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**MY STORY TO TELL: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION OF
INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING FOR CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY
THROUGH MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE IN ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS**

by

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Language, Literacy, & Sociocultural Studies

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation work and doctoral degree to God my savior, my husband Jeremy, and son Jeremiah, who gave me the invaluable gifts of time, patience, and love to pursue and achieve my dreams. Without them, none of this work would have been possible. I also dedicate this work to my late in-laws, Gary and Linda, who gave me the ultimate gift of their son, my son, and the opportunity to experience this work in my lifetime.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative *Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices* was to explore and tell a personalized account of myself as an instructional coach striving for culturally responsive pedagogical practices through multicultural literature in pre-kindergarten through sixth grade classrooms. Two research questions were designed to address this autoethnographic exploration. Research Question 1 was: What tensions do I experience as a living contradiction in the work as an instructional coach for elementary teachers of diverse learners who need culturally responsive literacy instruction? Research Question 2 was: How do my personal understandings of these tensions honor my commitment to enlarging teachers' culturally responsive pedagogical practices through the use of multicultural children's literature in their classrooms? Metaphorical data analysis included four phases through four different data collection artifacts. Five different findings paralleled the two research questions: time, resources, professional development/meetings, multiple coaching models, and resistance. I concluded the tensions to the living contradiction outlined in this study ensured my self-commitment to my role as an instructional coach and culturally responsive practices in elementary spaces.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Alma Sofía Esperanza Jose Pura Candela had a long name—too long if you asked her. ‘My name is so long, Daddy. It never fits,’ Alma said. ‘Come here,’ he said. ‘Let me tell you the story of your name. Then you can decide if it fits...’
(Martinez-Neal, 2018, p. 1-3).

During one of our monthly instructional coaches’ meetings I came across a unique piece of multicultural literature that immediately sparked my interest. *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018) was the picture book that had essentially brought me to where I am today on my dissertation journey. As I scanned and flipped through the pages of this text, I noticed the words and pictures; I thought about how this example of multicultural literature could be shared and celebrate the diverse populations and support cultural connectedness. These aspects of diversity stemmed from my own experiences as a child learning about differences in cultures, experiences of teaching literature to others when I became a teacher, and personal events in my life. This was a text that initiated an urgency for me around using multicultural literature as a steppingstone to culturally responsive practices for teachers and their students because of the message and diversity that it supported within a cultural lens. Alma’s experience of learning about her name also ignited an urgency to understand my own identity as an instructional coach and commitment to my passion of being a culturally responsive educator. In further sharing, studying, exploring, learning, and reflecting upon my own professional practices, I designed and conducted a *Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices* (S-STEP) based on my own experiences working with school educators and to some extent their students.

Thinking more about *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018) instilled a craving for sharing literature with teachers and students to support culturally responsive pedagogies in elementary classrooms. I also experienced myriad tensions in my work to provide a supportive space for culturally relevant multicultural literature and practices due to master schedule conflicts. As my thinking deepened, I connected with the definition of culturally responsive teaching that Gay (2000) provides.

Culturally responsive teaching is the behavioral expressions of knowledge, beliefs, and values that recognize the importance of racial and cultural diversity in learning. It is contingent on . . . seeing cultural differences as assets; creating caring learning communities where culturally different individuals and heritages are valued; using cultural knowledge of ethnically diverse cultures, families, and communities to guide curriculum development, classroom climates, instructional strategies, and relationships with students; challenging racial and cultural stereotypes, prejudices, racism, and other forms of intolerance, injustice, and oppression; being change agents for social justice and academic equity; mediating power imbalances in classrooms based on race, culture, ethnicity, and class; and accepting cultural responsiveness as endemic to educational effectiveness in all areas of learning for students from all ethnic groups (p. 31).

I decided to conduct a study where I could better understand, make meaning of, and ignite further avenues within my culturally responsive practices by sharing multicultural literature as an instructional coach with educators. I wanted to use the understandings to improve my practices in teacher education and in return share that growing knowledge with others in the same field of education. I wanted others to share in my same passion and in return learn from them as well.

The Living Contradiction

The seeds of S-STEP are sown in living contradiction (Whitehead, 1989). Prior to the discovery of *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018), I wondered about the ways in which I brought multicultural texts into the classroom to support teachers in acknowledging and affirming diversities within their instruction through culturally responsive practices alongside other responsibilities and pressures I felt (Nieto, 2000). Other responsibilities and pressures were those that included daily tasks that I was responsible for and those that I had opportunities to share literacy experiences with teachers if time allowed. Reflections on my practices revealed a contradiction stemming from my desire to be an effective instructional coach according to the research literature and recommended practices while also being a culturally responsive educator. My undergraduate and graduate educational experiences at a local university concentrated on literature as a point of origin for engaging in culturally responsive pedagogy while formal trainings as an instructional coach had focused more on teaching a standardized scripted curriculum. I experienced pressure in trying to do both, but I had not always been able to articulate why. I wanted to understand these avenues in my practices so I could better serve teachers, other coaches, school staff and children within elementary settings.

When I was invited to engage in a *Children's Literature* internship and then to later teach the same course at a local university, I had a desire to understand my own practices that I gained from those experiences so I could further support future educators. I considered my previous experiences alongside texts, projects, assignments, and extraordinary engagements from my master's and doctoral programs. I anticipated sharing these experiences with others through courses I taught as well as with teachers, other instructional coaches, school staff, and children at my school. However, I realized that I required a framework to organize my thinking.

I continued to struggle with these tensions as a living contradiction in the work that I did (Whitehead, 1989); I wanted to understand how and whether I used multicultural literature as part of a commitment to culturally responsive teaching, but I realized that teachers might not be responsive if they felt pressured to perform the instructional tasks I was trained to look for and value as a coach. Instead of positioning this contradiction as something to demoralize me or refuse to acknowledge, I decided to confront it by gathering and analyzing data about my teacher education practices with reference to this living contradiction. I realized that I may not be able to fully resolve the tensions, but I did intend to improve and enhance my practice and open doors for personal and professional growth (LaBoskey, 2004). The professional growth gained from this experience could provide divine interventions that would assist me in my continued professional career.

My brief encounter with *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018) sparked new ideas about studying, learning, and reflecting on my coaching practices within the context of my commitment to culturally responsive teaching through multicultural literature. I generated questions centered on how I could share this multicultural picture book and similar texts in ways that honored and supported diversity in the classrooms where my role as an instructional coach encompassed supporting the instructional practices of teachers. These questions were refined into research questions that directed this dissertation study.

Research Questions

- 1.) What tensions do I experience as a living contradiction in the work as an instructional coach for elementary teachers of diverse learners who need culturally responsive literacy instruction?

2.) How do my personal understandings of these tensions honor my commitment to enlarging teachers' culturally responsive pedagogical practices through the use of multicultural children's literature in their classrooms?

As these questions raced through my mind, a deeper passion formed for my S-STEP; in a sense, I began to visualize this work unfolding. It was not long after our lunch break when we returned to our instructional coaching meeting, that I ordered *Alma and How She Got Her Name* online (Martinez-Neal, 2018). I could not wait to get my hands on this book in hopes of sharing and modeling lessons in classrooms at my school. As I learned more about multicultural literature and culturally responsive pedagogy in all of its subtleties, I wondered about my own professional learning and development that I either provided for and/or participated in with other educators.

As *Alma and How She Got Her Name* concludes, Martinez-Neal (2018) writes from Alma's perspective, "That's my name, and it fits me just right! I am Alma, and I have a story to tell" (p. 26-28). This perspective was revealed after Alma discovered and learned how she got her long and unique name; a name that she longed to know more about and somehow felt herself growing into more as her story was being told. Alma's story of her name was told by her father of those past that she was uniquely named after and so curious about. This enthusiastic and unique multicultural piece of children's literature that Alma Sofia Esperanza José Pura Candela craved to tell aligned with the passion that lied within my own heart to tell and share with others. My passion for loving children's literature stems from the extreme joy that they bring me. The vivid words, images, and messages bring me peace and further understanding of not only my own culture, but also different cultures around me. Texts with visible differences within families and places shed light on the world around me. Texts that convey and share a message brings happiness as that is when I can be vulnerable as an educator in referencing and including

sometimes uneasy conversations. Being able to share my passion about culture and differences that stem from within myself would bring others to understanding more about who they are, where they are from, and their place in the world just as the urgency that Alma felt within this multicultural text. By sharing and using multicultural children's literature as a vehicle to culturally responsive pedagogical practices in elementary classrooms, I could hopefully see that reflection in furthering teachers' literacy experiences that they could share with their students.

My Role as Instructional Coach Against Previous Literature

The Census Bureau in 2015 stated that by the year 2020, "more than half of the nation's children will be part of a minority race or ethnic group" [in Chappell, 2015, p.1]." As the number of children with diverse backgrounds continues to rise, this study supported the exploration of my practice as an instructional coach in pre-kindergarten through sixth grade English language arts classrooms. Within this context, my role as an instructional coach had served as a tension against the previous literature which does not yet include how coaches have used multicultural literature as an avenue into culturally responsive pedagogical practices, despite the growing diversity of student demographics in classrooms. This tension had served as a living contradiction in the work that I did with teachers when it came to being an effective instructional coach according to the research and literature in addition to being an effective culturally responsive educator at the same time. However, I found it difficult to fulfil culturally responsive avenues when encounters such as master schedule conflicts, having daily duty, and not being in control of some of the instructional coaching opportunities that I felt the desire to share.

Despite increasing diversity, schools generally rely on instructional coaching models developed decades ago to enhance teacher pedagogy. The literature to support diversity does not yet include how instructional coaching has played a role in enhancing the pedagogy of using

multicultural literature as a pathway into culturally responsive practices. Dating back to the late 1990s, the instructional coaches have been defined in various ways, including those such as school leaders, professional developers, data analysis coaches, facilitators of grade level teams, and instructional leaders (Ross, 1992; Showers & Joyce, 1996). Instructional coaches have also had the roles of instructional supporters of curriculum by assisting educators with lesson planning, unit planning, data analysis, and assessment mapping (Ross, 1992; Showers & Joyce, 1996). Instructional coaches might demonstrate and model lessons, observe teachers' lessons and provide feedback to teachers, work with children, engage in professional book studies, as well as collaborate with grade level teams before, during, and after *Professional Learning Communities* (Dufour, Eaker, Many, 2010; Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, Many, 2016). Later, Professional Learning Communities were defined as collaborative grade level team sessions that allowed teachers to build lessons, create common formative assessments, analyze data, and engage in professional development learning opportunities (Dufour, et. al., 2010). Professional learning communities have been vital and a valuable aspect of my coaching experiences within the five years of my educational career as an instructional coach.

Since the turn of the 21st century, instructional coaches have been active in influencing the pedagogical moves and instructional practices enacted on that teachers make in their classrooms (Frye, 2015; Howe & Barry, 2014). Instructional coaches have been available to assist educators in engaging in knowledge building opportunities that do many things, one of which could be supporting culturally responsive pedagogical practices through avenues consisting of multicultural literature. Instructional coaches' assistance may support pedagogical practices that honor diverse learners, as well as providing a learning environment that is rooted in an informed sociocultural perspective on multicultural literature (Perry, 2012). The relationship

between instructional coaching and cultural aspects of learning focused on the idea that learning is a social interaction between two people (Vygotsky, 1978). This working relationship I spoke of was rooted in this dissertation study.

Instructional coaches, teachers and their students engage in social interactions on a daily basis— whether it is through coaching cycles or modeling and demonstrating lessons through literacy instruction. When instructional coaches work collaboratively with teachers and to some extent their children, their supportive role ensures that learning for all is taking place by writing, communicating, developing, and enacting on measurable learning objectives (Eaker, 2018). These interactions are collaborative in nature and are based on teachers’ academic objectives for students (Sweeney & Harris, 2016). Collaborative interactions between instructional coaches and educators are manifested in ways that not only support the learning, but could enhance pedagogy for all involved.

Wright, Horn, and Sanders (1997), in Howard [2010] states, “the most important factor affecting student learning is the teacher” (p. 33), when considering at the school level. This suggests a peripheral role for support staff, such as instructional coaches, who provide professional development opportunities and instructional support to all teachers in all subject areas. In my role as an instructional coach, I could only support children if I support teachers.

One major expectation of instructional coaches is that they monitor the teachers’ implementation of classroom instruction focused on the district’s required essential academic standards (Hattie, 2009). The essential standards (deemed as most important by the district within this dissertation study) are drawn from the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) National Board of Governors (2010). Although the CCSS is supposed to accommodate strong multicultural teaching through its content standards provided to support diverse learners, teachers

do not always take that away as a value or a need to implement in their instruction (Luján, 2010). Instead, they attend to strict objectives of the class as the norm and instructional coaches focus on assisting in those objectives outlined by educators themselves. This study focused on my own teacher education practices when it came to sharing multicultural literature as a vehicle into culturally responsive practices which supported the academic standards within my building.

Instructional Coaching Meets Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

The collaborative interactions between instructional coaching and teachers have been studied in various ways over the years; however, there is a limited research in the area of instructional coaching specifically meeting culturally responsive pedagogy (Lynch & Ferguson, 2010; Killion, 2017; Knight, 2006; Howe & Barry, 2014). Culturally responsive pedagogy is more than celebrating different cultures and customs around the world or providing children with a lesson on different cultural recipes, but generally could certainly be shaped and influenced by these experiences. Culturally responsive pedagogy is empowering for all children, providing an empowering learning environment through diverse instruction (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2004, 2009; Mills, 2008). It is about motivating and acknowledging children's academic abilities by bringing in their cultural beliefs, customs, and backgrounds into the academic instructional day in all subject areas (Gay, 2000; 2010). It is about engaging children in wide arrays of cultural literature, lessons that are engaging in supporting and stimulating their cultural development, as well as building a positive working relationship that creates a positive classroom climate built upon their own understanding of themselves and others (Gay, 2000; Lindsey, Martinez, Lindsey, 2007).

When instructional coaches and teachers encourage and support these practices, they are allowing children to honor diversity and an expanded learning of different cultures not only

within the classroom, but also in communities in the greater world. The visible gap of culturally responsive pedagogy coupled with instructional coaching practices within the literature suggests an important facet to the coaching role and the meaningful and equitable diverse learning environment necessary in elementary settings (Affolter, 2017). When instructional coaches attempt to meet the rising needs of culturally responsive practices, they are ensuring a diverse learning environment that supports the teaching and learning of today's diverse world. Instructional coaching woven together through culturally responsive practices with educators creates a diverse learning environment to which could be beneficial and empowering to understanding, appreciating, and cultivating ourselves and those around us.

Given such ways in which instructional coaches could support teachers culturally responsive pedagogy uncovered a tension in my role when desiring to be an effective coach and my commitment of being a culturally responsive educator. This study was a consideration of myself as an instructional coach and passionate culturally responsive educator who met other educators in their own knowledge and to some extent their students for culturally responsive practices through multicultural literature opportunities.

Tensions in Instructional Coaching Against Culturally Responsive Teaching

Tensions within the instructional coaching role for culturally responsive teaching practices within elementary settings serves as a visible aspect of the limited literature within the educational field. Considering the diverse populations that enter classrooms today, I had continued to strive for culturally responsive pedagogical practices through multicultural literature as an instructional coach. In fact, any chance I had to initiate cultural conversations, inviting myself into classrooms to share cultural literature, and/or building relationships through conversations, I would do so, but it was not always an easy process. These culturally responsive

pedagogical practices through instructional coaching ultimately shaped my study and the desire that I had to research more about tensions within my practices. Scholars have supported how diverse instruction within schools supports and encourages a place where learning could be shared by **all** (Escamilla, 2007; Rodriguez, Abrego, Rubin, 2014). This aspect of tensions between my role and being a culturally responsive educator supported instructional shifts which held genuine meaning for me when thinking about diverse learning for **all**. I often felt frustrated when I did not think I was doing enough because others did not seem to be as enthusiastic as I was to share multicultural literature as an avenue to culturally responsive practices. I understood that my passion in sharing multicultural literature as an avenue to culturally responsive practices did not always align with the essential standards which were derived from the Common Core State Standards that teachers were focusing on. I wanted to see how my passion of using diverse texts with others, but due to circumstances that I was required to do, I felt that I did not always have the time for this implementation that held close within my heart.

Instructional coaches could face various challenges, difficulties, and uncertainties within their daily encounters. The support, including challenges such as securing an education that is inclusive of diversity in itself is an experienced tension that drove my decision to move into an S-STEP dissertation. Investigating this avenue within my practices was where I could improve upon the ways in which I further supported the inclusion of multicultural literature through culturally responsive experiences in elementary classrooms. Additionally, to understand further how to better prepare teachers and their students for culturally responsive instruction through multicultural literature, I embraced the tension that supported the connection between my role as a coach in sharing multicultural literature as a vehicle into culturally responsive pedagogies in elementary English language arts classrooms. An S-STEP approach through autoethnography,

based on autobiographical techniques, enabled myself as the researcher to study and report my lived literacy experiences with teachers, school staff, other instructional coaches, and children. Scholars have further informed my thinking on how an S-STEP is a space for investigating, understanding, improving upon, and making meaning of tensions within my role when coaching for culturally responsive practices (LaBoskey, 2004; Lehman, Freeman, Scharer, 2010; Martin & Spencer, 2020; White, Smith, Kunz, Nugent, 2015).

Significance of this Work

The purpose of this study was to explore and tell a personalized account of myself as an elementary instructional coach who strived to use multicultural literature as a bridge to culturally responsive pedagogy in elementary educational spaces. My study examined and explored how I enacted on culturally responsive pedagogical practices through literature in my building on a daily basis. In this study, I reflected on my own lived experiences, the challenges I faced, successes that came my way, and the meaning of how those experiences and tensions strengthened and/or impeded my own professional practices as an elementary instructional coach.

Studying my own practices allowed me to be at the forefront of my own work to learn more about the past, present, and future literacy engagements within my educational professional career. Investigating, learning about, and looking into my role through a cultural lens served as a vital aspect of my work within classrooms. This work provided an opportunity for me to grow and improve professionally within my role as a coach and as a researcher while stretching myself intellectually, emotionally, psychologically, and creatively. By stretching myself in these ways, I was committed to engaging with the text *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018) with others and how that commitment could add to my own pedagogy and teachers’

culturally responsive pedagogy as well. This text reminded me how powerful and influential a message of identity through words and pictures could be and how children think about the content, see themselves and others in the world around them, learn about relationships and cultures of others, and various diversities. In fact, as a Hispanic woman, I resonated with this multicultural text greatly in how I got my own name which brought comfort, joy, and a sense of belonging as it was also chosen by past family members, just like Alma's in *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018).

More specifically, the story of my name is unique in as it was also chosen by family members also from those now past. My maternal grandfather liked the ending sound 'ette' and named three of his daughters with that unique ending sound. Sadly, before I was born, one of his daughters had passed away. There was no doubt, when I came along, that my parents would name me after her. *Annette*, was her name and I was now blessed to keep that special name in the family that meant so much to many. I am grateful that I get to carry on a name that is unique and a part of a past family member; an aunt that I was not able to personally meet. I wonder of the person she would have become; did I share in any of her personality traits or features? Further, my middle name, *Melissa*, chosen for me by my maternal great-grandmother who had her own significance to the name and adored it enough to keep it in the family. I wish that both my grandfather and great-grandmother were still here today to tell me even more about the story of my name. In connection, Alma's father, in *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018) shares, "Pura was your great-aunt. She believed that the spirits of our ancestors are always with us, watching over us" (p. 17). This aspect of the text reminded me of my aunt *Annette* when connecting with this story which emulated the great desire I had to learn more about my names and ancestors the more I read it and shared with others. As an instructional coach and culturally

responsive educator, I had a great desire to share a text like *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018) with teachers and their students in attempts for them to make the same connections to their own cultural identity (stories of their names) and belonging in the world just as I did when I first read this text.

Palmer (1997) speaks of teachers fully needing an understanding of themselves in order to fully understand their own students which was rooted in this study's purpose. Instructional coaches must fully learn and acquire the self-knowledge to understand their own identity in order to fully understand how they could better support others. One way to engage in learning about self is through reflection. Reflection as an educator is directly tied to learning, therefore if I am not reflecting then I am not learning (Kramer & Schuhl, 2017). Reflective practices were significant and courageous aspects in my dissertation journey because they revealed aspects of my professional practices that allowed me to understand and learn more about my role. Palmer (1997) provides insights to this type of courageous insightful exploration and inner landscape of self which was explored through this dissertation study; an inner landscape of self that I was rooted in and hopeful in sharing and learning the more I engaged in the work. Reflection, in this sense, brought me closer to the work that I did and the work I still felt the desire to do.

This study fulfilled a gap within my own professional learning practices as well as shed light on understanding necessary improvements within my instructional practices when using and sharing multicultural literature as a way into supporting culturally responsive practices with others that I supported. This study provided and offered a contribution to enhance existing S-STEP literature on the ways in which educators could potentially enhance literacy practices while using multicultural literature as an avenue to culturally responsive practices in diverse educational learning environments. This study enabled me to think about myself in a personal

and professional way which served and greatly contributed to one of my greatest blessings yet in life.

Overview of Research Design

Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP) is a methodology that accommodates a host of qualitative strategies and frameworks including studying one's own professional practices (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2009; LaBoskey, 2004; Tidwell, Heston, & Fitzgerald, 2009). This S-STEP drew on autoethnographic techniques (Boylorn & Orbe, 2004) while borrowing from autobiographical elements including those of historical and cultural nature (Ellis, 2009). A personal account of my instructional coaching role allowed this S-STEP to emerge through my own learning experiences as a researcher who described and identified as a member of the instructional coaching field. Hamilton (1998) defines S-STEP as "the study of one's self, one's actions, one's ideas" [in Samaras & Freese, 2009, p. 10]. These elements of S-STEP held what I sought out eagerly and completely when investigating my professional practices. Additionally, Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) defines autoethnography as studying self in one's own culture. I was the primary data source in this S-STEP and drew on the five years of professional instructional coaching experience within one public kindergarten through sixth grade elementary school in a district in the Southwestern United States of America.

Data collection within this dissertation study included my own artifacts all enacted on within my role as an instructional coach. My daily coaching calendar included tasks and engagements with staff inclusive of reflective jottings of thoughts that served as field note data (Emerson, et. al., 1995). As each month came to an end, I re-created my hardcopy calendar in a digital format to serve as documentation for monthly coaching logs as required by the district in addition to digitalizing weekly reflections that also served as a data source. Also included in data

collection were self-created digital weekly newsletters, agendas for meetings and/or trainings either provided by the school site, district or myself, memos to and from school personnel, and professional development sessions both attended and/or facilitated (Emerson, et. al., 1995). These artifacts allowed me to document, trace, and recall experiences that served as key attributes in assisting, discovering, and deepening the truth about myself as a subject of inquiry (Edel, 1984; Ellis & Brochner, 2000). Within this study, I also drew on tools of metaphorical analysis to arrive at the study's overall findings which allowed me to shed light on experiences that I lived (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Mahilos & Maxson, 1998; Tidwell & Manke, 2009). The theoretical frameworks of culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2000) and culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) constructed this S-STEP study. A detailed and more comprehensive review of my research study's design was outlined in chapter 3 methodology of this dissertation study.

Positionality

Exploring how researchers have studied instructional coaching, multicultural literature, culturally responsive pedagogy, and S-STEP practices not only encouraged me to reflect on my own practices as an instructional coach, but also helped me to gain a greater knowledge base of each that essentially equipped me for the research that was present in the field and the research still needed.

Instructional coaching for culturally responsive teaching through multicultural literature experiences originated from many different moments in my life, but several incidents were salient. Most importantly, the moment that I became committed to and passionate about serving the education and learning of children and later in my career, adults, began as a young child and solidified during my fourth-grade school year. My passion for becoming an educator resulted

from both my experiences as a fourth grader as well as my childhood. My childhood and grade school literacy experiences were rich and I recall always being inspired and challenged from them. Rich literacy experiences from my childhood included my mother, whom was an educator herself, teaching and inspiring me daily to love learning along with teaching and helping others. When nightly reading came about, I gravitated towards stories that shared in helping others and the relationships between characters that stories told. This desire for helping others and building relationships was a growing bud into how I strived to include that in my work as an instructional coach. Not yet understanding the concept back then when thinking about building relationships as a child listening to stories, but now knowing how that literacy experience cultivated into something that I now understand in greater depth. These experiences always continued to nourish my growing passion for literacy and the relationships that emerged because of them. I knew early on in life that I wanted to be a teacher just like my mother to therefore have the opportunity to share my love of learning and literacy with others. I recall intense desires to “play school” and go shopping to buy new books any chance that I had; Christmas lists and birthday wishes always included books. To this day, books continue to nourish my heart and soul and any chance that I get I order another book, I never hesitate to do so.

Although my love for books and reading was significantly led predominately by the passion and desire that I had for literacy, reading did not come easily for me. In fact, it was not until my fourth-grade school year that I finally became a true independent reader. My fourth-grade teacher believed in me and cared enough about my reading abilities to work with me. I knew this because he took the time to read with me independently and allowed small reading goals of mine to be celebrated as big wins. Every day, I would go to school knowing that my reading was going to improve the more he and I read books with few words and practiced sight

words together; soon books with few words became chapter books. The Caucasian, short in stature, gray-haired, always wearing plaid shirts and glasses educator proved to be an influential person that enhanced my literacy life and had a part in planting the seed to my own teaching career. I craved to be an educator like him and my mother, educators that took the initiative to build a trusting and working relationship that supported and illuminated a love for reading. The supportive relationships in my early literacy life planted opportunities to later give back the unique and powerful literacy experiences to offer others which helped a young budding reader like myself find my own passion and desire for literacy. Alma, in *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018) tells her father, “She was the one who taught me how to read” (p. 5) when learning of her grandmother who gave her a middle name *Sophia*. This reflects the way that I felt about my mother and fourth grade teacher, a story that I will always remember as I became a reader and a lifelong educator that valued literacy each and every day.

Alongside the positive and grounded elementary literacy foundation, were also those experiences within my secondary school years. Being employed at my mother’s preschool allowed me to care for and teach kids in the afterschool program. I was able to interact and share diverse literacy experiences with children throughout my high school years as an after-school assistant. As a preschool teaching assistant, I would read text to children of all ages any chance I had. The more I was around children the more I craved a classroom of my own; a classroom where I could share many unique and inspiring literacy adventures with children.

After high school graduation, I enrolled in a local university’s early childhood teacher education program and began to nourish the ‘teaching’ seed that had been planted back in elementary school. It was a couple of months before graduating with my teaching undergraduate degree in Early Childhood Multicultural Education, that I was hired to teach a classroom filled

with eager-to-learn second-grade bilingual children, yet not fully bilingual myself. I was up for the challenge that consisted of receiving assistance from a bilingual resource teacher and set forth with a group of children of my own on a cold October day in 2001. My career in teaching was finally budding. It did not matter that there was an initial language barrier between the children and me in my mind, I had a passion to teach and I would find a way to make learning happen. There was no barrier big enough to keep me from accepting this second-grade teaching position. In fact, being immersed with children who spoke a different language other than my own, gave us grander opportunities to engage in diverse literature together. I thrived in my passion for teaching within the first year and I longed for with the support of many mentors and colleagues all assisting with new curriculum, teaching strategies, and the barriers of language differences between the children and I. In fact, having a classroom of my own, where I could share multicultural literature through culturally responsive practices, increasingly watered the growing sprouts for my love of teaching. I, wholeheartedly, loved teaching and year after year I found myself anxiously awaiting summer school like a newly formed stem waiting for its first leaf, because I knew I would be able to share my passion beyond the traditional ten-month school year and also had more flexibility in the resources that I was able to share.

A personal event in my life that continued to nourish my passion for diverse literature was through the adoption process. My husband and I resorted to building a family through adoption due to not being able to have children on our own. After several failed attempts at adopting a child from the United States of America, we decided to enroll in our adoption agency's international program as there was a greater chance of having a successful adoption journey taking that route. In fact, we agreed to the international program on a Friday morning and the following Monday morning we received a call from our agency that an orphanage in

South America had a four-week-old baby boy that needed a forever family. Needless to say, once the agency emailed us information and a photo of this baby that same beautiful day in December of 2005, we proudly and happily said yes! Thanking the Lord above that parenthood was finally looking like a possibility for us.

Within the next few weeks, I researched the South American country we were adopting from and all the entities of the culture, language, beliefs, traditions, just to name a few. Immersing myself in cultural literature, because of the international adoption process, was reflective of my passion, commitment, and desire for multicultural literature then and even more so today. After eight months from the initial first step in the adoption process, we were finally able to fly to South America to finalize our adoption and bring our eight-month-old baby boy home. I started his collection of books the moment we found out about him; books about adoption, books that shared diverse families, stories about relationships, books that brought our cultures and families together, just to name a few. As my childhood literacy roots were securely grounded, I wanted the same for my son.

I began to journal and document all of our adoption journey experiences from the moment we learned about him. The daily journaling that I organized was later structured in an *A to Z: Life and Adoption Story* digital format book about our love and journey to becoming a forever family. This book that I wrote was one of my greatest memories and cultural aspects of South America in our adoption journey. *A is for art, B is for baby boy, C is for the call, D is for departing, E is for embassy appointment...V is for your very special name...* filled the pages of the book. Just as in *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018), we were able to name our son after his new family as well as keep a name given to him by his South American biological family; a name that he would be able to self-identify with as he grew up and had

curiosities about just like Alma did in this specific text. This literacy book was filled with words, pictures, quotes, songs, facts about South American experiences through and after the adoption process all the while encompassing many cultural references that paved way for a newfound purpose of multicultural children's literature. Most importantly, a book that brought two different cultures, worlds, languages, beliefs, and families together; these experiences in and around text were empowering in ways beyond imaginable.

I had shared this book that I wrote with many students over the course of my career which allowed them to learn more about who I was and where I came from. Sharing my identity with them was a needed spark for them to then be curious in sharing their own stories about who they were and, in my opinion, those classified as win-win cultural literacy experiences. I tell of my adoption process because it is a personal celebration and reflective aspect of my life that connects my personal life to my professional life as a literacy and culturally responsive educator. Revisiting our adoption story book today surfaces many different emotions. Being able to relive the amazing experiences only reflects how this personal journey connects to where I am today in my dissertation journey. Yet again another reason and reference to why I am passionate about multicultural children's literature.

Continuing on with my professional journey in education, after fourteen years of teaching either second or third grade and being a mentor to new teachers, I furthered my career in a newfound love for working alongside other teachers, administrators, and instructional coaches. I eagerly and excitedly applied and was hired to be an instructional coach for the same school district where my career in teaching began; a new growing rose in the same garden bed. It was then that my career in assisting, mentoring, teaching, and supporting adult learners set sail. My

divine eagerness to support others in literacy learning opportunities swelled and the more I shared in those experiences, the greater my passion for culturally responsive teaching became.

My positionality within the context of this study was through an insider-researcher lens where I studied myself as a five-year instructional coach for a Southwestern United States of America public elementary school. The nineteen years as an educator served as a solid foundation to my positionality within this S-STEP dissertation. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) describes an insider-researcher (emic perspective) as a person who is the researcher studying the same population that they identify with. Knowing and understanding the role, by being part of this educational population of people, assumed my positionality as an insider. I also situated myself as a researcher-participant within this study. Being a researcher-participant enabled me to solely self-reflect on my own practices and beliefs (LaBoskey, 2004). My positionality as an insider-researcher deemed beneficial in understanding, learning, improving, and enhancing my pedagogy as an instructional coach and researcher.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I shared and outlined the premise of this study as well as the tensions within the living contradiction that served as the impetus for inquiry. From there, I shared my study's two research questions, introduction to instructional coaching and culturally responsive pedagogy, uncovering tensions between the two, the significance of this work, overview of research design, and positionality which presented an introduction to my study due to the nature of an *Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices* approach. A comprehensive review of literature within the areas of instructional coaching including teacher and student-centered approaches, instructional coaching for culturally responsive pedagogy, and multicultural literature, inclusive

of the theoretical frameworks Gay (2000) and Ladson-Billings (1995) in which this study was designed, follows in chapter 2.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

This review of literature is comprised of early coaching models, later coaching models, and current instructional coaching models all within the critical role of an instructional coach in elementary classrooms. Also included are aspects of culturally responsive pedagogy that include multicultural children's literature for diverse learners in elementary pre-kindergarten through sixth grade English language arts classrooms as part of supporting teachers in a coaching role. As it is acceptable within S-STEP work, due to the academic course of my study and researching important aspects and issues in my personal and professional life (Ritter, 2017), I will first begin with myself and then move to the literature.

How I Came to Instructional Coaching

"Would anyone be interested in having a student teacher next semester?" the email read. It was at this point in my professional career when I discovered how interacting, teaching, and learning from other adult educators was a growing desire. The experience of mentoring sparked a new craving to support new teacher educators. I recall collaboratively engaging in and reflecting on discussions, lesson planning, challenges, and successes together all of which provided me new insight into my own teaching and learning which paved way into how to teach adults. I recall being apprehensive about sharing my knowledge with a student teacher because I was not sure I was really an expert on teaching myself, but I dived in anyhow and had never looked back.

I had always expressed my interest in mentoring and learning with new teachers the more I worked with them. Another email, *"would anyone like to be the mentor teacher to one (or more) of our new teacher(s)?"* My reply was always, *"yes, thank you for allowing me this wonderful opportunity."* I embraced every opportunity I received. The interactions that I had

with new teachers fueled my growing passion for teaching and learning from and with other adult educators. Being a mentor allowed me to further plant seeds of knowledge for both teachers and their students especially within a literacy aspect.

Being a mentor teacher to not only student teachers enrolled in teacher education programs at a local university, as well as newly hired certified teachers was an event in my career that eventually caused me to leave the classroom and solely enact in a career in teaching adults. As a second and/or third grade teacher for fourteen years, I myself consistently and eagerly reached out to the school's instructional coaches. I craved their help, accepted their opinions on my teacher practices, sought resources they suggested, and desired their continuous expertise in my classroom. These instructional coaches graciously checked in on me, assisted me in new learning, offered advice, and continuously provided encouragement. I knew that my career in working closely with adults was not too far away as these unique and empowering experiences were something that I dreamed of doing every day, from planning and providing professional development, to actively participating in professional learning communities, assisting and supporting new teachers, supporting the implementation of programs, to modeling lessons, and managing instructional materials, just to name a few. In my heart, I had always been an instructional coach who craved to work with other adult elementary educators; it just took the right people and experiences for me to come to this realization.

Early Coaching Models

Peer coaching is one of the earliest known forms of coaching. Originating in the 1970s and 1980s by Joyce and Showers (1980), peer coaching entails teachers working alongside one another for professional growth. It was through extensive studies that Joyce and Showers (1980) examined and explored how teachers learn and grow their *pedagogy* (the art and science of

teaching children). Joyce and Showers (1980) finds that “modeling [lessons], practice under similar conditions, and practice in the classroom, combined with feedback” (p. 384) is the most effective professional development design that improved teachers’ pedagogical practices. As an instructional coach, I had witnessed the collaborative work with teaching through modeled lessons and coaching opportunities that encompassed providing feedback to educators had increased professional learning. As peer coaching evolved, an 80% increase in teaching pedagogy and curriculum implementation, based on professional learning through peer coaching, proved that educators collaborating with other educators improved and supported pedagogy and provided for an enhanced learning environment (Joyce & Showers, 1982). Peer coaching included teachers working with one another through co-teaching and planning, development of content lessons, sharing of resources, and having meaningful discussions in and around multiple content areas. These implementations to peer coaching could pave ways for enhancing pedagogies in classrooms. Job-embedded professional learning through peer coaching enabled teachers to learn new practices and enhance skills to ensure, improve, and sustain their pedagogy (Joyce & Showers, 1980). Early coaching models paved way to later coaching models which allowed for further study within the field.

Later Coaching Models

Later coaching models that have evolved since the peer-coaching model includes instructional coaching, cognitive coaching, and literacy coaching; all of which have been widely implemented in school districts around the United States. Multiple components of these instructional coaching practices could often times overlap in practices and/or implementations. The various coaching models includes teacher-centered approaches that are fluid in (meaning can be interwoven together) when working with teachers and students. Teacher-centered coaching

models shed light on the support of instructional coaches in educational settings on increasing teacher pedagogy and student achievement (Killion, 2017; Sumner, 2011). Before moving to the literature on various later instructional coaching models, I started by defining the instructional coaching model in this study as I felt it was necessary and held meaning within the literature to which this study was grounded in.

Defining the Instructional Coaching Role

Defining the instructional coaching role within this literature review was important because of myself as an instructional coach serving as the sole participant within this S-STEP. Different variations of the instructional coaching role have been used in school districts across the nation; cognitive coaches, reading specialists, professional learning coaches, academic coaches, peer coaches, data coaches, math coaches, and literacy coaches. In spite of this variety of roles, the position within school districts itself, *instructional coach* has increasingly become commonplace by scholars in elementary settings (Colburn & Wolfin, 2012; Frye, 2015; Howe & Barry, 2014; Lynch & Ferguson, 2010). The instructional coaching role has been defined as instructional coaches and teachers working collaboratively either during professional development, implementation of interventions, small group sessions, modeling, planning, engaging in meaningful conversations, and/or instructional coaches providing constructive feedback upon observation through coaching cycles, just to name a few (Knight, 2004; 2009; 2016). The roles of instructional coaches are based on the professional development that is provided, but most commonly defined as instructional leaders and professional developers that support teachers' instructional practices (Abrego, Rodriguez, Rubin, 2012; Atteberry & Bryk, 2011; Knight, 2011; Kretlow & Bartholomew, 2010; Muhammad & Hollie, 2012). Professional

developers are common personnel within the studies mentioned which holds true to the role that they provide in classrooms and the understanding of my role within this study.

One of the most defined roles of an instructional coach is that of a professional developer (Howe & Barry, 2014; Jackson, 2017; Swift & Kelly, 2010). Professional developers are expected to share their knowledge and expertise with educators that could include the support of learning. In attempts to improve the learning of educators' instructional practices, effective professional development opportunities between instructional leaders and educators are needed (Abrego, et. al., 2012; Aguilar, 2013; Knight, 2004; 2007; West, 2012). Moreover, professional development opportunities are based on the multiple content area subjects and instructional strategies that are either need refinement and/or new learning that is necessary by administration and/or desired by educators themselves (Howe & Barry, 2014; Knight, 2004; 2007, Lynch & Ferguson, 2010). Professional developers provide job-embedded professional development to teachers and/or grade level teams at all levels. Professional development opportunities could be through the support of effective district curriculum and implementations, mentoring, new and innovative teaching strategies, professional resources, book studies as well as knowledge building on research within the field through collaborative sessions and/or workshops (Chien, 2012; Frye, 2015). Collaborative meetings and workshops were evident and implemented within the context of this study which held a place in the literature when it came to thinking about professional development learning and experiences.

Scholars have emphasized that “you can only talk about collaboration when you're on your own; with the group, you can demonstrate it” (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, 1986, xxi). Collaborative work could not only encourage learning, but could also serve as a place where truths are shared, knowledge building is supported, one is able to share their own

experiences that could bring voice to things on the mind and soul and encompass an authoritative approach to working closely with others (Belenky, et. al., 1986). This type of collaborative work was relevant to this study due to the extensive nature of collaboration instructional coaches and teachers engage in together. Through collaborative work, professional developers assist in filling learning implementations that could move teachers' pedagogical and literacy instructional practices forward, therefore increasing learning as described by Joyce and Showers (2002) as "formal study by educators" (p. 3). Scholars have supported the learning of students by increasing educator's knowledge through professional learning occurrences in elementary settings (Howe & Barry, 2000; Killion, 2017; Knight, 2007; Neuman & Wright, 2010; Ross, 1992). In order to build, support, and sustain an increase in teacher pedagogy through professional learning, instructional leaders could ensure essential elements are not only available, but active (White, et. al., 2015). Defining the instructional coach's role within the literature and connection within this study grounded its purpose.

Instructional Coaching According to Jim Knight

Knight's (2004) instructional coaching model influenced my professional learning of coaching itself within the last five years of my career. This is the coaching model that drove my support and work with teachers in entirety. Through multiple and various professional learning opportunities, this model provided structure and formality in working with educators, but not solely in a culturally responsive way. The teacher-centered instructional coaching model focuses around coaching cycles that could enhance, guide, and support teachers' pedagogical practices; taking an approach to teaching and learning through modes of routines. Instructional coaching is the most commonly known coaching approach and is widely implemented in American schools

(Knight, 2016). The instructional coaching model allows coaches and educators to work closely together to support professional growth from all parties included.

At the turn of the century, the instructional coaching model was developed as a means to aid in enhancing and furthering educators' instructional strategies when working collaboratively with instructional coaches (Knight, 2004). In Knight's (2004) study, educators that were active during professional development with instructional coaches resulted in the immediate transfer of information into classroom practices. I did not question this finding when I first read it. I was converted to the method and took it up. I was convinced that success could be achieved if instructional coaches worked alongside teachers through coaching cycles and other professional development opportunities (Knight, 2004; 2007). I accepted the view that this teacher-centered approach to coaching allowed for freedom within the collaboration between instructional coaches and teachers to weave in and out of multiple content areas, best practices, and/or new ideas and strategies governed by both teacher and coach. Focusing in on different elements of the coaching cycles to fulfil new learnings and/ or improvements is generated through instructional coaching. However, when I became a coach, even as I did it with all my heart, educators seemed to not make immediate visible implementations in their teaching, as Knight (2004; 2007) reports. As one could imagine I often experienced frustration within my role and disappointment with myself in maybe not reaching them in ways that I needed to. In attempts to further making a difference in the coaching cycles I conducted, I learned that various active elements to the role are necessary in doing so.

Active Ingredients in Instructional Coaching.

As part of my coaching, I also learned about instructional coaching's essential elements that White, et. al., (2015) classifies as "active ingredients" (p. 3). Active ingredients shed light on

their support that allowed for effective collaboration (White, et. al., 2015). The active ingredients include instructional coaches' own expertise and knowledge seeking in the field, flexible scheduling, strong personal and intercommunication skills (conversation between coach and teacher) and effective coaching relationships (Knight, 2009; Kretlow & Bartholomew, 2010; West, 2012; White, et. al., 2015). When enacted in a professional relationship between coach and teacher communication serves as a key element in professional growth (Ross, 1992; White, et. al., 2015; Wilking, 2015). The active ingredients that White, et. al., (2015) expresses were those I strove to include and implement while working with teachers as I knew and valued the meaning behind each in order to make for a successful place in education.

The active ingredient of effective relationships is when teachers and instructional coaches set the importance and focus of the collaborative work (Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Knight, 2007; 2011). A large number of studies have been linked to the active ingredients of relationships of instructional coaches and the school individuals they supported (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Doby-Holmes 2011; Howe & Barry 2014; Knight, 2004; 2009; Ross, 1992). Developing relationships with new teachers is important in supporting their new pedagogy and how that shapes and molds the beginning of their professional career (Abrego, et. al., 2012). While building a working relationship through multiple professional learning opportunities encourages a foundation set on sharing, understanding, and learning as well as gaining trust, respect, and building rapport to enhance school culture (Atteberry & Bryk, 2011; Aguilar, 2013; Boogren, 2015; Colburn & Wouflin, 2012; Dufour, 2015; Murer, 2009). However, I did not always feel that educators welcomed me, trusted me, or were open to me sharing ideas and strategies with them.

Relationships between instructional coaches and educators have been studied within the *Pathways to Success* projects (Knight, 2004). The Pathways to Success projects included instructional coaches whom were hired to go into classrooms to work with teachers through instructional coaching cycles in all subject areas (Knight, 2004). The relationship between an instructional coach and teacher must be positive to be productive. When these positive relationships are enacted through meaningful communication, listening to one another, followed-up sessions of modeled lessons, and provided constructive feedback upon modeled lessons, the instructional coaching model proved effective (Knight, 2004; 2007; 2016). My commitment as a culturally responsive educator stepped in to implement these literacy experiences with teachers and children almost all the time. The positive bond between coaches and educators was supposed to form as they shared knowledge and reflected on practices together. In turn, educators were supposed to be willing to take risks and try new strategies offered by instructional coaches (Howe & Barry, 2014). The positive bonds and engagement with educators were those I strived for each and every day to ensure a relationship that is securely bound.

Knight (2004) also focuses on the intensive support of classroom relationships between instructional coaches and teachers within group meetings, curriculum content collaboration discussions, modeling of lessons in classrooms, management of experiences as relationships, and response time to teacher requests which all plays a part in the success to improve teaching. “Instructional coaches [themselves] found [that] the most efficient way to create change is to spend time creating meaningful relationships that generate successes” (Knight, 2004, p. 36). The meaningful relationships could ensure that the professional learning of educators’ benefits children (Doby-Holmes, 2011; Jackson, 2017; Knight, 2000; Love, Stiles, Mundry DiRanna, 2007). The important facets in growing and sustaining relationships enable “good things to

happen” as Knight (2011, p. 1) states. When instructional coaches understand that they are active agents in growing the knowledge of not only their own pedagogy, but other educators’ as well they are open to new applications of new content with and for educators (White, et. al., 2015). In understanding the importance of growing my own pedagogy in attempts to further enhance others’ pedagogy supported the purpose of this S-STEP research. I attempted to seek my own understanding of the work I did with and for educators through the lens of providing a greater education for diverse learners. I was able to witness what I thought I did to build and strengthen relationships and how I responded to those circumstances within this S-STEP.

As relationships between professionals are active ingredients to the role, as is the continued learning of instructional coaches themselves; it is vital that instructional coaches also engage in professional learning opportunities to enhance their own learning (Cornett, Ellison, Hayes, Killion, Kise, Knight, Reinke, Reiss, Sprick, & West, 2009; Will, 2017). As *pedagogy* is the art and science of teaching children, *andragogy* focuses on the art and science of teaching adult learners (Knowles, 1980). For coaches, their adult learning most often stems from either in or outside district professional development and/or instructional coaches providing learning opportunities within themselves as a community of adult learners. The idea of who provides professional development and/or is a mentor to instructional coaches is generally a notion of importance to the role (Stock & Duncan, 2010). When instructional coaches are offered a mentor to work closely with, they are felt supported and more successful in their role (Stock & Duncan, 2010). Specifically, as a first-year instructional coach when my professional career in instructional coaching began, I was placed with a mentor coach and I learned so much that year because of the constant support I was provided with. Our working relationship and continued partnership became an avenue to effectively learn how an instructional could support others in

the education they provided in their classroom which children every day. I was grateful that I had someone that I could trust in my classroom sharing their expertise with me in order to enhance my own teacher education practices as well as sharing my own expertise with them in return.

Instructional coaches, as all adult learners, need others to help sustain learning and in most cases, instructional coaches provide that professional learning network for each other (Cornett, et. al., 2009; Gallucci, Lare, Yoon, Boatright, 2010; Knight, 2011; Lauer, 2013). When instructional coaches are working with others either through professional development sessions or general collaborative meetings, learning occurs and enables each individual to further gain knowledge and work toward a common goal (Dufour, et. al., 2010). Just as the zone of proximal development shapes and enhances the learning process within a collaborative learning environment for children, as does the engagement of two or more adults (Vygotsky & Piaget). Professional development opportunities in this manner allows for continuous learning because as diversity grows, we also grow and how “we engage in the world and are changed by it” (Howard, 2017; Swift & Kelly, 2010, p. 19). Adult learning and the importance of instructional coaches supporting other adult learners is an active ingredient to professional growth and continuous improvement on pedagogy for all (Dufour, et. al., 2016; Kramer & Schuhl, 2017; Santamaria, 2009). Adult learning to enhance pedagogical practices for all was rooted and relevant to this dissertation study.

Further, the professional learning of instructional coaches themselves could occur through professional development opportunities such as workshops, conferences, professional reading, and webinars, just to name a few (Cornett, et. al., 2009; Gallucci, et. al., 2010). The professional learning that coaches acquire not only maximizes their own cognitive and social learning, but it could also bring benefits to those with whom they share their insights. Teachers’

growing knowledge, based on their own teaching practice implementations and/or understandings, is supposed to be sustained through instructional practices, curriculum implementations, data analysis, and student assessment (Gallucci, et. al., 2010; Jackson, 2014; Knight, 2004; Will, 2017). When coaching is centered and focused around effective active ingredients through job embedded learning for adults a foundational space is then grounded to promote and enhance instructional coach and teacher pedagogy (Aguilar, 2013; Bailey & Jakicic, 2018; Dufour, 2015; White, et. al., 2015).

Cognitive Coaching Model

In addition to the instructional coaching model and active ingredients within the role is also *cognitive coaching*. Like instructional coaching, this model is also teacher-centered which focuses on the professional growth to enhance teacher pedagogy (Costa & Garmston, 2002). This approach includes elements of cognitive communication and listening discussion techniques that take place between a coach and teacher. This coaching approach requires an essential reflective process between the coach and teacher where they engage in conversation that entail a deeper cognitive ability such as true beliefs, viewed perspectives, and thoughts (Dewy, 1984; Garmston, Linder, & Whitiker, 1993; Howard, 2003). Combined with the perspectives of Piaget's (1934) cognitive learning, the humanistic theory of Maslow's (1943) self-fulfillment and change through personal growth, and Rogers' (1959) self-worth and identity into what is known as a cognitive coaching approach (Costa and Garmston, 2002). The coaching model has research supporting some positive benefits to teacher pedagogy through cognitive engagement and learning outcomes (Alicea, 2014; Gonzalez Del Castillo, 2015). These characteristics are vital to the role of thinking with others within a cognitive context. This approach to coaching is one

aspect of coaching that I had been professionally trained in and was active in the work that I did with educators which supported the overall need to be included in my S-STEP story.

Literacy Coaching Model

Another important coaching approach is that of *literacy coaching*. Including the literacy coaching model was relevant to my study as it was focused on, reflected in, examined, explored, and reported on literacy itself with English language arts classrooms. “Literacy coaching seeks to support reading instruction by offering regular, reliable, and appropriate professional development to instructors” (Mraz, Salas, Mercado, Dikolata, 2016). This approach to coaching hones in on literacy-based practices only and is mostly delivered and implemented as a pullout support program in schools (Abrego, et. al., 2012; Frye, 2015; Vogt & Shearer, 2010). As in other coaching approaches, literacy coaches and teachers engage in co-planning, co-teaching, and an array of lesson planning that focuses only on literacy skills such as fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary that transfers to students’ improved reading achievement (Abrego, et. al., 2012; Frye, 2015; Vogt & Shearer, 2010). There is limited research on the improvements of student learning based on literacy coaching itself, however, literacy coaching has been a successful schoolwide pullout program that supports the growing and successful role of literacy coaching in support of diverse populations in education (Abrego, et. al., 2012; Neuman & Cunningham, 2009). When teachers have access to a literacy coach, not only does their classroom instruction have the opportunity to enhance through required observations, but also their own growing knowledge base of literacy practices (Abrego, et. al., 2012; McIntyre, Hulan, Layne, 2011). Exploring how instructional coaches who focused on literacy practices encouraged me to continue the support that I provided teachers withing a literacy perspective.

Current Coaching Model within My Context

Student-Centered Coaching (SCC) is the most recent theoretical coaching model that supports instruction and the overall implementation of instructional coaches in elementary classrooms (Sweeny & Harris, 2016). This student-centered coaching model was developed for instructional coaches by instructional coaches themselves, yet structured to focus on data gathered from students. Sweeney and Harris' (2016) approach to coaching is framed in supporting classroom teachers through the lens of improving and enhancing student learning through assessment data. Unlike other traditional forms of teacher-centered coaching models, this approach to coaching focuses on student learning as measured by proficiency levels on formative and summative assessments within the data selected by the classroom teacher rather than explicitly improving and focusing on increasing and/or enhancing teacher pedagogy. Like other coaching models, this approach however does require the coach and teacher to co-plan and co-teach through coaching cycles, but also must be developed and created collaboratively through conversations driven by current student reading assessments (Sweeney & Harris, 2016). Within this approach, focusing on student data impedes the pathway to enhancing and structuring conversations and collaboration around enhancing teacher pedagogy. This approach served as a new way of thinking for me, a new way of learning, and a new way of coaching. I could not attend to my beliefs about using multicultural literature through culturally responsive pedagogy when coaching within this approach and the opportunity for coaching through this lens and coaching approaches seemed limited; at least at the beginning notion of learning about it through a two-day professional development provided by the school district.

This approach to coaching has the potential to enhance instructional practices of elementary educators through different coaching moves enacted on by both teacher and coach

while engaging in coaching moves the more I dug deeper in learning about its implementation (Sweeney & Harris, 2016). The coaching moves encompass coaching strategies that are geared with more emphasis and focus on students rather than teachers; an approach that was new to me and that I continued to pray about the more I engaged in learning more about it. There are five different coaching moves that could be worked in and out of, meshed together, and woven through between coaches and teachers. These coaching moves were relevant to the relationships between coaches and teacher as it provided collaboration, conversations, and interactions all of which I was initially dedicated to and excited about.

The five student-centered coaching moves that Sweeny and Harris (2016) identifies in this approach to coaching include:

- 1.) *Notice and Naming*: During the lesson, the teacher and coach focus on how the children are demonstrating their understanding in relation to the learning targets determined by the academic content standards that are in place within the school. As the coach and teacher work with children, they record student evidence (doing, saying) that they will use in their future planning conversations. Notice and naming provided a space for teachers and I to have conversations around content standards that were deemed essential by the district. Within this coaching move, I felt content in my role because I was able to be in classrooms learning side-by-side with teachers and their children.
- 2.) *Thinking Aloud*: The teacher and coach share their thinking throughout the lesson. By being metacognitive in this way, they are able to name successes and work through challenges in real time. Yet another conversational approach for myself and teachers in real moment of teaching in the classroom. I found that this avenue of coaching opened up opportunities to think and go beyond the provided lesson and generate new conversations

to thereafter engage in with teachers; this is where I initially found and was hopeful in sharing culturally responsive practices through multicultural literature as I sensed a slight glimmer of possibility.

3.) *Teaching in Tandem*: The teacher and coach work together to co-deliver the lesson.

The lesson is co-planned to ensure the roles are clear, that the learning targets are defined, and that they both understand how the lesson is crafted. Co-teaching was something that I felt strongly about when supporting teachers as they had so much to offer me about learning new and interesting ways of instructional practices. When we were co-teaching a lesson I did not feel the pressure to be an 'expert' as most often coaches are perceived as. Teaching in tandem was an area where I could find avenues into sharing multicultural education, granted the lesson objective was based on an English language arts literacy standard, but did not offer the possibility for me within the time provided.

4.) *You Pick Four*: The teacher identifies four children that the coach pays special attention to in order to collect valuable student evidence. The coach keeps the learning targets in mind while collecting student evidence. The evidence is then used for planning. Within the school year, teachers and I had not yet experienced this coaching move, but it was a move that I was interested in learning more about how it looked in the classroom.

5.) *Micro Modeling*: A portion of the lesson is modeled by the coach. The teacher and coach base their decision about what is modeled on the needs that have been identified by the teacher. This was the coaching move that took most precedence within my collaboration with teachers. This was a move that was more familiar than any other. As a coach, modeling lessons in the classroom was an assurance that most felt comfortable

with. To be honest, as a new approach within my career, this is where I felt most confident. This coaching move was also one that I could share culturally responsive practices through because I was in control of the delivery of the lesson based on a teacher-centered approach. As one could imagine, this is where I thought I would thrive the most because it was familiar. It was familiar because it allowed opportunity- granted the teacher felt comfortable enough and have the desire to assess children in an English language arts literacy standard in order for a coaching cycle to begin.

While keeping these coaching moves at the forefront of the collaborative work between a teacher and coach, a coaching cycle begins to form. The coaching cycle includes the following steps: (1) The teacher and coach set standards that are based on goals that the teacher sets out for their students; (2) the teacher and coach develop learning targets based on the goals identifying what the students need to know and be able to do; (3) pre-assessing the students to gain a proficiency level based on a chosen assessment (formative or summative); (4-5) teacher and coach co-plan and co-teach based on strategies the teachers requests through based on the five coaching moves; (6) teacher post-assesses students based on the learning targets to determine proficiency and/or next steps in the cycle (Sweeney & Harris, 2016). All of the work focused around SCC encompasses CORE Practices such as utilizing coaching cycles, set standards based on goals, unpacking the goals into learning targets, co-planning with student evidence, co-teaching using effective instructional practices, measuring specific kinds of learning outcomes, and partnering with school leaders (Sweeney & Harris, 2016). These elements within the coaching model were privy to its process and the ways educators engaged in them together. The more I engaged in cycles with new teachers, the more I became comfortable in attempting even

though it was a new approach to coaching that I struggled to learn at the beginning of its required implementation.

Studies within this coaching model originated from a study of eighty-seven instructional coaches whom worked with teachers through student-centered coaching cycles. Results included an average of 68% growth in student proficiency as measured by a determined student success criterion that focused on academic standards; which was also aligned with the work of Hattie (2009) based on student achievement (Sweeney, 2018). Elements to student success within the focus on academic standards does matter in a sense because teachers are expected to teach the standards provided as most beneficial to their students' learning. This was a new coaching approach that focused on assessment data rather than what classroom observations were witnessed and guiding instruction. Initially, as mentioned earlier, this was an approach that I did not initially see culturally responsive pedagogy through multicultural avenues fitting in and I felt nervous and anxious because of my commitment to that work. Data and assessment driven coaching did not leave much room for culturally responsive pedagogy such as question and inquiry, welcoming and viewing perspectives, getting to know your students, guiding connections, teaching through visuals, and building meaningful relationships, just to name a few. As a culturally responsive educator, these aspects of teaching were prevalent and essential to me and the implementation of others in all walks of education. The research within Sweeney's (2018) study indicated an increase in teacher pedagogy through assessment measures, differentiation instruction, and focused lessons. As a teacher, prior to my coaching career, I had always strived for all students to succeed, but I also wanted them to become thinkers that went beyond the standards and I wondered how a student-centered approach to coaching might be detrimental to learning.

In theory, 60 percent of an instructional coaches' day should be focused around Student-Centered Coaching as part of the new district wide initiative and district implementation (Sweeny & Harris, 2016). In effort to support my growing knowledge of SCC, professional development was provided through a two-day training in the fall of 2019 to gain knowledge in order to support the implementation with teachers and their students. As a coach who was new to this student-centered coaching model, I questioned how I could strive to weave in and add familiarity into each coaching cycle in a culturally responsive way for diverse populations who need culturally responsive instruction; it took creativity, courage, and bravery to do so.

Coaching for Diverse Learners

“Culturally proficient coaching meditates thinking toward values, beliefs, and behaviors that enable effective cross-cultural interactions” (Lindsey et al., 2007, p. vii).

Coaching for diverse learners provided in section served as a road map as to the capacity in which the current research of instructional coaching through the use of multicultural literature through culturally responsive pedagogical practices. As Lindsey, et. al. (2007) exposes in the beginning quote of this section, the lack of contemporary research advocating multicultural literature for instructional coaching practices in utilizing and seeking culturally responsive practices within diverse communities is vital when thinking about cultural interactions between educators. The cross-cultural interactions between coaches and teachers provides opportunities for thinking together, sharing beliefs, and enacting behaviors within educational spaces. Within the past ten years, strides have been made in the support of instructional coaches to incorporate different aspects of multicultural literature and culturally responsive pedagogy (Abrego, et. al., 2012; Frye, 2015; Gorham, 2013; Kretlow & Bartholomew, 2010; Rodriguez, et. al., 2014; West, 2012). The instruction, awareness, and inclusion of multiple behaviors, beliefs, and values are

vital to the educational field today due to our rising diversity of children (Lindsey, et. al., 2007) and how instructional coaches support for the growing diversity through literacy instruction was rooted in this S-STEP. When teachers and instructional coaches work collaboratively through cross-cultural interactions for the inclusion of diverse populations, children's academic success combined with improved literacy instruction prevails (Abrego, et. al., 2012; West, 2012). Thus, this embodied a tension that validated the living contradiction I was faced with as an instructional coach who strived to include culturally responsive practices through multicultural literature experiences into my support for teachers and children, but not always having adequate and ample effective opportunities to do so.

Instructional coaches have helped educators in instructing the needs of diverse learners through supportive strategies and best practices which was an area of passion for me (Mraz, et. al., 2016). Instructional coaches could recommend literacy content and practices when working with educators in differ ways (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011; L'Allier, Elish-Piper, Bean, 2010; McIntyre, et. al., 2001; Mraz, et. al., 2016). However, limited research within the realm of instructional coaching for multicultural literatures as an avenue into culturally responsive practices adds tension to the ways in which children connect to their identities through literacy instruction (Van Leent & Exley, 2013). The question remained as to how coaches could further support multicultural literature as a way into culturally responsive practices to connect and further assist educators in allowing English language learners to feel welcome and valued through diverse experiences (Escamilla, 2007). As teachers increasingly face the reality to serve diverse populations it is vital that they have the support that could help prepare all children for 21st century learning. When teachers and instructional coaches work collaboratively, preparation for 21st century diverse learning for all could definitely be the spark that illuminates this very

important work through increased studies within S-STEP scholarship (Ford, Stuart, Vakil, 2014). This was my professional goal that I strived to research and learn from each and every day within my educational career.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

My recent interest in adding culturally responsive practices to my instructional coaching work originated with the inspirational teaching experiences at the university level while teaching a course in *Children's Literature* as well as engaging in a *Children's Literature* internship at a local university. In addition, my deep interest and passion for including cultural learning and diverse experiences in the lives of adults has grown by being an instructional coach that supports both adults who then educate children. As an experienced teacher, prior to the last five years of elementary instructional coaching experience, I had always attempted to build and cultivate a culturally responsive learning community for children by including and building in opportunities around their learning, learning more about who they are and come from, build relationships, build an understanding of those around them, just to name a few. As I became an instructional coach, I greatly missed sharing those experiences with children and had a craving for those opportunities again. In hopes of keeping this passion alive within me, I strived for coaching through a culturally responsive pedagogical lens coupled with multicultural literature for others to visibly witness the importance for diverse cultural connectedness and cultural learning in elementary classrooms.

Gonzalez (2017) paints a canvas that culturally responsive pedagogy foresees by stating:

Culturally responsive teaching is not about eating tacos once a year to celebrate *Cinco de Mayo*. It is everyday practices that embrace the cultures of all students

no matter where they come from, what language they speak, or what color their skin may be.

The everyday practices that Gonzalez (2017) speaks of was the ultimate purpose behind this S-STEP in exploring my own practices as to how my role shares and encourages the use of multicultural literature which could be an avenue into embracing culture and language to fully support students' learning through culturally responsive instruction. Gay (2000) emphasizes an importance to culturally responsive instruction, yet not fully including within a literacy realm, but stating that this approach

is grounded in some beliefs that are fundamentally different from most of those that govern how educational programs and practices historically have been designed for underachieving students of color. It is an equal educational opportunity initiative that accepts differences among ethnic groups, individuals, and cultures as normative to the human condition and valuable to societal and personal development (p. 50).

Within this realm that Gay (200) speaks of, instructional coaches could certainly aid in assisting teachers in enhancing their culturally responsive teaching practices which could ensure and support an environment that is active and exploratory in bringing and cultivating children's own languages, literacies and authentic cultural interactions (Abrego, et. al., 2012; Gay, 2010; 2013; Leland, Harste, Huber, 2005). *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018) was one way through multicultural literature that I thrived in my instructional coaching role to ensure that these cultural interactions with teachers and their students were present, active, and innovating.

The equal educational opportunities Gay (2000; 2013) references ensures that teachers are making conscious decisions to support the process of learning for how children learn and

acquire knowledge through diverse cultural experiences within their own and others' cultures (Halliday, 1993). With the overwhelming amount of complex learning required of children today, classroom teachers could benefit from an approach to teaching that supports their culturally responsive pedagogy which has the potential to then grow and sustain diverse learning experiences, especially through multicultural literature avenues (Killion, 2017; Gorham, 2013; Slade & Griffith, 2013; Teemant, 2013). Growing and sustaining essential experiences through multicultural literature was my greatest passion for fulfilling a dream of being a successful culturally responsive educator.

Since the turn of the 21st century, classrooms look quite different than before due to the diverse populations that increasingly fill schools that include increased cognitive academic skills, processes, and concepts (Castro, 2010; Howard, 2007; Kramer & Schuhl, 2017; Montgomery, 2001). Van Sluys (2005) deepens our understanding of the growing diversity within schools.

We know that children enter schools with vastly different experiences: some have traveled extensively; some have nontraditional families; some are avid newspaper readers, or soccer players, or dancers, or TV watchers, or cartoonists; some are in between countries and cultures; some are familiar with a wide array of new technologies; some have navigated issues connected with race, class, gender, or social or political concerns; some communicate in languages other than English (Van Sluys, 2005, xiii).

The references that Van Sluys (2005) described is a 21st century representation of the growing diverse populations in classrooms and how culturally responsive practices, inclusive of multicultural literature, could support diverse characteristics for all learners. Educators could support the different characteristics that Van Sluys (2005) speaks of by including students'

backgrounds into their daily academic instruction. How a teacher responds to that type of diversity is central to this S-STEP where I looked deeper into how I was that same contributor and support to diversity instruction (Gay, 2000; Kramer & Schuhl, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1992; 1994; 2006). Culturally relevant teaching and its effective practices involve bridging the home and school environments together while sustaining an empowering community of learners to support academic growth (Beckett, 2011; Howard, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Morrison, Robbins, Rose, 2008; Singh, 2011). An avenue that had always supported my culturally responsive practices to empower diverse cultural learning was through multicultural literature experience's in the classroom.

Educators are one of the most important contributors to overall student development and learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hammond, 2015). Vygotsky (1978) states “learning and development are interrelated from the child’s very first days of life” (p. 84); this ties to the support of classroom instructors that stems from the education that begins at home and transfers to the elementary setting. Moreover, the “teacher must orient his [or her] work not on yesterday’s development in the child but on tomorrow’s” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 211). Further thinking about the education of children, Freire (1993) states, “knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other.” The important elements that Freire (1993) speaks of connects to the experiences and idea of how culturally responsive pedagogy and community could support student learning development as children grow and develop in society. Children require supportive opportunities through instruction that encourages them to gain knowledge to be producers and consumers of their own learning which could be through the support of the work that coaches and teachers engage in together when planning lessons (Gay,

2010). Culturally responsive pedagogies inclusive of literacy instruction could include project-based learning, academic vocabulary, cooperative groups, small group instruction, visuals and graphics, sharing opportunities, multicultural resources, and guest speakers, just to name a few (Freire; 1993; Neito, 2000; 2009; Staehr-Fenner, Synder, & Breiseth, 2017; Vygotsky, 1978). Culturally responsive pedagogy enables teachers to include fundamental elements that support learning such as pronouncing students' names correctly, asking about their weekends, caring about their lives, and encouraging storytelling that reflects their home lives through reading, writing, and speaking (Straehr-Fenner, et. al., 2017; Rice, 2014). The work between an instructional coach and teacher could stem from these elements of culturally responsive practices and even more so those that are supporting students and communities in understanding issues especially when thinking about using multicultural literature to support those practices.

Gay (2000) stressed that educators must commit to taking a critical leap of courage to hone into each student's intellectual, social, cultural, linguistic, class, and physical backgrounds in order to address their various educational, emotional and social needs. Culturally responsive spaces allow children to understand the significance for their identities and positions in an increasingly diverse world (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2000; McCarty & Lee, 2014). In elementary classrooms throughout the United States of America, teachers, children, and staff witness the many linguistic, cultural, social, political, gender and other diversities that have become commonplace in school communities (King, Artiles, Kozleski, 2009; Hollie, 2017). Culturally responsive pedagogy not only validates, but could potentially enhance student agency and empowerment fostering an environment where children's beliefs, ideas, and backgrounds are acknowledged and used to compose experiences with literature (Delpit, 1995; Freire, 2000; Gay,

2000). This is where I, as an instructional coach, strived to include diverse literacy practices with teachers and to some extent their students every chance I had.

Further, Vaughn, Premo, Sotirovska, and Erickson (2019) defined student agency as a means of all children learning through engaging activities that are meaningful, relevant and encouraged within classrooms; These activities are dependent on teachers implementing them as well as instructional coaches enacting on professional practices and professional learning experiences. When children's backgrounds and beliefs are acknowledged, through the use of literature, and embedded into the areas of curriculum, such as math, science, social studies, and other subject areas cultural learning could flourish. Currently, it may fall on educators to decide if they will take this critical leap of courage to enact culturally responsive practices into the academic instructional day inclusive of seeking professional learning opportunities with coaches that could assist in this regard (Grant, Sleeter, and Anderson, 1986; Nieto, 2000; Paris & Alim, 2017). Seeking these professional opportunities for myself and for others was something I resorted to my faith to help me work through, understand, ensure next steps, and being successful in doing so.

Supporting Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices

Bigelow (1994) shares the perspective of what culturally relevant practices entails that shapes the diverse learning of children and Ladson-Billings (2009) explains that “culturally relevant teaching is a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents as a measure of knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 20). A diverse foundation that is set on culturally responsive practices stem from current mainstream society and how students share their world they live in with one another (Bennett, Gunn, Gayle-Evans, Barrera, & Leung, 2017; Howard, 2017). Culturally relevant and responsive practices

require educators to hold high expectations and acknowledge school changes for their students to build communities of learning that acknowledge and validate their thinking and learning (Au, 2009; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978). These expectations are essential and important to the current day, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, remote learning environments because children must become active and engaged thinkers while educators strive and take the initiative to validate and acknowledge each child's unique and important voice (Holquist & Porter, 2020).

Culturally relevant practices ensure that educators promote children's individual empowerment, value their own and others' diversities, provide equal access to learning, ensure learning is meaningful, build a positive learning environment, and expand and enhance the learners' experiences, beliefs, knowledge, and skills through social justice, democracy and equality (Banks & Banks, 1992; 2009; 2010; Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Oakes & Lipton, 1999; Shor, 1992). When thinking about how I supported elements like culture, race, ethnicity, and power, I felt excitement for those experiences I had and at the same time anxious for the desires that sometimes did not always arrive (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Culture, race, ethnicity and power could be through conversations, discussions about topics of interest and current events, engaging in project-based learning opportunities that includes differences with families and individuals, and making connections to our identity, all of which could be shared through multicultural literature experiences in the classroom and/or remote setting.

Culturally responsive teaching practices could aid in supporting and sustaining the important racial, ethnic, linguistic and other diverse funds of knowledge within schools that includes bringing in children's backgrounds, cultures, and customs into the learning environment built upon multiple literacy opportunities (Moll, Amanti, Neff, González, 1992; Risko & Walker-

Dalhouse, 2007). All of these elements mentioned about culturally responsive teaching practices could be addressed within a lesson using *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018) in addition to other literature texts in a classroom and/or remote setting.

Additionally, culturally relevant experiences could be through literacy lessons based on students' backgrounds, expectations, reshaping and enhancing the curriculum, promoting literature, engaging students in multiple topics, displaying cultural referents in lessons, invite collaborative work both through whole group and small group instruction (Au, 2009; Bennett, et. al., 2017; Colbert, 2010; Hollie, 2017; Kesler, 2011; Ladson-Billings; 1995). These experiences are based on mainstream society by sharing in power relationships with learning and the world (Freire, 2001). Understanding and bringing learning of the world to students' literacy lives enables educators to not only learn more about who their students are and where they come from, but also how to implement learned information to further guide English language arts literacy instruction (Christenson, 1996-1997, 2000; Meyer, 1996). Using a text in a classroom lesson, such as *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018), could potentially spark literacy instruction to include the important facets of culturally responsive pedagogical practices including those that share in learning more about students' literacy lives and where they come from; literacy experiences that I have a great passion for within my heart and soul.

As culturally responsive classrooms practices are essential to the learning of diverse populations, scholars like Au (2009), Delpit, (1995, 1998), Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings (1994), and Sleeter (2011) provides instructional teaching practices that ensure all students could benefit from when thinking about diversity and equality in the classroom. Setting a solid foundation in culturally responsive practices requires educators to think differently about how students learn and acknowledge differences within literacy lessons taught (Callins, 2004; Chessman & De Pry,

2010; Gay, 2000). “Research has shown that no one teaching strategy will consistently engage all learners [and] the key is helping students relate lesson content to their own backgrounds” (Wlodkowski and Ginsberg, 1995, p. 1). This is where multicultural literature fills my heart and brings hope to my world as an educator. Research on culturally responsive pedagogy and its importance in the curriculum and instruction opened new pathways to professional growth for me (Au, 2011; Finley, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 1992; Muniz, 2019). Diverse classroom instruction is vital to supporting diverse populations and even more so in a remote learning way.

In fact, when it comes to instruction in classrooms, Goodman, Harste, and Short (1996) stated the following.

No published reading materials or programs can teach students to read; these are only tools. In the hands of a master artist, good tools can be used to produce a great work of art. In the hands of an insecure or weak artist, not even superior tools are very helpful. Teachers are like artists as they construct classrooms that are innovative and conducive to learning. Artists bring to their work knowledge or perspective, color, line, form, space, and theme, as well as techniques implemented with a variety of tools. Outstanding teachers bring to reading instructional strong knowledge base of language, learning and teaching, and they know the cultural background and experiential differences of their students (p. vii).

This perspective sheds light on the emphasis of reading materials that educators bring into their classroom instruction to bridge authentic literacy supports to diverse children and their experiences “inside the world of a story” (Goodman, et. al.; Short, Lynch-Brown, Tomlinson, 2013, p. 4). For example, children could experience the life of others and place themselves in the

world of a story when listening to stories provided by their teacher and other staff personal that support learning instruction. For example, texts like *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018) shared in a story about her inside world generating from others related to her; this type of literacy experience could encourage and empower an avenue of literature connected to diverse experiences for educators and their children. This type of literacy experience could construct innovative cultural experiences that solidify and cultivate students' backgrounds, language and learning experiences which I strived to accomplish and initiate any chance that came my way, but it was not always easy to do so due to resistance felt within my role (Goodman, et. al, 1996).

Resistance to Classroom Supports

Understanding the complexity in supporting classroom practices for instructional coaches has stemmed back to how educators resist aspects in their role and/or coupled with allowing assistance from others to increase pedagogy (Knight, 2009). When thinking about resistance to classroom supports, coaches should consider strategies on how to find ways to build multiple capacities to partner with educators. For example, be persistence in your support, determine the necessary steps in working with educators, recognize the supports teachers need, allow opportunities for educators to share their expertise too (Jackson, 2011), just to name a few. Scholars like Knight (2009) and Jackson (2011, 2014, 2017) emphasize the importance of instructional coaches understanding their role in great depth in order to fully support the needs of educators and therefore limiting the resistance to coaching they offer to educators. When resistance arises in educational spaces, it is often due to unforeseen changes in practices which instructional coaches should be mindful of to ensure a partnership that is grounded in trust. Gaining an understanding to resistance is essential for instructional coaches to consider in their

role as, often times, the classroom practices and support that they offer could be welcomed and explored by educators they are supporting and therefore eliminating and/or lessening resistance. Resistance to classroom supports, especially in a culturally responsive pedagogical way through multicultural education, could be explored in ways where coaches and teachers are working alongside each other instead of an instructional coach going into a classroom to fix an issue.

Multicultural Children's Literature and Culturally Responsive Teaching

Multicultural literature has been defined in many different ways within educational scholarship. Scholars have indicated that multicultural literature is a pedagogical term that supports literary works that accepts and recognizes people of color, racial or ethnic minority groups, people with disabilities, gender issues, and/or class (Grant & Sleeter, 1986; Harris, 1992; Kruse, 1992; Norton & Norton, 2003). Multicultural literature texts are those that emphasize the lives of members of diverse groups outside the mainstream United States of America (Short, Day, & Schroeder, 2016; Sims Bishop, 1997). Multicultural literature continues to have a positive and increasingly popular place in classrooms which encapsulates language, beliefs, cultures, and attitudes within growing diverse demographics around the world (Butler, 2020; DeNicolo & Franzquiz, 2006). With increasingly diverse populations present in American classrooms today, using multicultural literature as a vehicle into culturally responsive pedagogy in the English language arts classroom could serve to address the urgency that teachers feel as they witness children's feelings of alienation because of texts, required writing, and other facets of curriculum that marginalize or bracket their students' identities. To further understand the connection that multicultural literature could provide in classrooms. Sung (2009) states

The use of multicultural children's literature in classrooms needs to include a focus on differences as a tool used by readers to understand...a particular cultural group and should be combined with a focus on human connection (p. 12).

When thinking about the essential tools that scholars like Goodman, Watson, Burke (1996) and Sung (2009) speak of supported the vision and importance of multicultural children's literature experiences through culturally responsive practices in educational spaces within my S-STEP dissertation. Through multicultural literature, students could take on identities as cultural beings to support the human connection relevant to their place in the world and understanding the boundaries within when engaging in literature (Sung, 2009; Hadaway & McKenna, 2007; Yokata, 2009). Further, Yokata (2009) states, "Reading about the diversity within the United States and the diversity of the world provides readers with settings and perspectives that allow them to imagine and consider a wider world beyond their own" (p. 66). The 'world beyond their own' notion is where multicultural literature could provide for unique literacy aspects through grand conversations of collaborative learning which could then allow students to connect to and be inclusive of a cultural community world (Peterson & Eeds, 1990). When instruction is focused on multicultural literature as part of students' reading and writing experiences, instruction allows them to make connections to texts that could support, inspire, gain insight, build emotion, and relate to their lives in meaningful ways which cultivates and supports their imagination; teaching beyond the surface level of cultural information (Short, 2009; Sung, 2009; Yokata, 2009). Literacy opportunities for diverse populations through texts could impact children's perspectives of the world and how they choose to respond to the world; this could be influenced by images and words in multicultural literature (Janks, 2000; Rosenblatt, 1978; Short, 2011). Literacy had always been an important value of mine and continued to further grow the

more I was able to engage in and around it as a teacher, instructional coach for other teachers, and as an instructor for future educators in undergraduate teacher education degree programs.

My thinking about multicultural literature had always been influenced by experiences that I came across to support and bridge an awareness of different cultures, ethnicities, and communities, which enabled teachers a pathway to learn about their own cultural awareness as well as other cultures around them and, in return, share it with their students (Islam & Park, 2015; Montero & Robertson, 2006; Vogt & Shearer, 2010). The importance of texts taking up teaching work as a form of agency creates for an environment that is linked with learning to read (Vygotsky, 1978). Fostering intercultural understandings through literature creates worldviews of diverse children and their lives to further strengthen the opportunities for more expansive literacy practices (Dietrich & Ralph, 1995; Livingston & Birrell, 1993; Milner, 2011; Short, 2011). Short (2011) expresses that “Recogniz[ing] the cultures that influence their thinking [so that] they become more aware of how and why culture is important” (p. 130) is the process of creating a rich literacy environment (Souto-Manning, 2009). Rich literacy environments and experiences with literacy were an element of my professional career that I greatly sought out and foraged on.

Multicultural literature within a culturally responsive classroom could assist and empower the connection of children’s lives in and within different social world issues which could then impact their thinking about the growing diversities around them as well as seeing themselves in the literature they engage in (Au, 2009; Butler, 2020; DeNicolo & Franquiz; 2006; Goodman, et. al., 1996; Harste & Manning, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2004). When students engage in personal connections to multicultural literature they build personal expertise and self-reflective circumstances that directly include reading experiences that could be shared with

others and use strategies that enable learning (Au, 2009, 2011; Goodman, et. al., 1996). Literacy, as Miller (2009) states, “changes your life. Reading unlocks worlds unknown [while] taking travelers around the world and through time” (p.18). Multicultural literature has greatly changed my life which I am further grateful for each opportunity to do so when provided with an opportunity with educators and their students. Meaningful connections as transactions within cultural literature infused through culturally responsive practices could support diverse learning experiences on cultures, customs, traditions, perspectives, issues and beliefs (Martens, Martens, Doyle, Loomis, Fuhram, Furnari, Soper, Stout, 2015).

Comparatively, Bishop (1990) references experiences through different lenses when engaging in literature. First, as mirrors that allow children to see themselves in words and images that literature provides. Second, as windows allowing children to see, hear, and witness views of the world around them. Alma, in *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018) tells, “The world is so big! I want to go see it, Daddy” (p.11). This reflects how literature can bring the world and what it has to offer to children. Last, as sliding glass doors which allows children to walk through in imagination to a new or familiar world to gain a greater understanding. These important literacy elements that Bishop (1990) speaks of allows children the opportunities and avenues to connect with literature in ways that support their backgrounds and learn of others’ backgrounds around them all of which could be reflected through culturally responsive instruction (Butler, 2020; Harste, 2003; Howard, 2017; Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2014). Multicultural literature could be the avenue that supports and connects culturally responsive practices with diverse ways of teaching, it just takes a mindset shift for any educator not only interested in the implementation, but acknowledging its benefits for supporting 21st century diverse thinking and learning.

Conclusion

Within this dissertation research, I intended to take a reflective look into my own instructional coaching practices for improving literacy experiences through culturally responsive practices. Although the current literature does not support my experiences in the field, further study is necessary to align the literature with the reality of the modern, culturally diverse populations that are found in our current elementary classrooms. The S-STEP exploration is vital in understanding more about its place in the literature within the educational field and the improvement of my own pedagogical practices through the enactment of a lived contradiction.

Research in these areas could provide educators insight into developing strategies for literacy curricula, incorporating social justice, multicultural lessons, deepen an understanding and implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy, as well as ensure a diverse learning environment when and if they have the desire to seek the support from instructional coaches (Hackman, 2005). As Joyce and Showers (1980) introduced their work on coaching many years ago, and since the turn of the century, instructional coaches today have the potential to include and/or support multicultural literature through culturally responsive practices ensuring diverse instruction for children (Howard, 2017; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Reutebuch, 2012). In attempts for myself as an instructional coach to support teachers, I must see myself as a learner and also see the teacher as a learner.

Additionally, further thinking about the literature, Howard (2003) states, “culturally responsive pedagogy recognizes the explicit connection between culture and learning” resonated with the overall intent and significance that this study focused on as a means of bridging and understanding my own professional connection and practices of culture, learning, and instructional coaching in elementary English language arts classrooms (p. 18). Working in

isolation is no longer an option in classrooms today and when instructional coaches work closely with teachers and even with other instructional coaches, student learning and enhanced teacher pedagogy is bound to happen (Sweeny & Harris, 2016). Educators are at the center of 21st century transformational change when it comes to providing and implementing diverse learning opportunities in their classrooms, especially now during a global pandemic (Aguilar, 2013, Howard, 2017; Sweeney & Harris, 2016). When educators consistently include multicultural literature that could be infused and enhanced through culturally responsive pedagogy, academic success and social equality are more likely to co-occur (Gay, 2013; Grant, et. al., 1986; Nieto; 2000). As Jackson (2014) states, “if there are teachers on your campus, then you have a need for instructional coaching and you have an opportunity to improve teaching” (p. 3); this vision made my professional voyage in coaching hopeful and with so much pride I was able to investigate that in greater depth and therefore resulting in sharing my instructional coaching story.

A comprehensive explanation of this study’s methodology follows in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3

Methodology

“Qualitative methods are most useful and powerful when they are used to discover how the respondent sees the world” (McCracken, 1988, p. 21).

This study drew upon a critical autoethnographic qualitative S-STEP methodology (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998) drawing from autobiographical elements of myself as an elementary pre-kindergarten through sixth grade instructional coach in one public elementary school district in the Southwestern United States of America. S-STEP methodology provided a frame for this research as I, wholeheartedly, believed that when teachers have someone there to not only support them, but also to support their own pedagogy, great things could happen; this process began with myself understanding my own practices and having the desire, dedication, and commitment to improving upon them. Culturally responsive pedagogy combined with the support of coaches could ensure a bridge that supports the diversity in classrooms that is vital today and by initiating S-STEP on my own practices and documenting my knowledge of how I supported teachers was at the heart of this dissertation study. As McCracken (1998) argues qualitative methods enable researchers to make powerful discoveries that allow the responder to see the world mirrored the overall purpose of this dissertation study where I was able to engage in deep reflective inquiry of my professional practices as an instructional coach to fulfill culturally responsive pedagogical avenues through multicultural education in elementary spaces. The following sections within this chapter assisted in mapping out my research study: research design, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, trustworthiness and conclusion.

Qualitative Research Design

A qualitative research design was most sufficient in my study due to my extensive instructional practices, experiences, and professional engagements as an instructional coach (LaBoskey, 2004). Merriam (1998) states “qualitative research is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that helps us understand and explain the meaning of a social phenomenon which has little disruption of the natural setting as possible” (p. 5). In addition, Merriam (2009) outlines five basic key characteristics of qualitative studies that I drew upon within my study: “1) participant’s perspective; 2) the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis; 3) involves fieldwork; 4) primarily employs an inductive research strategy; and finally; 5) richly descriptive” (p. 6-7). These particular characteristics contributed to the processes of this research study because they allowed me to be able to understand myself as a participant in greater depth while engaging in field work data which derived from my own personal and professional perspective as an insider-researcher (emic perspective, Merriam, 2009).

A qualitative research study allowed me to compose a rich descriptive analysis of my lived instructional coaching practices for culturally responsive pedagogical experiences through multicultural literature in elementary classrooms. Additionally, a qualitative self-study approach enabled me to seek, understand, learn, and improve upon my daily duties as an instructional coach which encompassed the work that I did at the classroom level, team level, and whole group staff level at my school (including educational assistants, counselors, librarians, and other school personnel). Constantly revisiting the work I engaged in allowed for reflective decisions about my work which then afforded me the direction to which my practices steered my future work with educators. Such practices included interacting and collaborating with teachers,

providing professional development opportunities, and supporting curriculum and school/district essential standards derived from the Common Core State Standards. My personal experiences inclusive of working collaboratively with others, conversations about children and lessons, unit planning and assessments, coaching and modeling lessons, and providing professional learning opportunities contributed to my decision to conduct a qualitative research design study.

The intent for a qualitative research design was to provide a compelling contribution to the instructional coaching field, enhance and improve my practices, expose educators to additional literature on S-STEP methodology, and uncover how I offered and supported the use of multicultural literature as a vehicle into culturally responsive pedagogy in elementary spaces which could be a vital aspect to include in today's diverse classrooms.

These research questions reflected the purpose of this study and served as a guide within the following research design approaches of S-STEP, autoethnography, and autobiography discussed in this section.

- 1.) What tensions do I experience as a living contradiction in the work as an instructional coach for elementary teachers of diverse learners who need culturally responsive literacy instruction?
- 2.) How do my personal understandings of these tensions honor my commitment to enlarging teachers' culturally responsive pedagogical practices through the use of multicultural children's literature in their classrooms?

How I Came to S-STEP Methodology

S-STEP as a researcher within the context of this study molded, shaped, and arrived from moments in my dissertation journey that led me down a path both long ago and especially more recently. Many years ago, I recall expressing my passion for memoirs with a friend -indicating

that one of my life goals was to read twenty-five memoirs and then someday write my own. Ironically, and possibly by destiny itself, I realized that the current shift from two previous studies in my dissertation work would be a newly paved pathway to finally working toward that life goal of writing my own story within my professional career as an instructional coach. Over the last few years, I had read and shared an array of memoirs, autobiographies, and biographies from both children and adult texts that I had always been drawn towards to share with others; *Brown Girl Dreaming* (Woodson, 2014), *El Deafo* (Bell, 2014), *I am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban* (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013), *The Boy on the Wooden Box* (Leyson, 2013), *Eat, Pray, Love* (Gilbert, 2007), just to name a few. Reading about someone else's story reminded me of real life and others' life experiences. This aspect of literature draws me in as I picture myself in their shoes to learn more about different realities, moments in people's lives, cultures, identities, languages, and human interactions.

Previous Challenges Contributing to an S-STEP Approach

The challenges that I faced within my previous dissertation research studies was the potential thought of including participants in my study as well as a study investigating a scripted curriculum. With the instructional coaching role being unpredictable and uncertain from school year to school year, including participants was always a great fear of mine as there was a possibility of not being rehired, the possibility of not staying at the same school, or even the possibility of having to coach at multiple school sites. Including participants in a study was something I prayed about and in some capacity was excited about because I would provide me an opportunity to collaborate with others on their thinking of culturally responsive practices, but my confidence in doing so was always troubling and worrisome. Additionally, another possibility of my research journey was possibly investigating a well-known scripted elementary curriculum.

The challenges that it also brought as uncertainty with including participants perspectives and the potential of changing programs. I did not feel a passion or desire within my heart to dive into a study of the content itself and the notion of including participants yet again. These challenges may have been due to this personal goal and dream of someday writing my own story which had been lingering in the background all along.

The shift that I speak of refers to my current dissertation study that I began in the late fall of 2019 when I decided to transition my dissertation proposal to S-STEP research based on shifting coaching models and the uncertainty of the coaching position as well as including participants in a study; things in my work that changed every school year. Shifting my dissertation work to S-STEP methodology, where I could fully focus on my own experiences, practices, and professional improvements, rapidly became a rich storytelling learning opportunity that arrived after thoughtful and genuine conversations with my dissertation chairs. I immediately felt comfortable in moving forward with S-STEP and through many tears, I felt and found relief as this was a new direction and idea to enhance and further my professional growth. Day after day, my passion for S-STEP research increasingly filled my heart, became content in my mind, gave life to my soul, and a new hope to my dissertation journey; all of which were rooted in conversations with others and the extensive research I engaged in.

The pivotal moments in coming to S-STEP research, yet not a new discovery, but a refreshed and revisited experience from past research courses, did S-STEP awaken within me and become a realization of where I needed to be in my journey; a dream of writing my own story that I had imagined and yearned for years ago. As the idea and new coming of S-STEP emerged and progressively became clearer the more that I researched, learned and had a desire for S-STEP research especially through meaningful and genuine conversations with my

dissertation chairs. The conversations between them and I had focused around this work encouraged me, inspired me, empowered me, and brought an internal excitement, eagerness, and purpose to *my story* that I wanted to tell. It was through our conversations that always left me feeling blessed, heard, and full of hope that this type of research study was a possibility.

Self-Study Research

As briefly mentioned in chapter 1, this study was situated in *Self Study of Teacher Education Practices* (S-STEP) methodology that encompassed qualitative strategies including my own professional practices within the instructional coaching field at the elementary level (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998; 2009; LaBoskey, 2004; Tidwell, et. al., 2009). S-STEP is a genre that encompasses the educational research community which is inclusive of improving and investigating the relationship between teaching and learning (LaBoskey, 2004). S-STEP enabled me to investigate my own improvements of my own knowledge of practices and how those improvements enhanced and impacted my pedagogy (LaBoskey, 2004). S-STEP required me to look into my own actions, ideas, experiences, and practices to improve my pedagogy (Emerson, et. al., 1995). Within this study, adding moments of new learning, epiphanies, things that immediately came to mind, and observations all served as reflective elements that guided my professional work as an elementary instructional coach moving forward.

LaBoskey (2004) researched educators within their own practices and argued that S-STEP research is a systematic approach to various activities that must be enhanced and strengthened through this type of scholarship that has been development in nature and expanding within its place in the field (Lassonde, Galman, & Kosnick, 2009). This increasingly focused S-STEP methodology has broadened and guided systematic studies within the S-STEP community literature in attempts to understand multiple outcomes of educators' professional practices

(Lassonde, et. al., 2009). S-STEP allowed for myself to be both the researcher and the major focus of this study focusing in on my own professional instructional practices as well as zooming in on being completely attentive to the strategies embedded within this process (Hamilton, 2008).

Early S-STEP Practices

S-STEP originated and has evolved since the early 1990s as educators turned to acknowledging greater emphasis on their learning that derived from studying and reflecting upon their professional practices (Dewey, 1933; Hamilton, 1998; LaBoskey, 2004; 2009; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 1998). Educators explore, attend to, make changes and react to their practices to put next steps into practice as part of a reflective professional growth (Schön, 1983). Prior to the 1990s, teacher educators who began to develop the methodology did not feel that traditional methods stretched their thinking, learning and teaching. One concern was how researchers often left out critical details of the context. Another was that the self was not considered reliable as a reporter—instead someone else had to study you. A third was that teacher educators often developed and embodied, nonconscious ways of knowing about their practice that never made it into other forms of research because other methodologies did not build in time for reflection and action. Thus, when teacher educators left teacher education, all of the knowledge and wisdom gained through years of experience walked right out the door with them. This uncovered a tension in the work of educators who do not have adequate, ample time, or opportunities for reflection in their practices within a contract day.

Instead, educators felt as if teaching practices emerged from researchers and theorists in itself placing a barrier between teaching and learning through reflection. In fact, it was not until later in the 1980s and early 1990s when educators began to think about and look into their instructional practices in a more reflective and exploratory way (Dewey, 1933; Marzano & Sims,

2013; Osterman, 1990). Self-reflection has had a great influence in how S-STEP evolved and how it was used within an educational setting (Samaras & Freese, 2009). Working to become reflective practitioners and thinkers is a process that is constant which enables educators to problematize about their practices and learn more about who they are as educators and thinkers. Thinking and deeply reflecting about practices enables educators to delve into the everyday experiences that impacts teacher pedagogy; constantly collecting information both mentally and recording observations about practices proved useful (Dewey, 1933; LaBoskey, 2004). While the process of reflection could be exhilarating, it could also be exhausting for educators due to the extensive number of other responsibilities within a teaching day.

S-STEP for Researchers

S-STEP as a methodology provides a space for researchers to be present at all times in their professional process and also speak of their passion and be their own critic of their instructional practices (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2000; Samaras & Freese, 2009). Using this type of methodology could be certain that the experiences known to the researcher themselves provides for a study that is engrained and entrusted within researchers own ideas, perspectives, and practices (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2000). Writing weekly reflections, jotting down comments, hunches, wondering, questions, and/or observations all served as ways in which I was able to reflect upon my beliefs and practices. The reflection process allowed me to focus in on and gain a better understanding of needed improvements and new learning of self. Being constantly aware of shifts in my practice ensured for an approach that explored my own practices and what I understood about how I practiced (Berry & Crow, 2009). Being a researcher in the field of teacher education encouraged my work in how multiple frameworks could support my story.

Bridging S-STEP with Instructional Coaching, Multicultural Literature, and Culturally Responsive Practices

An S-STEP framework is limited and currently absent in the field when it comes to bridging the instructional coaching role for culturally responsive pedagogy and multicultural literature (Hollie, 2017; West, 2012). Instructional coaches have the potential to improve literacy instructional processes for culturally diverse populations through the work that they do with teachers and a need for further research is at the forefront of classroom instruction today. Instructional strategies govern how the support of coaches could contribute to teachers' overall enhanced instructional practices (West, 2012). As an instructional coach themselves shared:

Teachers need to be able to see the needs of the ELL [English language learner] student and recognize their own need for support in order to show any interest in a coaching partnership. It is the responsibility of the coach to assist in that recognition through providing information about the student and posing questions that help the teacher recognize the student's needs as well as their own need for support in language acquisition strategies (p. 36).

Under this logic, instructional coaches could aid in the support of not only English language learners, but all learners and therefore creating an environment that is supportive of diverse language and literacy through culturally responsive pedagogical practices (Martin & Spencer, 2020; Reutebuch, 2012; Rodriguez, et. al., 2014). As my first year of teaching included teaching English language learners in all content areas, I could have greatly benefitted from the support of an instructional coach during this time. In other words, instructional coaching practices that merely promote narrow views of literacy will not do, so creating a supportive environment that includes language and literacy opportunities seems necessary. One cannot use strategies for

promoting narrow views of literacy while hoping teachers and students adopt expansive lenses for broader literacy activities.

Howard (2007) states “as diversity grows, so must we” (p. 1). This is an important correlation as to the importance of connecting instructional coaching for multicultural literature through culturally responsive pedagogy in efforts of enhancing the learning of diverse learning populations and increased teacher pedagogy because the close support of coaches and their work with teaches in all aspects of education (Howard, 2003). Even more so, when teachers reflect on their practices to improve their professional growth, diverse learning opportunities flourish. The importance of instructional coaches’ supports and their own growing knowledge of culturally responsive pedagogical practices within the English language arts classrooms is at its all-time high due to increasing diverse populations; this is where culturally responsive pedagogy through multicultural literature coupled with self-study and reflection in teachers’ educational practices is of utmost importance.

Autoethnography

S-STEP is referred to as a methodology rather than a method or strategy because it could accommodate a host of methods and strategies—so long as these permit the study of one’s own practice in a systematic way that leads to personal enlightenment and insights that are trustworthy for other teacher educators. One approach supported by S-STEP is autoethnography. While combining ethnography and autoethnography this study allowed me to become a participant to examine myself as an instructional coach (Tilley-Lubbs, 2016). Taking an autoethnographic approach to focusing on self is a method that allows researchers to reconsider how they think, how they do research, and maintain relationships with those involved and how they live (Boylorn & Orbe, 2014). Even so, I expected that the self-focus would be informed by

the reading I was doing and how the content learned would not only drive future work, but present changes within instructional practices enacted on daily.

Origin of Autoethnography

Autoethnography originated in the 1970s when researchers developed an approach to linking ideas, concepts, and theories together that illustrated power and oppression aimed towards social change (LaBoskey, 2009; Lapan, Wuartaroli, & Reimer, 2012). This approach requires an insider view through reflective writing that shows deep understanding of different and multiple structures (Lapan, et. al., 2012). Placing myself into the social context within this study, autoethnography held the greatest approach to examine and improve my professional practices in my role by focusing in on multicultural literature as an element of culturally responsive pedagogy in greater capacity (Boylorn & Orbe, 2014). Autoethnography is appropriate because this approach allowed me to investigate my work, interrogate my thinking, uncover improvements, position myself into the community of learners I associated with, and immediately being able to act on my practices as an instructional coach.

Autoethnography for Researchers

Sparks (2000) expresses that autoethnographies are personalized accounts of a researcher, in so it depended on me as the researcher to provide an understanding of myself. This form of autoethnography allowed me the opportunity to examine and explore myself and forced the opportunities to shape into my understanding of educational contexts (Boylorn & Orbe, 2014). Further, autoethnographic research allowed me to reveal myself in multiple ways that included emotional, spiritual, and personal attributes. These attributes allowed me to draw on my own experiences that served as an understanding within the field and/or the context as well as an increased understanding of myself as a member of that community (Boylorn & Orbe, 2014).

These attributes of autoethnographic design embodied the way in which I engaged with the collected data by documenting immediate emotions, jotting down personal thoughts within my calendar and weekly reflections; these elements were analyzed to ensure findings that allowed myself to reveal an array of elements and that provided evidence into the educational field. This type of research methodology calls for thinking deeply about myself and allowing those experiences to shape identity, positionality, and professional improvements (Boylorn & Orbe, 2014). Autoethnographic research design allowed for my personal experiences, beliefs, practices and experiences to understand myself in a social group while stretching me and engaging in deep self-reflection practices (Dewey, 1933; 1984). We do not learn from experiences themselves; we learn from reflecting on those experiences (Dewey, 1933) and by doing so, this improves our learning in a more metacognitive way where we are thinking deeply about our own thinking. In this same realm of reflection, I was able to think about the work that I did, learn through it and ultimately learn from it ensuring the building of meaning within experiences relevant to my practices (Halliday, 1993; Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999).

With the rise of autoethnographic identity in scholarship, Heider (1975) described this type of methodology as a cultural member's perspectives in providing personal investments, practices, perspectives, and experiences. Denzin (1997) explains how autoethnographic research is the "turning of the E [ethnography] gaze inward on the "self" (auto) and outward gaze of E [ethnography] looking at a larger content within self" (p. 227). Choosing to do this type of approach provided me the opportunity to arrive at my own realizations, needed changes, and shifts within my own reality and the professional practices endured within a culturally responsive pedagogical lens; at the same time enhancing my expertise in the field. These opportunities arrived in my work by sharing with others what I had noticed in my work, what I improved upon,

added or changed within my practices as well as applying those observations to my work immediately. Elements of the autoethnographic approach are what Ellis (2009) defines as “flexible, reflexive, and reflective of life as lived” (p. 16). An autoethnographic approach offered the potential to expand scholarship about human experiences and lived opportunities (Ellis, 2004; 2009). This approach honed in on and allowed me to be able to share those unique and owned experiences and being a reflective researcher while doing so.

Taking a qualitative S-STEP autoethnographic research approach in this dissertation study enabled me to connect deeply to my own personal and professional experiences as an instructional coach whom strived to coach for culturally responsive pedagogy through the use of multicultural literature to reach diverse populations. This research design permitted a look into the research questions sought out to gain insight, investigate my role, and make meaning of which included an understating of my professional practices as a researcher and educator.

Autobiographical Research Design

To achieve a S-STEP autoethnography, I borrowed from an autobiographical data collection technique including those of historical and cultural nature when exploring and examining myself as an elementary instructional coach. According to Hamilton and Pinnegar (1998) S-STEP research is “autobiographical, historical, cultural, and political and takes a thoughtful look at texts read, experiences had, people known, and ideas considered” (p. 286). Using autobiographical elements contributed to my story organically unfolding to provide insight, data collection, timeframes, and reflection coupled with methods of improvement regarding myself as an elementary instructional coach (Ellis, 2004; 2009; Rice, 2014). The invaluable aspects of an autobiographical research design afforded my ability to fully understand how my past influences potentially impacted my present (Ellis, 2009). Alongside Ellis (2004),

Kitchen (2009) also referenced autobiography as “an excellent way of examining how one’s personal history informs present practice and plans or the future” (p. 42). As a flower bed needs constant tending to as each season comes and goes, as does the way it is shaped and influenced by past elements and newly added contributions to support its growth and transformation; this expresses the way in which I looked into my own professional practices of how past experiences shaped the present and future work that I did with teachers. Engaging in autobiographical elements allowed me to reveal and move through professional experiences based on my own actions, perceptions, and data collection that I was not entirely conscious of, but shaped the purpose of my research study (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Kitchen, 2009; Rice, 2014; Rice, Newberry, Whiting, Cutri & Pinnegar, 2015).

Data Collection

Data are nothing more than ordinary bits and pieces of information found in the environment. They can be concrete and measurable, as in class attendance, or invisible and difficult to measure, as in feelings (Merriam, 1998, p. 69).

The “bits and pieces of information” mentioned by Merriam (1998, p. 69) was beneficial in collecting data through my S-STEP approach where I was the primary data collection source. When collecting data, the bits of pieces of each item gathered were useful in the study’s findings and conclusions because of the intensity of the S-STEP data collected. These data collection within my study were artifacts compiled within the 2019-2020 school year as a means to document, trace, and remind myself of experiences within my own instructional coaching practices and served as key attributes that assisted, were discovered, and deepened the truth about myself as a participant-researcher through analysis. Data collection was through a research digital database (digital folder) that included and stored my professional coaching logs, weekly

newsletters, agendas from various professional development sessions, memos, and weekly reflections. Data collection was also hardcopy printed and stored in a sectioned and tabbed binder with a self-cross-stitched silhouette of Rapunzel from the movie *Tangled* (Greno & Howard, 2010), “*and at last I see the light*” on the cover that was of great significance to my dissertation process.

Gathering Artifacts of my Practice

Creating a database in both digital and hardcopy format held the majority of my data collection artifacts that served as a place to store and keep them together and organized (Merriam, 1998). The data collection artifacts within this study consisted of weekly reflections, professional calendar (hardcopy and digital formats), weekly newsletters, and agendas and memos. All data collection artifacts were required of me with the exception of the weekly newsletters which were my own inclusion. The majority of the data collection artifacts were gathered in digital format and folders that were a part of one larger folder (database) other than hardcopy items and my professional coaching calendar. Data collection artifacts within my S-STEP allowed for explorations through a reflective approach and encompassed and reshaped my practices by taking a deeper look into the work that I did instead of focusing and attending to a basic surface level of reflection (Schön, 1983).

Weekly Reflections. Reflection is often attributed to Dewey (1933). It accounts for the personal learning process of self when one reflects and are making sense of events and experiences. The process of reflection encompasses elements such as thinking about one’s work, gathering evidence of practices, being active in the moment, feeling emotion through experiences, making and recognizing changes in practice based on observations, and considerations in practice that one could learn from (Schön, 1983). Taking a more reflective

approach to my weekly reflections ensured that I was evaluating my coaching, understanding what impacted my practices, questioning my professional practices and strategies to improving upon my experiences when it came to sharing multicultural literature as a way into culturally responsive practices (Boylorn & Orbe, 2004; Meziro, 1991). Weekly reflections served as the primary data collection source within this study because of the in-depth reflection and analysis encountered on a weekly basis. This was a place where my thoughts, discoveries, questions, just to name a few were uncovered within words and images. Further, I attempted to allow the work that I did as an instructional coach come alive and further make meaning of it by adding photographs, quotes, book cover images, just to name a few in order to take a more visual representation to enable the use of metaphor within a S-STEP approach (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2009; Tidwell & Manke, 2009).

As I reflected, I decided on what stood out to me throughout the week and what I wished to include and reflect upon, which usually accounted for large chunks of my week such as professional development, professional learning communities, and others events and tasks as categorized by district initiatives. Included in my weekly reflections was factual information as well as opinions, perspectives, wonderings, questions, new learning, challenges, successes and/or emotions. My weekly reflections consisted of critical incidents that occurred within my week that identified and revealed improvements and/or continued practices; taking a reflective approach to learning more and enhancing my practices (Marzano, 2012). As I reflected, I wrote down how I could improve, questions that I had or were generated by my new learning that could enhance my practice, items that I could further support teachers with, professional opportunities that I wanted to include based on those that I had already facilitated, further reading and training that I needed, and resources I needed. Reflections as the participant-researcher were perspectives

that ensured a study that held truth in my practices through my own lived reality (Loughran, 2006). In learning and reflecting more about my own reality, critical incidents were helpful and effective techniques and strategies that enhanced my data collected to recall information which allowed new learnings to emerge (Marshall & Rossman, 2015; Marzano, 2012). This process required an intense reflection and was an effective tool for professional growth while conducting this study (Marzano, 2012).

Professional Calendar. My professional calendar served as a valuable asset to my data collection process that allowed me to physically write down concrete reminders, hunches, wonderings, questions, and next steps of my daily events that I encountered within my role (Emerson, et. al., 2005). This daily-timed stamped calendar served as a place where I pencil-papered all of the day's events, duties, responsibilities, and the work that I engaged in with teachers, staff, children, and critical community members. I used this professional calendar as a place to springboard ideas, refresh my thinking and thoughts, and reflect about the events that occurred within that day. My professional calendar allowed me to record immediate emotions, tensions, observations, comments, hunches, wonders, and reflections and thoughts as each day progressed (Marzano, 2012); all of which that served as field note data (Emerson, et. al., 2005). The reflective notes then allowed me to recall important ideas, behaviors, observations through the data collection phase and served as a place to store and record my dissertation journey both as a participant and a researcher. The notes were useful in understanding the study's purpose at a deeper level throughout the analysis phase of this research study. One of my responsibilities was to log my daily duties in a digital coaching log format that must be submitted monthly to district personnel; this coaching log is a digital version of the professional calendars content and is categorized by large grouping tasks such as: whole group professional development, small group

professional development, coaching, modeling, and materials management; just to name a few. I used my professional calendar to calculate hours that I spent completing different categories throughout the week, including descriptions of those hours, and calculated hourly and weekly totals. I had my personal calendar with me at all times as I jotted down the day's events, notes, requests, new learnings, next steps, and other responsibilities immediately to ensure accuracy in my daily encounters with staff (Emerson, et. al., 2005). My professional calendar was part of my everyday attire and I always took pride and adequate time in finding the perfect one to serve my educational needs. My professional calendar was a space for me to value and document my teacher education practices that I was always passionate about.

Weekly Newsletters. Self-created weekly newsletters were a way that I engaged my teachers in many learning opportunities regarding a variety of offerings such as upcoming events, professional development opportunities, new learning opportunities, curriculum support, technology enhancements, and informational news and teaching strategies. For the last five years, I had felt that the weekly newsletters that I created and shared with educators were my gateway into sharing professional knowledge with all teachers and staff and in a way to 'get into their classroom' without having to physically be present. Using my weekly calendar to reflect upon my week usually served as a steppingstone to furthering my knowledge about a topic to include the following week in my newsletter; tailoring and attending to the pedagogical needs of both teachers and myself (Coia & Taylor, 2009). Many of the items provided were developed and/or are derived from myself reflecting on experiences that led to questions and thoughts that I included within the week based on engagements with teachers. I spent weekends creating digital newsletters for the week ahead to be shared with all staff on Monday's. This artifact was not required by the school or district, but rather my own way to engage staff in professional reading,

learning, and development throughout the school year. Creating weekly newsletters afforded me the opportunities in shared learning with others and changed my practice in a way that continued to fuel my passion for teaching and learning (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2000). Newsletters were in a sense my saving grace especially when teaching remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic which will be shared later in chapter 4 of this dissertation study.

Agendas and Memos. Agendas and memos from various school and/or district meetings and professional development sessions also served as a beneficial data tool throughout the collection phase within my study. Multiple memos and agendas either digital or hardcopy served as professional development and informal coaching opportunities that I both provided and supported at the school and district level. Agendas and memos were either prepared, facilitated and/ or supported by me when needed. Agendas included items that were addressed, and memos served as reminders and conversations that further created learning opportunities for both myself and other educators. The process of reflection within these artifacts was through revisiting, analyzing for content and experiences, while drawing upon lived experiences (Schön, 1983). Although limited, this artifact held an important and valuable place in my data because of the occurrences within my daily encounters with others which shared in important events in my instructional coaching role.

Analysis of Data

Merriam (1998) describes data analysis as the process of decoding data in an effort to make meaning and assess validity, a pivotal approach to S-STEP methodology (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998). Although a complex process that requires active and rigorous planning, my data collection and analysis was completed simultaneously throughout this S-STEP. An additional tool, metaphorical analysis, aided in unpacking, understanding and telling the story of my

instructional coaching experiences. How I analyzed the work that this study consisted of is through metaphorical analysis (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and through the use of narrative as symbol within various readings of my artifacts.

Metaphorical Analysis

Metaphorical analysis, as Lakoff and Johnson described (1980), provides a process of connecting concepts, doorways into stories, and is “pervasive in everyday life, not just in language, but in thoughts and action” (p.3). Researchers have increasingly been drawn to the benefits of metaphorical analysis as instrumental in understanding how people conceptualize change within their practices (Lakoff & Johnson, 1998). Exposing and displaying metaphors in practices could reveal profound insights which might lead to informing, adjusting, unpacking, and improving practices (Kitchen, 2009). Metaphorical analysis has been present in the literature for over the last couple of decades. Qualitative scholars speak of how this type of analysis allows researchers to better understand their own views and the views of others in metaphorical ways. For example, East, Fitzgerald and Heston (2009) as well as Saban, Kocbeker & Saban (2007) support metaphorical analysis as a means of researchers understanding their work in deeper thinking within a meta level which allows the researcher to make a change in practice and notice aspects of their practices by surfacing the work they engage in and make meaning of. Self-study scholars encapsulate metaphorical analysis as a way into broader, creative, more profound ways of teaching and learning; in a sense serving as ‘blueprints’ into a researcher’s analytic ways of knowing, making meaning, and understanding self (Martinez-Sauleda, Huber, 2001; Pritchford & Mountain, 2004; Tobin, 1990). This analysis approach afforded in telling of my own experiences that I was able to make meaning of, improve on, learn about, and therefore make immediate and needed changes.

Thus, metaphorical analysis assisted myself as the participant-researcher in disclosing, questioning, and critiquing the deeply felt beliefs that I revealed through the myriad forms of data collection employed in the study (Kitchen; 2009; Mahilos & Maxson, 1998). Metaphorical analysis served within this S-STEP revealed my findings in ways that myself and others could relate to and identify with by comparing one thing to another in softer ways when speaking of data. It allowed me to design, and understand myself who is a member of the instructional coaching profession (Tobin, 1990). Using metaphorical analysis provided the structure to conceptualize, understand and represent my practices in a way that was creative and unique that ultimately illuminated the meaning of my lived experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Moser, 2007). Coming across metaphorical analysis within the S-STEP community was beneficial in confirming this type of analysis as an explorative way into telling my story which shared my challenges, successes, and improvements in a way that was meshed within relationships to the content in what Coia and Taylor (2009) describes as peeling back the layers of one's teaching and learning experiences.

Narrative as Symbol

Thus, through metaphorical analysis, I examined my data collection artifacts through a lens of narrative as symbol within four different readings of my data artifacts using different colored highlighters for each of the four times I read through the data as well as checking off each aspect of the process in a digital format table thereafter. By allowing my coaching experiences (information in artifacts, emotions, connections, questions, and others) to be tied and compared to a symbolic representation, while being flexible in moving in and out of, fostered a better understanding and a deeper level of meaning to make meaning of my instructional coaching story (Berry & Crow, 2009; Carter, 1993).

I first read through all four of the data collection artifacts in entirety; physically turning page after page of the sectioned and tabbed binder that I created. While I read through each of the data collection artifacts, I could not help but to allow my mind to begin to wonder about relevant themes to my research questions, vividly hearing patterns in the data, and visibly seeing represented symbols of a rose which was chosen, but I did try my best not to do so as I wanted to just read all of my artifacts. The process of reading over all four artifacts initially enabled me to immerse myself in the data, engage and prepare in a mentally equipped attitude for analysis and think about and organize my data within a researcher mindset.

As a second read through all of my data collection artifacts, I jotted down general notes in a black leather notebook to find and gather relevant, frequent, and reoccurring experiences that served as potential indicators of the dominant categories/themes for each of my research questions and then cross-analyzed thereafter. Writing down, circling and starring, boxing items, creating diagrams, and/or sticky note thoughts guided my thinking as I read through enabled me to make observations, reflect, consider, and make meaning of what I had collected within the school year. After I read through this time, I then organized the themes and patterns noticed and found in a digital table format labeled as headings. This table helped me to organize my thinking and thoughts in a way that was visual and linear to compare, examine, and analyze data (Tidwell & Manke, 2009). The dominant headings were then examined and those that deemed as most sufficient and relevant to my study's purpose and a representation of the tensions and self-commitments to a lived contradiction in the work that I did with teachers served as final categories/themes which were labeled by a specific color within the table for extensive analysis.

As a third read through my data, I highlighted on my artifacts and wrote direct references down in my black leather notebook for each research question and then cross-analyzed

thereafter. I, then, tied headings to various symbols by indicating those experiences with a symbol in itself (drawn image/photo placed within the table) to surface meaning making as well as highlighted any direct references to my research questions throughout the process. For example, *instructional coaching is like a rose*, could utilize the flower as an image of the practicum which enables me to recreate, uncover, and reveal moments of my real-life experiences through a poetic stance and a shared focus between myself and others (Richardson, 2000). In this metaphor, the rose, like instructional coaching, needs nutrients from a variety of sources in order to thrive in its own environment. As one progresses through the symbolism, nutrients could be embodied or symbolized by domains such as professional development, seeking the support of other instructional coaches, working collaboratively with teachers, and self-reflection exercises. With the symbol of a rose and all that it entails as a process of change and transformation such as seed, soil, growth, renewal, sunshine, water, and so on in mind, metaphorical analysis and the large dominant themes and visual representations begun to tell the story of my lived experiences, new learnings and discoveries, perspectives, and improved practices as a pre-kindergarten through sixth grade instructional coach pursuing culturally responsive pedagogy through multicultural literature in classrooms.

As a final fourth read through my data, I again wrote notes in my black leather notebook while sifting through artifacts, but this time referencing indirect references to each of my research questions and then cross-analyzed thereafter. I cross-referenced data from research question one to research question number two by creating lists of similar words and patterns in the data and then highlighted references to each that aligned. This process completed the analysis portion of the study while I added more to the table to increase and validate headings and descriptors within each category. All hardcopy phases within my data were highlighted with two

different colors to represent the two research questions which enabled me to keep track of each finding along the way and deeply analyzing each after each read. This analysis that told my story was formed and shaped by my professional career in education I chose nineteen years ago (Carter, 1993; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Tilley-Lubbs, 2016).

As I completed the analysis table as well as the written content in my black leather notebook, which I had been using to keep the overarching domains organized, I then created a more concise table that generated a glimpse of the tensions and commitments in a more linear and less detailed format for my own reference to therefore analyze and write from; working and analyzing simultaneously through all phases, tables, black leather notebook, and binder proved essential which validated and supported my thinking, learning, and direction when it came to this dissertation study's analysis phases, findings, conclusions, and implications.

Personal engagement with data is mandatory within the S-STEP approach. As a researcher and participant, evidence collection was a constant process of observations, questions that came to mind, feelings evoked by experiences, conscious epiphanies, conversations, and other contacts and practices all provided documentation of my reality. The analysis within this study was ongoing and developing over time the more I revisited, reexamined, and explored tensions in my practices as I engaged with my data collection such as professional calendars, agendas, and memos, weekly newsletters and reflections all in real time (Hamilton, 2008). As I delved deeper into the metaphorical analysis through narrative as symbol, a renewed and broader awareness of lived practices emerged like the sun peeking from behind a cloud. As different patterns/themes became apparent as did the critical incidents that processed my thoughts and feelings through which by metaphor documenting the process within each artifact along the way. Revisiting data collection artifacts provided insight into needed improvements, adjustments, and

better implementation coaching practices; all the while thriving in an environment supported by those around me.

Ethical Considerations

Brandenburg and McDonough (2009) described ethical considerations within a S-STEP methodology as “teacher educators acknowledge and appreciate the complexity, non-linearity and the sophisticated yet nuanced nature of teaching and teachable moments” (p. 2). Because my study focused on my own tensions that served as a lived contradiction throughout my journey as an instructional coach, no other considerations on human subjects were evident. Ethical considerations within my study were solely to identify and improve upon myself as a member of an educational field to better understand what I did, how I did it, and how I learned and improved upon those experiences as my career in instructional coaching furthered (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Looking at myself as a researcher and sole participant in this study, yet a human being that validated the work that they did and yearned to improve upon on a daily basis, ensured authenticity. Even so, this study was limited to my own personal and professional data. What I do not believe it is ethical to do is reveal confidential or private information about or gather data from others.

Trustworthiness

Mishler (1990) defines trustworthiness as “the degree to which other practitioners or researchers turn to, rely or will rely on, and use the concepts, methods, and inferences of a practice as the basis for their own theorizing, researcher and practice” (p. 419). To ensure trustworthiness within this particular qualitative S-STEP, Lincoln & Guba (1985) refer to the following terms: **credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability**, that is ensured based on the trustworthiness of this study while looking into the data from multiple

lenses as a means for significantly valuing my S-STEP research (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2000). These elements served as a road map to ensuring a study that was relative and genuine.

Credibility

Credibility is described as whether the findings are accurate, within this study, I ensured by incorporating a critical community where I was able to converse with others about my data that included daily events, tasks, thoughts, wonderings, questions, opinions and perspectives within my professional calendars (Kosnik & Beck, 2009; Mishler, 1990). Including a critical community (friends) made up of a professional educator friend with twenty-five years of experience, two doctoral students who are also working on their program requirements, an associate professor at the university level, and one personal friend of twenty years. I was able to utilize critical friends as a ‘sounding board’ in conversations, discussions, perspectives on incidents, shared drafts and artifacts with, told my story to, and to help me think about the work that I did with educators which ensured a credible account to the research study (Schuck & Russell, 2005). Critical community engagements were either through email/text/phone conversations and/or in-person conversations and meetings. The moments with my critical community were at my discretion to share my thoughts, work, ask questions, and/or engage in discussion regarding using multicultural literature as a gateway into culturally responsive pedagogical practices.

Dependability

Dependability is described as whether the study is reliable and/or could be replicated, was through a rich-descriptive metaphorical analysis tool where I was able to share my findings in a way that is based on data collected throughout the school year. Looking genuinely into my own professional practices through self-reflection practices through the data collected could allow my

study's findings to arrive at a descriptive narrative that could be reliable and a contribution to the professional field (Schön, 1983). Metaphorical analysis shared in a researcher mindset when it came to discussing challenges and tensions within the work that I did as an instructional coach with teachers, students, other instructional coaches, or school staff.

Confirmability

Confirmability is described as the findings, interpretations, conclusion, and implications that are a result of the research study. Confirmability was through the use of my weekly self-reflections where I documented factual information as well as my own perspective, opinion, and other wonderings throughout the school year based on the study's overall purpose. My study was through a rich analysis and descriptive results that were based on the results and conclusions from telling my story of the lived experiences as a coach who strived to coach for culturally responsive pedagogy through multicultural literature experiences.

Transferability

Finally, *transferability*, described as “the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts or settings with other respondents. The researcher facilitates the transferability judgment by a potential user through thick description” (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p. 121). Rich descriptions of the context were through a detailed analysis, results, and conclusion to this overall study within chapters 4 and 5 within this dissertation. The content within this S-STEP was written from my perspective and viewpoint only drawing upon my own understanding of experiences, and voicing my practices, while adding metaphorical elements to describe the content of these experiences as an elementary pre-kindergarten through sixth grade instructional coach (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Patton, 1990). This allowed for a

transfer in knowledge building for other educators' in the educational field of instructional coaching.

Conclusion

As the opening quote in the data collection section states, “qualitative methods are useful and powerful when they are used to discover how the respondent sees the world” (McCracken, 1988, p. 21). This chapter provided an in-depth review into the methodology of this research study that allowed me to “see the world” of myself and my current and future teacher education practices. Merriam (2009) states, “qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 5); it is my hope that this shined through within this dissertation study. A description of the study’s overall findings within this S-STEP is included in the following chapter.

Chapter 4

Findings

In chapter 1, I argued that using multicultural literature as an avenue to support teachers' culturally responsive practices is a responsibility that I felt that I had as an elementary pre-kindergarten through sixth grade instructional coach. In that first chapter, I also theorized how I felt I could support teachers while increasing my own knowledge about culturally responsive practices. In brief, I wrote:

As these questions raced through my mind, a deeper passion formed for my S-STEP; in a sense, I began to visualize this work unfolding. It was not long after we returned to our meeting, that I ordered *Alma and How She Got Her Name* online (Martinez-Neal, 2018). I could not wait to get my hands on this book in hopes of sharing and modeling lessons in classrooms at my school. As I learned more about multicultural literacies and culturally responsive pedagogy in all of its subtleties, I wondered about my own professional learning and the professional development that I either provided for and/or participated in with other educators. As *Alma and How She Got Her Name* concludes, Martinez-Neal (2018) wrote from Alma's perspective, "That's my name, and it fits me just right! I am Alma, and I have a story to tell" (p. 26-28). This unique multicultural piece of children's literature and story that Alma Sofia Esperanza José Pura Candela craved to tell aligns with the passion that I have within my own heart to tell.

As I write chapter 4, I am filled with different emotions and thoughts, which have shaped me professionally by telling my lived story through this S-STEP. I sensed the passion I had for this text mentioned in chapter 1 as I immersed myself physically, emotionally, spiritually, and

mentally in the data I collected. While sharing *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018) with teachers and students within the school year, I experienced what I had felt in my heart all along: passion for building a diverse community of learning where literature experiences were stimulating, innovating, and empowering for **all**. It was through this S-STEP work that I truly learned the value of my role and just how much I was able to improve, develop, and build on current knowledge and practices as a culturally responsive educator.

The purpose of this S-STEP study stems from a passion for sharing children's literature for myself and others that I clearly referenced above. When it came to sharing multicultural literature as an avenue to culturally responsive pedagogical practices, I did not sense that I would be subject to administrative barriers. I chose to view my professional career as having a purpose and sharing that purpose regardless of what goes on all around me; only I could choose how I see it and how I responded to it. This S-STEP explored the limitations within my work as an instructional coach and my commitments to the limitations within my role when it came to sharing culturally responsive pedagogical practices through multicultural literature experiences with elementary educators and to some extent their students.

This current chapter presents the key findings obtained in my S-STEP dissertation study for both of my study's research questions. Findings were organized according to the following research questions outlined in this S-STEP.

- 1.) What tensions do I experience as a living contradiction in the work as an instructional coach for elementary teachers of diverse learners who need culturally responsive literacy instruction?
- 2.) How do my personal understandings of these tensions honor my commitment to

enlarging teachers' culturally responsive pedagogical practices through the use of multicultural children's literature in their classrooms?

The major concepts from the findings for the first research question revolved around five different tensions that I experienced in my instructional coaching role. First, finding *time* to work collaboratively with teachers was of most significant within my role. Secondly, having *limited available resources* to share in classrooms served as a barrier to the literacy experiences that I endured on a daily basis. Thirdly, engaging in multiple and various *professional development and/or meetings* that I facilitated or participated in brought limitations in sharing practices and literature with teachers and their students. Fourthly, having to balance between two different *coaching models* within my role was challenging. Lastly, experiencing *resistance* to coaching opportunities that I provided or were a part of throughout the school year brought uncertainty.

The major concepts for the second research question centered around five self-commitments to the tensions that I endured within my role. First, I was committed to finding *time* to collaborate with teachers either within the contract day or after hours as well as those that served as formal and informal conversations. Second, committing to assisting teachers in building classroom libraries with *available resources* for individual students was priority. Third, my commitment to providing *professional development workshops* for teachers that included culturally responsive practices through multicultural literature secured my purpose. Fourth, my commitment to balancing multiple *teacher and student-centered coaching models* within each instructional day was essential to my role as an instructional coach. Lastly, my commitment to the instructional coaching role was building, supporting, and sustaining multiple levels of *teacher agency* within current instructional practices.

Although the findings are individual entities in themselves, according to the outlined research questions, the overarching theme within the S-STEP findings stemmed from *relational* circumstances. I found that no matter the circumstance or experience at hand, either serving as a tension or a commitment, it was how I responded that built and sustained trusting relationships which overall contributed to my professional learning experiences. When thinking about myself as an instructional coach and the support I provided to teachers, through field note data, I wrote that, “building relationships and trust are the greatest foundations of instructional coaching.” Trusting relationships are clearly the foundation to what I have researched and learned about myself and the experiences that I had lived as an instructional coach.

As I articulated in chapter 2, building and sustaining positive trusting relationships in all aspects of my life was critical to the work I do. As an instructional coach and professional leader in a school building, relationships were certainly vital. Throughout this research process, I was able to uncover the truth to my own professional relational instances when it came to supporting teachers in their current or new learning of culturally responsive practices through the use of multicultural literature experiences. The support that I offered teachers was through creating and cultivating a positive environment, staying consistent in my supports, and being present at all times which made the world of difference in sharing my passion for multicultural literature as a culturally responsive educator.

Tensions Within My Practice: Findings for Research Question #1

Different types of tensions in one’s lived experiences are those of multiple boundaries, limitations, stresses, barriers, and pressures (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). These tensions could provide deep insight into understanding and making meaning of within experiences that I had encountered throughout this process. In further understanding tensions within my work allowed

me to be cognizant of the experiences I told and relived in order to understand the rooted complexities within my professional career. Like a rose, coaching is like being flexible in the wind, remaining stable, and exuding bravery while in motion. While thoroughly being able to connect and recognize tensions on a professional level enabled me to identify with, engage in, and create a space that I could significantly explore; in a sense grounding myself in my own experiences to generate a landscape to better understand my professional educational instructional practices. Further, tensions, in a variety of ways, could be impactful both in a healthy way as well as those providing strain on one's lived experiences which is all a part of being human living in a real world. The following tensions were contributors to the work that I did as an instructional coach which enabled me to answer my first research question within this S-STEP: What tensions do I experience as a living contradiction in the work as an instructional coach for elementary teachers of diverse learners who need culturally responsive literacy instruction?

Tension 1: Limited Time to Work Collaboratively with Teachers

Finding *time* within my day to share culturally responsive pedagogical practices through multicultural literature as well as fulfilling daily requirements was not always easy. The concept of time had always been a factor in the work that I did as an elementary instructional coach. I often felt that my purpose as a culturally responsive educator was secondary to that of my role as an instructional coach. Everything else came first and I struggled emotionally when culturally responsive practices were put aside because of other things.

Within a field note, I wrote:

I want to share more literature, be in more classrooms, connect with more kids, and share my love of diverse learning experiences with them, but I can't always

do so because of limited time that I have. When do I have time to share literature through standards and how can I go into classrooms to ensure a culturally diverse learning environment?

This quote, inclusive of the pondering question that filled many of my days, provided insight into the tension of *time* that I experienced as an instructional coach. A constant dilemma within my role was being consciously aware of my passion as a culturally responsive educator, yet not knowing when I would find the time to share those experiences with teachers. I noticed that *time* was of most significance within my role and frequently kept arriving within the data. I found this to be heartbreaking because all I ever hoped for was being a great coach and ensuring *time* to do what I needed to within my role as well as share my own educational beliefs with others along the way. Multiple circumstances that deterred my time and support that I offered teachers were due to master schedule conflicts, working directly with students through scheduled and mandated intervention sessions, serving as an assessment proctor in the classroom, a variety of directives that were non-negotiable, and adhering to being present for before school, during lunch, afternoon recess, and/or after school duty. These daily engagements often times contradicted the work that I needed to accomplish in order to support teachers and their students with diverse learning instruction, but as required tasks, I embraced and completed them. I was challenged by managing these circumstances on my own and often resorted to my faith for strength.

On November 23, 2019, I wrote: “time, time to be fully in the classroom is limited” this specifically referring to an event that took me away from being in the classroom that day. Even though as it was relatively early in the school year, I had already felt the pressure of needing more time to be in the classroom supporting teachers’ diverse instructional practices. Although I

loved helping others in any ways that I could, I wished that I had more time to be in classrooms with teachers. Being fully in the classroom stemmed from my past experiences as a teacher and how sharing literature with children brought me to life. Further, directly thinking about *time* was on February 1, 2020 when I wrote: “when do I have the time to share literature through standards with teachers and how can I get into classrooms to ensure a culturally diverse learning environment? I don’t know.....” *Time* was always a factor, no matter what I had to endure and then overcome. As I calculated hours within my monthly coaching log calendars of *time* spent coaching in the classroom, in data analysis, I was surprised and saddened as to the limited time spent with teachers either coaching and/or modeling lessons compared to other duties performed within my role as a coach. When I was modeling lessons in the classroom, “I was able to share my knowledge of multicultural literature and culturally responsive pedagogy with teachers in hopes they will in return share with their own students,” documented in my professional calendar in mid-November 2019. Not having enough time to share culturally responsive practices was something that I had already accepted, yet grateful for the bite size learning opportunities that sometimes arose in the work that I did with teachers and their students; indicating those such as professional investments that were sure to provide me with further work with teachers and to some extent their students.

For example, a critical ‘bite size’ learning opportunity stemmed from a conversation that I had with a team regarding diverse versions of a traditional and familiar text. As I sat there with the team, around a large oval table, during a *Professional Learning Community* collaborative session, I thought about what knowledge I had to share with them regarding cultural versions of the specific text. I thought about how I could share versions that I was already familiar with and those that might be new given some time to research other versions that might fit the lesson as

well. As we conversed about how authors of two different versions of one story were conveying cultural messages to include what they wanted children to know and learn. We collaborated on how children could indulge in the texts, what their thoughts and connections would be, and how they felt about having them be part of their reading learning experiences. This, as one could only imagine, was igniting my passion of cultural texts even more as I heard their own ideas and connections. Their increased curiosities of cultures in texts were fueling my own curiosities of them in return. Their increased will to share these texts increased my will to research more about the texts and how I could share them in their classroom with their students. Their energetic enthusiasm about engaging lessons through literature was noticeable while budding from within. All the while, wondering if I was going to have the time to be in their classrooms, which was always lingering in the back of my mind, because of other duties necessary that took some of my time in the classroom. I offered my suggestions about cultural texts and how using critical questions within the texts during lessons could also be beneficial for this specific text in mind. Questions such as, *Whose perspective is being heard?*, *Whose perspective is missing?*, *Whose story is being told?*, *What have I learned about myself by listening to this story?*, *How many different ages, genders, and people are represented in this text?*, just to name a few. I saw their curiosities begin to emerge through enthusiastic body language and quick responses as to how I could help them with that lesson delivery. I sensed an increased willingness within myself and others when we lesson planned together. This is where I felt my role was, to build on the ideas and knowledge of other educators, not necessarily to replace their own pedagogy.

This circumstance of planning cultural versions with the team, documented in my data during the week of November 25, 2019, was essential within my role; however, finding the *time* to actually fulfil the request of modeling cultural versions in their classroom with their students

was always worrisome. I knew that I was stimulating and contributing to not only teachers' growing knowledge of multicultural literature through culturally responsive practices, but also balancing the pressures of the passionate work I had and still had left to do, yet not always finding the time to do so. I knew that if I shared my expertise with them, the urgency to fulfil the obligation, yet stewing tension within. In fact, the result of this planning and collaboration resorted in only a one-on-one student session of reading aloud one of the cultural texts we planned for because of other master schedule conflicts during the time this team was scheduled to teach the lesson. I was grateful for the 'bite size' opportunity nonetheless, but craved and was left with a great desire for wanting more.

Further sharing my passion of bite size opportunities one can vividly see within my monthly coaching calendar, images of hearts and flowers documenting when I was able to share my passion of multicultural literature with teachers and their students when the opportunity of *time* arose within my workday; these were some of the greatest moments to revisit during this S-STEP. Instructional coaching when having time, is like a rose, breathing from the fresh air around me giving me that small window of opportunity to breathe with greater ease. Later in the school year, I continued to feel the same way and wrote that "time to be in the classroom sharing literature" is what I had craved the most within my role. I was not surprised that even later in the year I was feeling this way as finding time was always something familiar within my role. Although familiar, I continued to feel overwhelmed reading back those words.

Further, I found that some of these contributors to the tension of *time* were duty on the playground, cafeteria, and/or the bus area and, in addition to, assessment proctoring was actually opening up coaching doors for me. Opening up coaching doors serving as coaching opportunities

that allowed me to further work with teachers in a culturally responsive way which I was always grateful for. Documenting and expressing this realization on December 21, 2019, I wrote:

Although I thought that having duty in the cafeteria everyday would hinder my engagements with working with teachers and students, it was actually a blessing because it enabled me to connect with students on a deeper level to see what they were thinking, feeling, and needing academically; this would then allow me to support teachers where they needed. While in the classroom, serving as a testing proctor, allowed me to scan book shelves and see what students and teachers were already reading about and therefore, how I can enhance those literacy experiences as a coach in a culturally responsive way through the use of multicultural education.

I learned that often times what seemed like borders when it came to sharing culturally responsive practices through multicultural literature and the daily tasks I had to do were actually serving as some of my greatest coaching opportunities. *Time* was always something that brought pressure and limitations within my coaching role, but through this S-STEP I learned to appreciate the limitation by significantly understanding it more and in greater depth. The tension of *time* proved to be a healthy tension within my role because of the opportunities that it brought forth the more it became transparent.

For example, my data revealed how pressured I felt to fulfil duty requests when I knew that they could provide ample time to actually work with teachers. On November 29, 2019, I wrote: “I believe at the core of who I am , I want to make a difference, get involved and feel like a part of something bigger.” Often times, teachers would stop me in the hallway while on my way to cafeteria duty and they would need me in that very moment. Sometimes needing me to

watch their class because they needed the restroom or needed to make a copy, they needed me to come in and talk with a child that needed one-on-one support at the time, they needed a specific resource from the book room, they needed to ask me advice on a lesson or situation; just to name a few. Their urgencies for my support in the moment became incidents that removed me from my role at the time in that very moment. It was visibly clear and noticeable in their face and actions that I was needed, even if it was for the smallest area of support and when I had to tell them that I could not help at the moment, I was left feeling deflated. Documenting this occurrence, although one of many, on December 16, 2019, I was conscious of coaching opportunities that were taken from me, teachers, and children when I had to fulfil other master schedule coaching duties. The small instances with teachers often led to other and even something bigger within coaching and learning opportunities for all involved. However, in light, it was through the process of making meaning of these circumstances that I came to understand my own work and practices in greater depth that I was able to navigate through this tension which was brought to the surface within this S-STEP. This was a deep realization to not only uncover, but also to engage deeper in and learn from. As the late Jill Jackson, instructional coaching consultant, would often mention and reference in the webinars she offered, coaching opportunities that were ‘on the fly’ were those that sparked greater and grander coaching opportunities later. I, wholeheartedly, believe that these brief encounters were my greatest open-door opportunities when it came to collaborating and coaching experiences with teachers; many of which resulted in sharing culturally responsive pedagogical practices through multicultural literature. “If we are not collaborating, we are not learning. If we are not meeting, we are not improving” written in a weekly reflection which expressed the invaluable experiences that I

needed with teachers. The *on the fly, stopping me in the hallway*, coaching opportunities were where I predominantly felt safe, needed, and wanted within my role.

Another aspect of my role as a coach is to be a substitute whenever needed which took time away from collaborating with educators. I found that these circumstances were also *on the fly* coaching opportunities for me even though they felt like a tension within my role at the time. For example, written on February 15, 2020 in a weekly reflection, I wrote:

I was asked to cover a classroom for 15 minutes today and sitting on the bookshelf was a new book I had just bought at Barnes and Noble Bookstore. *Grumpy Monkey* by Lang (2019) was a book that caught my eye and I immediately felt like this was the book that I would share with these students in that moment. This was even the first time that I myself was going to fully read the book that I had recently purchased. As I sat the children down around me, I immediately felt my heart grow three sizes-similar to the Grinch at Christmastime. They way that they were smiling at me, waiting patiently to hear my story, sitting crisscross, I just felt relief and joy. As I read, they listened, they asked questions, we discussed the emotions of this *Grumpy Monkey* and how we related to the emotions. Emotions were ok to feel, ok to explore, and ok to express. As *Grumpy Monkey* (Lang, 2019) shared his emotional journey, I could wholeheartedly relate. I understood him. I connected with him. I felt like him. In the end, he finds a friend that offers comfort and brings back his happiness. After I finished the book, I told the children, you all have made me feel better today. I was feeling a little sad and grumpy today and I feel better being here with you. I got quite a reaction from the children and immediately I knew that children not

only need to hear stories, but they need to hear stories that they can connect with—just like *Grumpy Monkey* (Lang, 2019) had done for me today.

As I felt subbing in a classroom was a felt tension of *time*, it was a great open door coaching opportunity for me. When the teacher returned to her classroom, I told her about the read aloud experience I had with her students. I told her that I would like to share more reading adventures with her students and even connect those stories to writing lessons. The experience left me craving and desiring more reading opportunities with children. Opportunities that could stem conversations and discussion with children about emotions and feelings and diversity which were grand and essential culturally responsive pedagogical aspects of diverse learning. If it were not for the *time* taken from my role at the time, another coaching opportunity would have been passed by. The teacher excitedly mentioned that I was welcome into her classroom anytime to share literature of all kinds with her students. I left this experience feeling on top of the world and like a rose, waiting for my next purpose.

One of the greatest aspects of *time* as a tension was made clear was when the COVID-19 pandemic brought me into a remote coaching platform. I was not prepared to coach virtually nor did I even know if I could. *What did those skills even look like? What does coaching in a distance learning way look like?* served as pondering questions I was faced with. This new way of coaching was frightening because it happened from one day to the next without notice and/or training. I had to quickly and effectively figure it out on my own. At the time, I was quite nervous and anxious, but the more I prayed about it and engaged in online sessions with teachers and researched ways of coaching virtually through my own knowledge building, the more I knew how to navigate my new role, at least I thought I did. Learning more about coaching virtually each day brought peace within my daily practices as well as peace in my own way of thinking. “I

feel a great shift in my work now, a shift that I struggled with,” documented in data analysis in general notes. Further, written in a weekly reflection on April 25, 2020 which was how I was feeling during the virtual world that I was now faced with.

Just as a rose is beautiful on its own, it still has purpose. It still has passion. It still is vibrant, resilient, and needs attention. It thrives on its own, it gives others joy, it speaks of beauty, passion, love, still full of life, no matter what!

It was not until I was coaching remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic that I came to the realization that was of essence as it allowed me even more time to share multicultural literature as an avenue into culturally responsive practices with others. Aspects of my coaching role such as duty and/or managing instructional materials disappeared and allowed for more time to share my passion of children’s literature woven into culturally responsive practices with others with greater ease. For example, I could now fully support teachers and their students without the pressures of duties that filled my work day. I was not grateful that we were in a remote learning environment because of the severity of the situation, but the situation granted for a deeper understanding into my coaching role and I was determined to find ways in given this new platform. I embraced each situation with understanding and will and attended to everything I could and ever had imagined. I felt nervous and physically ill over how I would be able to then reach teachers and students within this capacity. *Did I even know what that meant?* Although *time* was a tension within my role before, because other duties were in place, it was now a place that scared me even more.

Although not immediately, it was not until teachers begin to text me and email me to ask questions about remote learning, resources that they needed, or just to check-in. The check-in’s became more frequent and provided ease to the situation I was in. I could hear uncertainty in

their voice when they asked for support, just as they could possibly hear the same uncertainty in mine. This was still the case even through email and text correspondences. Documenting this tension within my data was during the week after spring break in March of 2020 which was immediately during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic that had just consumed the world. I knew that I could not do any of this alone. I needed teachers and other coaches to help me navigate through the uncertain waters that I was faced with. I needed to hear their voices, ease their insecurities, support their needs just as I needed those same things from them in return. *Time*, in a new light, was a new tension through this uncertain time in my role and I had to learn how to make sense of it in a way that was rapid and effective.

More specifically, written on March, 28, 2020:

I am struggling to connect with teachers. I have reached out to teachers to offer my assistance, but no one has reached out to me. *How come?* I know they are educators and know what to do in these disturbing circumstances, so why would they reach out to me? This is something that kept racing through my mind. Teachers are figuring out how to do this remote work, they don't need me. I feel disappointed. *What is my impact now? Where is the influence?* The tensions of time before, seemed to be the last thing that kept me from the work I do with teachers now. Now, I have the time. *How would I go about this?* It made me happy this week that one of my teams wanted me to be a part of their weekly phone conversations. One team. I am feeling grateful that they have included me. I have shared my knowledge with them, I have supported their thinking, I have offered my assistance and strategies to get their students on this road to distance learning. It's not easy, no one said it would be, but I am here for

my teams in any way that I can. This week I shared resources with them, shared professional development webinars, and offered my time and help. I can only reach out so far, but I am here if they feel my presence in any way is needed. Today, as I reflect, I feel as if I'm a flower swaying in the uncertain wind, yet fully committed and holding on strong for whatever comes my way.

Within this weekly reflection, I sensed my uncertainty and in many ways uncovered inner questions and insecurities that I was then faced with. I heard doubt. I heard will to be that ultimate support for my teams. I heard desperation for my continued work in coaching and for those that included me. I heard a passion and desire to support educators in any way I could, maybe it was due to not yet knowing myself how to be a virtual instructional coach. More importantly, how I could be a better and more effective instructional coach once the COVID-19 pandemic struck was always on my mind. Only *time* and knowledge building would be the avenues needed to support my own journey, but those that I supported as well. Self-knowledge building became the greatest aspect within my role during this time which was documented by hours and daily events which were apparent in my monthly coaching log.

On May 23, 2020, I shared a quote that I had come across in a blog that I read and added to my weekly reflection because of its relevance: “your hardest times often lead to the greatest moments of your life. Keep going. Tough situations build strong people in the end” (Roy Bennett). These words supported my thinking and learning at the time, gave me courage, instilled a new hope and immensely proved to be an empowering message that encapsulated the tension of *time* that I often experienced as an instructional coach not only throughout the regular school year, but also once we entered the COVID-19 pandemic by taking our learning environment to a virtual mode. This was definitely a new ‘learning journey’ for me.

Tension 2: Limited Resources

I often wrote and indirectly referenced through expressive words, vivid telling, and significant images that conveyed a deep message for me “culturally responsive pedagogical incidents through literature could spark a light of change and sustain a glowing flame.” It is essential to have a classroom that is built on a solid foundation of great literature especially because of the change that could arrive from the sustaining growing knowledge one receives. When educators are provided with great literature for children to engage in and experience with it not only provides and supports a culturally responsive education, but hones in on literacy experiences that enables all to see the world through multiple lenses. These literacy experiences were always those which were most heartfelt and satisfying within my practices and purpose. A classroom with diverse literature is essential in classrooms today because they provide rich literacy opportunities within many different literary genres through different cultural aspects that could support diverse populations and learning. Therefore, effective and relevant resources are needed in classrooms that enable learning opportunities for children to see, read, hear, and touch all within culturally responsive ways and avenues. I learned a great amount regarding the importance of these learning opportunities the more I reflected on my own professional practices and heard and felt the passion for this implementation in elementary spaces. Investigating this passion within the S-STEP which gave rich meaning to instructional coaching experiences as I was able to share my dream of including cultural referents with teachers, other instructional coaches, staff, critical friends, and students any moment that I had.

For example, moments, even the smallest, with teachers were commonplace within my role. When I had readily available resources to share with teachers, I felt included. When I had resources to share with their students, I felt needed. When I had resources to support lessons that

they were teaching, I felt equipped. When I had resources to share that encompassed culturally responsive pedagogical practices, I felt purposeful. Throughout my data I found that I had always had the passion to share resources, I just did not always have them available in the moment. More specifically, one critical incident in particular was through a collaborative discussion with a teacher regarding a cultural read aloud based on Civil Rights historical fiction themes, novels such as *One Crazy Summer* (Williams-Garcia, 2011) or *The Watsons Go to Birmingham* (Curtis, 1995), just to name a few which she was requesting for her group of students. I heard her passion for the content in the words she spoke and the way in which she needed me to help find the resource that she was seeking. I saw and heard passion within her voice which allowed her to believe that I was the one to help her find that perfect cultural text. After she and I rummaged through the walls of books bags in the book room for quite some time, we did not find what she was ultimately seeking. I mentioned to her that I would return to the book room after I had finished doing duty in the cafeteria and would continue to find what she was looking for. I sensed her urgency in that moment and she mentioned she would stay and look through the books. I knew that this was during her lunch time and I felt uneasy about it because I was the support that would allow her to not have to use her own lunch time to look for a book. I felt deflated not only because I did not have the resources at hand at the moment, but also because I did not have the time to continue to help her right then.

More specifically, this event in my daily calendar shared in the ways in which moments like this sometimes left me feeling unworthy in my role and how I could do better when I am fulfilling other obligations. While doing duty in the cafeteria, I was thinking about her in my bookroom rummaging through texts without me. I was thinking about staying after school to dive deeper into her perfect cultural read aloud quest. I was thinking about using my own lunch

break to keep up with the cultural novel search. I was thinking about what cultural novels I had in my own personal library at home that I could potentially offer to her tomorrow. The tension of readily available resources to share with educators became my priority in routing new and/or familiar avenues to meet teacher requests. In fact, it was only through unpacking and uncovering moments like these, deep and honest reflection, that I was alert of next steps that I needed to do.

Throughout my career as an instructional coach, I was committed to frequently sharing with others the importance of cultural literacy lessons whenever possible, but did not always have the opportunity to do so. As I analyzed my data, there were many occurrences where I jotted down how significant sharing literature resources with others is in education. In one circumstance, revolving around how multicultural literature could be shared in classrooms, I wrote “let children’s literature share the message for us” and/or “build relationships through literature.” This thinking directly referenced how having access to great multicultural literature resources could support diverse cultural experiences within classrooms and invites necessary and essential learning for children of all ages today. Allowing multicultural literature to share messages for us that sometimes hold discomfort can ensure that the opportunities are provided and relationships between literature and others are present. My heart is most fulfilled and extremely content when I am able to connect with others through literature experiences such as sitting in classrooms holding books, turning pages, asking questions, looking at images that share a whole new world, fully immersing myself and others in the world beyond the classroom door. The images in *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018) uncovered these illustrations of the world beyond what we can see at a distance that I speak of, but rather felt and lived within the heart. However, when resources were limited, it generated a barrier to what I

could share with others as well as what educators in schools could share with children every day within literacy instruction.

Limited resources served as a limitation within the work that I engaged in with teachers. Coaching with limited resources, was like a rose without water, brought uncertainty. I did not always have access to the resources to share with teachers to create rich literacy experiences through multicultural literature serving as a steppingstone to culturally responsive experiences. There were limited school-wide multicultural literature texts that I had available to immediately pull off the shelf and share with teachers and their students. The inventory which was available was not always providing me with the rich literature that I was needing, craving, and in some cases attracted to as a culturally responsive educator, especially literature that I had recently come across in teaching at the university or newly published books that I searched for on my own. Not having relevant literature resources served as an indicator to what literature I did share and frequently outlined within my data that I needed to seek additional resources to share. Additionally, sometimes I would share literature not labeled or considered multicultural because of the unavailability at hand which raised my insecurities within my own practices.

I recall frantically and nervously rummaging through the inventory that I did have access to in order to fulfil a teacher-request of a particular genre of literature. This request included literature that highlighted cultural themes combined with the winter season. I was disappointed that the inventory that I had access to that did not provide me with the multicultural literature I was hoping for to fulfil this teacher request. In a weekly reflection describing this situation, I wrote: "I feel like I am doing the right work when it comes to sharing literature that teachers request." In addition to purchasing a text, I did have access to a different text that could immediately pull from our inventory to support this teacher request, *The Snowy Day* (Keats,

1996) which I was grateful for. This was an event that taught me that when you do not have access to something needed, you get creative and find other avenues to fulfill the need. I documented this situation in my weekly reflection in the early winter that arose and from this point forward I made the tension of limited resources a priority.

I was determined to reshaping limited resources, and in some cases seeking resources other than those in scripted curriculum textbooks, to ensure something greater for not only myself as a culturally responsive educator, but for those I supported. I felt an obligation to support diverse learning in all capacities and seeking resources to fulfill those experiences were my utmost importance. Teachers came to me because they knew I had the knowledge base to find what they were looking for to share in their classrooms which illuminated my purpose and gave hope to future literature shared in classrooms. In particular, an educator had requested Native American texts from me to then share with her students to support diverse populations in her classroom. Texts that I shared included *The Legend of the Indian Paintbrush* (dePaola, 1996), *Coyote and the Sky: How the Sun, Moon and Stars Begin* (Garcia, 1996), *The Very First Americans* (Ashrose, 1993), *The Star People: A Lakota Story* (Nelson, 2003), and *The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses* (Goble, 1993). This occurrence documented in mid-November 2019, was such an empowering experience for me as she knew I was the one that could help her in her search for literature to support diverse populations in her classroom. Educators knew of my passion for literature and that consumed and filled my heart beyond any words that could express the feeling I felt.

In addition, within the circumstance mentioned previously within cultural versions combined with the winter season, the teacher was disappointed that we did not have the immediate texts on hand, as she was exploring during her lunch break and did not have adequate

time to continue searching. However, she believed in me and the help that I could provide, I desired the time to be able to do so. I shared in the same disappointment because all I ever wanted was to be able to help teachers *immediately* with their requests which is when I felt most purposeful and resourceful. I noticed that the more frequent experiences in sharing multicultural literature with teachers, the more they craved to share these texts in their own classroom and/or with me. They knew that I was a support for diverse literature experiences in texts, but it was going to take some creative thinking and ways to ensure the desired exchange.

“Exploring Amazon” to self-purchase rich multicultural literature, just as I had with *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018) filled many lines within my data as I was not going to let culturally responsive educational experiences serve as limitations because of resources I did not have access to. Texts such as *Chato’s Kitchen* (Soto & Guevara, 1997), *The Day You Begin*, (Woodson & López, 2018), just to name a few. For example, these such texts mentioned were because of teacher requests for me to share lessons in their classrooms. Maybe not the exact books requested, but cultural texts that evoked opportunities for kids to learn about themselves and others, in a sense finding their place in the world through images and words in literature. When I did not have the immediate texts on hand, it took some time to purchase them and then find the time to schedule lessons because of my busy and unpredictable schedule from day to day. Teachers were patient, but I could always hear disappointment in their tone when they were not immediately available; disappointment for me as well. I had to remain patient because, as in any profession, patience is essential to being successful in the work that I did with others. On January 6, 2020, documenting a specific event when it came to a recommended and requested book, I wrote:

I love the bilingual aspect of this book. The pictures, the characters and all that it entails. There were a few Spanish words in the book that I didn't know so I asked one of our bilingual teachers about them. As she herself became excited about the book, I invited myself into her classroom to read it at a later time.

Chato's Kitchen (Soto & Guevara, 1997) was a text that was recommended to me earlier in the school year which provided me with a coaching opportunity with her, even though it was a coaching opportunity that I had to seek and initiate on my own, due to the unavailability of resources at hand, I was grateful. This text would provide her and her bilingual English language learners opportunities to see themselves in texts, hear the language that they were familiar with, seek and connect to experiences that the text provided, but limited resources became something that I had to work through. These circumstances were those that I truly cared about and that I craved to share with teachers and their students, even so that I asked a critical friend what they had thought about me sharing this text with a group of children at my school to support diverse learners. Unfortunately, due to circumstances in our schedules, *Chato's Kitchen* (Soto & Guevara, 1997) never made it into the eyes, ears, and lives of children. I felt devastated and disappointed because it was something we both had looked forward to. Having the time to read aloud texts that shared students diverse languages were opportunities that were critical and essential to finding *home* in the world of literature for many students was critical in my eyes. The lines within my data were filled with hope and that in itself made my heart content despite the tension of limited resources at hand. "I'll try again next week" mentioned in one weekly reflection referencing circumstances such as those mentioned above. The hope within my own heart is what always drove my work even if it was a small glimmer of hope in the faint distance. A hope that kept me connected and empowered by the environment around me.

Tension 3: Professional Development Trainings and/or Meetings

On April 10, 2020, I wrote:

I had offered to ask teachers what they need and then plan PD around that, but it was required that we provide PD first and then see what teachers need thereafter. This, I feel, is where tension and resistance arrive. Some teachers don't need what we have planned, others might. I feel like the PD we are offering should be focused on the needs they 'need' *right now*. I am not allowed to go to the school to get my iPad, so I can't even plan and/or follow along with the PD that I am providing...

As I wrote this, I recalled professional development workshops and/or meetings that served as boundaries between the needed professional development and the required professional development that occurred in the lived experience's that I experienced with teachers. *How was I supposed to be a supportive coach and professional developer if I did not have the same device they and their students were using?* All of my work was on the iPad that I needed to further my work with teachers and their students now in a remote learning setting. I felt completely lost. I had no other choice but to move on and try my best to continue my support in other ways. The professional development provided and mentioned above was during the initial days that the COVID-19 pandemic had brought which contributed to the tensions and uncertainties which I did not feel comfortable and secure at all with at that time. I was navigating through uncharted waters with resources that I did not have access to as well as figuring out how to 'coach remotely.' What I was conscious of was the passion that I had to share literature in a professional development kind of way with them and the new uncertainty that was present. Documented in a weekly reflection, I wrote:

I wish I would get invited into their Zoom meetings so I can share literature. This is something that is out of my control and I can only hold in my roots that I have already secured while in the school building. I hope those roots are strong enough for me and for them. I hope the soil around and within me and them are strong enough to nourish what has already been planted.

Professional development is based on overall directives for required professional learning opportunities that staff must attend. This, however, at times, limited my passion and dissolved hopes to share culturally responsive practices through multicultural literature experiences with teachers and the professional learning that I provided as an instructional coach. Often times, it left me feeling stuck or anxious on how I would support culturally responsive practices during times when professional learning was in place. I jotted down on an agenda provided at a professional development training: “I sit here thinking I need to be in classrooms right now.” This was the passion I felt to work closely with teachers and if I was not with them I was thinking about what I would do next to share learning experiences in the classroom with them. Being with teachers in their classrooms was where I felt most secure in my role as it provided the professional development needed and was on-the-spot learning (and coaching) at its all-time best. Documenting a particular incident referring to this type of professional development was on December 7, 2019, when I wrote:

Over the last three days, I have been able to visit classrooms and seeing the amazing lessons that teachers are working on with their students. This has brought me so much happiness and desire to work in their classrooms even more because of the professional development opportunities that I can share with them.

When it came to different whole group and/or small group professional development and/or meetings, I did not have the authority to suggest the type of literacy professional development that I saw as immediate and of urgent need. As I did understand the importance of the professional development that was provided by reflecting on experiences engaged in, it did not reflect how I felt or how it reflected the current need of supporting a culturally responsive curriculum or how providing and supporting a culturally responsive curriculum through the use of multicultural literature was essential to diverse literacy development. This often times left me feeling alone, empty, and insecure in the culturally responsive world; images of sad faces and tear drops to signify emotions blanketed my data. Providing teachers and their students with new and innovative experiences that supported diversity and/or literacy experiences to serve as a vehicle to culturally responsive practices within the classroom was where I felt my best as an instructional coach. Instructional coaching, in this sense, is like a rose that needed the environment around it to grow and regain its purpose. However, I was only able to do this when I was either invited into classrooms or when I took the initiative to invite myself in which I was fine and comfortable with either way.

On January 11, 2020, I wrote: “ I scrambled to reschedule all of my events that I had planned with teachers and students. Those events have been rescheduled and will have to wait until next week to complete them.” Rescheduling engagements with teachers was common in my role because of either scheduled or sprung upon professional development and/or meetings that I had to attend as an instructional coach indicated by items physically pencil/pen scratched off in my calendar. This instance in particular referenced coaching that was planned where I would be sharing two texts with children in order for them to continue creating their Digital Heart Map projects, in which they would have gotten to make connections to cultural elements to further

understand not only their own cultural beliefs, but other diverse learning of the world around them. Heart Maps or Cultural X-rays are ways in which children can engage in who they are as cultural beings in a visual representations of self-identity elements such as religion, race, language, gender, just to name a few (Short, 2009). The *Heart Maps* that I engaged students in were first through hardcopy illustrations and then those transferred into a digital format to then create slides to zoom in further into ‘their heart.’ “I have to remember to be flexible. I have to remember that writing it in my calendar doesn’t mean it will happen,” this written in my calendar on a cold winter January day.

Moreover, when I informed the teacher that I was no longer available to model the texts and the *Heart Maps* lessons in her classroom because of an unscheduled professional development. She was as deflated. I, too, was deflated because these opportunities did not often arrive and in some cases were scarce; therefore, any scheduled lessons I had with teaches and their students were always essential in my role. In fact, I dreaded making the call and struggled to formulate enough courage to do so in order to inform her that I was not able to fulfil the request. She relied on me to show up for not only her own learning, but her students’ learning as well; this coaching opportunity was already scheduled in her English language arts weekly lesson plans. *Heart Maps* were a high commodity within many grade levels and I was always looking forward to my next adventure with children at all grade levels. *Heart Maps* “have been the glue that has held together teachers, students, coaching, and culturally responsive instruction” mentioned in data analysis through writing general notes. They felt connected to them. They felt their own voices being heard. They felt their own lives being valued and acknowledged through *Heart Maps*. Their stories were being told and heard. Digital Heart Maps supported 21st century technological learning. These were aspects of my lessons that I witnessed greatly in my time

spent with them. In fact, the students shared their own disappointment when they saw me in the cafeteria or on the playground and asked why I did not come to their classroom. They asked if I knew when I would be able to visit their classroom next to do *Heart Maps*. These conversations left me feeling needed and wanted, yet at the same time upsetting because I felt I let them down too. The *spur of the moment* changes within my daily duties often affected many and left many feeling discouraged. However, I had to pick up the pieces and attempt to reschedule in those specific times. Instructional coaching, in this reference, is like the water to a rose-teaching flexibility and power to withhold the capacity to which it is engaged with. I knew I had to be flexible in the work that I did every day, but when it came to distractions that took me away from sharing literature with others, I had to remember to breathe and remain calm; coping mechanisms that had always gotten me through because I was in control.

Professional development and/or meetings, although often times being a barrier to my culturally responsive pedagogical passion, ensured that I was always learning as an instructional coach. I attended and participated in countless professional learning opportunities not only because they were required, but also those that I sought out on my own to keep my professional knowledge continuously developing which I found to be beneficial to my professional growth. As I revisited my data and the professional development agendas, I understood the value of the content, appreciated the learning, and gave my best self to learning the material to then share with others. It was up to me as a culturally responsive educator to make sense of the professional learning opportunities that came my way and how I could then transfer that knowledge to the classroom to better serve teachers. On January 11, 2020, I continued to write: “it does go back to being in the classroom to support the work that they do with their students and will be the key to increasing learning.” This expressed the tension of professional development trainings and

meetings that I was feeling, yet understanding and embracing all the outcomes necessary either in person and/or in a remote learning setting.

Tension 4: Teacher and Student-Centered Coaching Models

When we were approached with now having to implement a student-centered coaching approach, after a two-day professional development training in October 2019, I found that I had to remain calm and figure out how I was going to support this new coaching model. In a field note, I wrote: “how do I proceed to continue my love for teaching and coaching.” I did not know at the time how my passion for teaching and coaching would now proceed which was fearsome. In fact, my dissertation journey was yet again feeling uncertain due to sporadic and changing coaching initiatives. “How can I make my way into classrooms with SCC in place?” These types of questions and thoughts were part of many circumstances within my data that I reflected on balancing coaching approaches and the fear that consumed my world. Often times, resorting to my faith to guide the direction of my work in support the coaching approaches that I was now faced with; those indicated with quotes about faith within my artifacts. In this circumstance, I found that instructional coaching is like the soil around and within a rose which has the freedom to promote change and express balance. I had to remember this.

For example, on February 29, 2020, I referenced how embracing change in order to provide balance was essential through a student-centered coaching approach. I knew that it was not going to be easy, but I knew the importance of conversing with teachers to fulfil the new initiative. I sought ways to continue multicultural literature through culturally responsive pedagogical experiences within this approach, not entirely taking the typical content that was required in assessing students for mastery through a specific standard. I craved genuine conversations with students by digging deeper into texts when I modeled lessons. I craved for

joyful opportunities for teachers and students in reading and learning more about cultures through texts just like I did. I craved culturally responsive opportunities through and within texts to spark curiosities, question issues, and indulge in unwavering ways to find their place in the world. My thoughts within this training workshop were consumed by how this approach to coaching was going to fulfil my passion for being a culturally responsive educator. I needed to seek clarity while building knowledge within this approach, but the more I tried to figure it out the deeper in muddy water I felt I was getting myself into. It was going to take far more time and knowledge building in order to clear the muddy waters to couple culturally responsive pedagogy through multicultural literature within a student-centered coaching approach. Later in my data, the muddy water feeling and thinking I was experiencing was then beginning to clear the more I was self-committed to seeking ways to build in this coaching approach, culturally responsive pedagogical learning opportunities through multicultural literature, and my daily coaching duties together. The tension of professional development within student and teacher centered coaching approaches literally felt impossible at the time, but as with many things in life -it just took the right amount of time and actions to see slight possibilities.

Because my professional career in coaching was set on a teacher-centered approach foundation, it took my own mindset and professional knowledge building to fully not only understand the new coaching model, but also to be confident in balancing and navigating through the steps with teachers the more I learned about it. I witnessed jotting down within my daily calendar, “I will continue to pray about this tension that has sprung upon me; a new uncertainty” as well as “you don’t need a new sunrise to start over, you only need a new mindset.” The word *uncertainty* was definitely one of the many words within my data that explained and described the circumstances that I had encountered and felt uneasy about especially when it came to now

having to balance teacher and student-centered coaching approaches. In reference to the uncertainty I felt during this time, I cross-stitched a scripture that I then included in one of my weekly reflections to signify the emotion of ‘uncertainty’ I deeply felt. The cross-stitch consists of is one single long stem different shades of pink colored rose with the scripture, “His Will. His Way. My Faith. Jeremiah 29:11.” Alma, in *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018) also felt uncertainty when it came to learning about her story, yet she trusted her father to help her make sense of it just as in the muddy water circumstance I mentioned earlier.

As I continued to sift through my data, a question that consistently arose was, “how can I make my way into classrooms with the student-centered coaching model in place?” Over and over, this was the burning question in my mind and the uneasiness I experienced. Ensuring that I was implementing a student-centered coaching approach within my day (which had to be documented in monthly coaching logs) and within my role brought an added and uncertain pressure. It was, at times, difficult when having to balance both the teacher and student-centered coaching models because of my professional beliefs of teacher-centered approaches. Difficult because the student-centered coaching model provided a cycle of steps to ensure completion with teachers based entirely on student data. However, within a teacher-centered coaching approach, coaches and teachers could work together to improve instruction and different direct instructional strategies that teachers could use to enhance each other’s pedagogy. There are times when student data does and could ensure literacy implementations in a culturally responsive way through a student-centered approach, but it is more difficult to do so and more creative ways were needed to accomplish the task. For example, when teachers and I are planning English Language Arts curriculum in Professional Learning Communities, I almost always attempted to offer the inclusion of multicultural texts. Texts that could be tied to English Language Arts

standards being taught, objectives being delivered and assessed, and learning opportunities that increased meaningful lessons for diverse populations. Collaboration was definitely valued by them and it was clearly shown by their increased involvement in allowing me to come into their classroom and share literature. These experiences arrived from those teachers who taught general education to those that taught extracurricular subjects and special education programs. We embarked in learning adventures together in search for texts that could be tied to cultures; a true collaboration that I was passionate about. However, due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, Professional Learning Communities were not initially continuing so these engagements were then nonexistent which was devastating for me as an instructional coach striving for culturally responsive diverse learning engagements with educators and their students.

When further thinking about how I could incorporate a student-centered coaching approach with teachers in a culturally responsive way, I asked a critical friend on December 2, 2019 about a certain text that I wanted to share in classrooms through this approach. I was thinking about how I could connect an English language arts Common Core State Standard to one text that I had come across in my Children's Literature internship at a local university. I loved this text so much that I wanted to include it in my coaching opportunities with upper grades at my school. I provided her with the text and we met later that week to discuss her thoughts. This was a book that I was eager to share, but wondered how, through a student-centered approach, it could or would it fit. When she offered me thoughts it made me realize how I would introduce the text to children and what discussion and critical questions would come from it. This text, in my opinion, would be a better fit as a potential read aloud in the classroom more than tied to a coaching cycle based on student data which was how student-centered coaching was intended to do. I appreciated her thinking and because of her thoughts,

suggestions, ideas, and critiques, it really provided a space for me to rethink mine. I needed that second set of eyes and ears, so to speak, to ensure that I would either attempt it in a student-centered coaching approach or not. After some reflective time thinking about next steps, I concluded that I would rather share this text in a teacher-centered coaching approach instead. I intended and decided on sharing *Somos como las nubes/We Are Like the Clouds* (Argueta, 2016) in a student-centered approach, but instead as a teacher-centered approach steppingstone to *Heart Map* lessons that I craved, desired, and held close to my heart. Student-centered coaching relied more and was driven by student data tied to Common Core State Standards and I did not see the possibility for this text at the time within this approach to coaching.

In other circumstances, sometimes sitting together, with new educators, during our lunch breaks and/or preparation periods surfing the internet to find resources while considering what was available outside and inside the school building took precedence in our time together. In fact, I found myself sending emails at times to the entire staff looking for a specific text that was needed as I knew teachers needed resources immediately. *How can these texts be infused in a student-centered approach? How can these texts drive our coaching cycle?;* thoughts that consumed my mind. As one can imagine, I was often left feeling overwhelmed with gratitude and awaiting what was next. I knew that collaborating with new teachers would be an avenue and secure the possibility of implementing the student-centered coaching approach because of the required time spent working with new teachers within my work day. I also knew which essential standards derived from the Common Core State Standards we could focus on through this approach to coaching where we could focus on standards, student data, and the five coaching moves. I felt hopeful the more I unpacked how it would fit into my role, but not necessary in a culturally responsive way.

In a reflection on February 1, 2020, I wrote:

Working with them fills my heart, nourishes my passion and relieves my tensions. They are my daily dose of vitamins, my sun on a warm day. Working with new teachers reminds me of why I became a coach in the first place. I love their enthusiasm, their efforts, their flexibility, and their craving for new learning. We complement each other well. We fuel each other's passion and we grow and thrive together.

This was a reflection of my thinking and learning when it came to the internal challenges that I faced with balancing multiple coaching approaches, but enjoyed the collaboration between new educators. I was made aware of the tension that I was feeling when stating: "my stomach is literally in knots. I could feel the tension in my shoulders starting to build and I could feel my dream of coaching slipping through my hands." It was not until I read my thoughts later during data analysis that I realized how much I struggled as an experienced coach having to learn something new within a two-day training and implement it immediately with teachers. However, this challenge was not going to limit my passion for coaching in any way. I was committed to growing professionally and creating a new mindset, a new vision of what I needed to do in order to water the withering petals I felt and be resilient in doing so, not only for myself as an instructional coach, but others that I worked with in return. I would implement the approach as directed, maybe just not at first in a culturally responsive way.

Reflecting more on this experience, I wrote:

One day I feel as if I am the water bringing life back to myself, sometimes I feel like I'm the sun providing me with comfort, warmth, and guidance; sometimes I feel like the perky rose petals that show their beauty to others, and sometimes it's

the wilted rose gasping for fuel. Sometimes I feel like the seeping water fueling the roots, and sometimes I feel like the spilled water from overflowing.

This realization and genuine growth within my professional practices as an educator came from deep and honest reflection about balancing two different coaching approaches even when I did not understand and even know how to do so. As a rose has roots, I needed the deep reflection to further understand what I believed in and made meaning through a plethora of instructional coaching circumstances that I was faced with, yet endured the more I persevered through day after day. This is where professional learning at its best provides opportunity and growth within any profession, especially mine as an instructional coach, through this S-STEP.

Unfortunately, once the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020, student-centered coaching became absent because of the new circumstances that we were all facing. Written in a weekly reflection I stated,

Student-centered coaching has been nonexistent as teachers have not yet reached out to me with their needs and I'm not sure where to even begin. I plan on sending another email to teachers to seek their thoughts on coaching cycles and the further needs they might need at this time.

We had a new focus now and I did not feel comfortable or even knowledgeable enough to even know where to begin to initiate a student-centered coaching cycle with teachers in a remote learning way, especially within a culturally responsive way. Educators, including myself, were now attempting to navigate remote teaching (and coaching) and learning with children. A new tension of *remote* student-centered coaching was quickly unfolding before me. I felt like I had not only let myself down, but also the notion of giving student-centered coaching a chance to prove itself. I was left with wanting more, but the world seemed to be so uncertain that I did not

believe anyone was thinking about initiating coaching cycles during this time. My purpose as an instructional coach was changing before my eyes and I became deeply saddened, yet hopeful for what I was in for and would continue to fulfil within my role.

Tension 5: Facing Resistance

Resistance had always been noticeable within my role as an instructional coach for as long as I could remember; however, at different levels and with every individual. Resistance could look like working in isolation, could feel like not being a part of a team, and could sound like constant distractions at least that is how I have experienced it. Enduring resistance, as an instructional coach, is not easy, is uncomfortable, and heartbreaking. I did not really understand if it was professional resistance to mandates or something personal. In a field note, I wrote: “Resistance is apparent. Relationships are essential.” Resistance is an aspect of the coaching role that I have not only struggled with, but also embraced in learning how to improve upon to be a more effective coach. Resistance and relationships go hand in hand in many circumstances within the educational world and I had always been committed to learning how to navigate through them in different ways over the years. The relational aspect of coaching stems from trusting relationships that teachers and I had together; just as the seed of a rose develops from growing elements within the environment they are living in. I attempted to find creative and fun learning experiences for teachers that invited them in and to feel comfortable with me.

For example, those that I felt resistance from were those that I seemed to gravitate towards; when being bold enough to invite myself into their classroom to share learning opportunities deemed necessary. I was always questioning why I was not being able to reach them in way that they felt trust in my support that I had to offer. I questioned why they seemed to allow each other to help and support, but were not that same way with me. This was an never-

ending feeling that consumed me every day within my role. I would sometimes experience from others confused looks, short tones in voice, or even unanswered emails which proved to be such indicators of felt *resistance*. However, to me, the uncomfortable looks and tones, the unanswered correspondences were the very invitations I needed to secure a building act of trust within my role. Specifically, I knew I had planted a seed of trust with a teacher when she emailed me, documented on May 2, 2020, images of flowers thanking me for sharing my knowledge with her. The small acts of trust were those that held tight to the foundation in which they were built on. The images, in my thinking, portraying pride, encouragement, resilience, support, thankfulness, and acknowledgement all of which of those coaching characteristics that were apparent in my work. Teachers felt comfortable sharing their classroom and students with me when they did not feel like I had an agenda and to check off items on a list and/or give feedback about their teaching in particular. The trusting visits were best when those aspects were removed and I was strictly in their classroom to provide my support and share my best practices with them and their students. There was a different and noticeable demeanor, tone, body language, facial expressions when I was present in their classroom to share my passion for teaching rather than checking items off of a list. This type of trust from one another is when we both felt most comfortable. This type of trust was my way into their classrooms to share learning experiences which were what I had always dreamed of as an instructional coach.

I had always gotten along with teachers and felt as if they were comfortable with me visiting their classrooms and sharing my knowledge with them, but there was always a felt resistance with even those I felt closest to and overtime through many different experiences. Moreover, in a reflection note written on December 2, 2019, I wrote:

I find myself having to more so invite myself into their classrooms, but I have made peace with that tension that has always been consumed within me. I am comfortable asking teachers if I can come into their classrooms and share lessons with their students. I am reminding myself that being “bold” in my professional is essential to getting into classrooms.

This insight was not only meaningful, but revealing as to how I was aware of the resistance that I had experienced. This tension that I gave myself permission to be bold in, brave for, and courageous by stepping out of my comfort zone to do what I felt was necessary for not only myself, but others. The trusting relationships that I had built over the years were an avenue into classrooms; an avenue that allowed me to share my passion with others and see the change within me slowly emerging into inspiring and grand coaching experiences. Instructional coaching in this aspect is like planting seeds of knowledge to oneself and those around them. Another example of the importance of trusting relationships that Alma also experienced in the multicultural text *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018).

“Tensions with what I need to do verses what I do,” was rooted in the daily occurrences with teachers and the support that I provided consistently arriving in my data. I, in my heart, felt an unwavering urgency of sharing culturally responsive practices in classrooms because of our growing and diverse world we currently live in as well as the teacher education courses throughout my bachelors, masters, and doctoral programs. A sense of urgency to share cultural literature with teachers to share with their students filled my mind and heart every day and served as something I needed and desire to fulfill as a culturally responsive educator. How that sense of urgency was delivered is what I strived do within my role as an instructional coach to my fullest potential both in-person and virtually due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. The

more I discovered and uncovered many different ways in which the tension I was experiencing as an instructional coach, the more I found out how my commitment to being a culturally responsive educator surpassed and outweighed the boundaries and limitations that I had encountered. For example, resistance in any profession and within any individual person is real, but has to be understood by themselves in order to fully adhere to change. In a sense, “changing the soil” to uncover what is going on around you and accept the needed change within; this was a priority and I knew I had to work diligently and passionately through daily within every moment.

On May 23, 2020, I added a quote to a reflection that I had come across, “courage does not always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying I will try again tomorrow” (Mary Anne Radmacher). This quote resonated with how I felt many days and nights as an instructional coach; not only during that week, but also throughout the school year when it came to resistance either from me being in the classroom for some unknown reason or sharing new district initiatives. I knew that I was not always going to be able to reach everyone that day, despite the effort I put in, but I did care enough and have the growth mindset and bravery to do it all over again the next day. For example, within analysis jotting down general thoughts within my second read of the data, I wrote: “I feel frustrated when I have to invite myself into classrooms. Do they not like me, need me, or do they resist because of everything else that on their plate, I’ll never know why.” The resistance that I felt, heard, and visibly saw on a day-to-day basis did not limit the work that I did with teachers, if anything it fueled the passion to keep moving forward in all ways and give one hundred percent to my role.

More specifically, for example, during a scheduled training that I was required to provide, I had and felt resistance from participants. In my data, documented on January 15, 2020, I reflected on how I understood that adults do not learn the same way that students do, but part of

the professional development was to ‘practice’ as if we were students to ensure a modeling of how the lesson would be shared with students in the classroom in real time. We needed to respond to this professional learning in a professional learner mindset. I felt uncomfortable with having to provide the training in that manner, but I did not have the control to do so in a different way otherwise. The tension that I felt during this professional development was difficult for me because of actions seen in the room and conversations that were occurring. However, I was committed to share with them what I was instructed to share. Teachers referenced that they understood it was not me that was initiating the content I was providing, but more so doing what I was directed to do. I was grateful that the resistance that I was feeling, visibly seeing, and hearing was not taken personal as their instructional coach. They trusted me enough and allowed me to share my knowledge with them. They trusted that what I was sharing was required of me. They trusted me enough as their coach to later return to their classrooms to model a lesson of the specific content being delivered if needed. The tension of *resistance* was felt, heard, seen, yet it was up to me to build the needed relationships to ease circumstances such as this instance and/or those that often arrived in my role.

I had learned so much about myself as a person by being committed to what I believed in and allowed my faith to drive decisions that made me a better version of myself. I learned about myself as researcher who delve deep into the scholarship to support my thinking, learning and present and future practices. I learned about myself as a committed culturally responsive educator who not only felt passion in the work, but made every attempt to make sure it was included in the world around me. These new learnings not only guided my personal life, but enhanced my professional career, something that I had always prayed about and endured great patience for along the way. As I wrote in my last reflection for the school year on May 30, 2020:

And now, I'm glad that I didn't know the way it all would end, the way it all would go, our lives are better left to chance, I could have missed the pain, but I'd have to miss the dance.

The meaningful lyrics from the infamous song *The Dance* (Brooks,1990) spoke to what I was feeling when describing the tensions in telling my coaching story and the commitments to those tensions that follows in the next section. Tensions that I made meaning of, in a sense, which allowed me to brave the storm just like a rose on a rainy spring day or dancing through the pain. I did not know what my day would look like every day that I went to work, but I did know that I was going to leave it up to what was meant to be done. I was committed to my career and left it all to chance to steer the direction of my life and was deeply grateful for the opportunity within my educational professional career in instructional coaching. Thinking about how the lyrics and the journey that I was able to tell of deeply paralleled when it came to *my life and story*.

My story was not perfect, but telling of genuine lived experiences seemed needed. My story was only able to be told because of the experiences that I endured and the courage I found to write about them. My story could be told in ways that only I lived; experiences that led me to grand engagements with educators who gave me a chance as their instructional coach.

“Professional growth comes from overcoming internal and external battles,” this, I felt the more that I sifted through and made meaning to the limitations told in my story. I realized overcoming the internal and external battles was the first initial stepping stone into greater genuine and meaningful experiences as an instructional coach, turning the limitations within my experiences into limitless opportunities. Tears are streaming down my face I as type those words because I can hear my own passion for the work that I did as an instructional coach, the courage and

bravery I had to tell about it, and the legacy I leave behind; overcoming challenges and growing professionally while persevering through it all.

Self-Commitments: Findings for Research Question #2

Self-commitments within my teacher education practices included believing in the daily work that I was doing, contributing in all ways to the work I was passionate for, as well as continuously learning for professional growth. These commitments were those that I valued, did not hold back from, and made genuine contributions to within my professional practices to wholeheartedly support others and research in order to answer my second research question: How do my personal understandings of these tensions honor my commitment to enlarging teachers' culturally responsive pedagogical practices through the use of multicultural children's literature in their classrooms? Committing to keeping the right mindset and continuous balance within my teacher education practices fulfilled the passion within the tasks that I accomplished over the school year for this research study.

In one of my weekly reflections, I wrote:

I love children's literature. I will never be able to speak to the passion I have for it in all the days of my life. Every chance I get I love to share literature, especially multicultural literature, with teachers and children. If you asked anyone about this passion I have, they would clearly be able to see and hear it through the experiences that I commit to in sharing with teachers and teams at my school. This type of passion doesn't come lightly and I always seem to find a way to include and connect literature to the work that I do with teachers and students, whether it is required or not.

This quote highlights my own professional thinking and learning when it came to be committed to being a culturally responsive educator and the work that I did as an instructional coach. My commitments to navigating and learning from and through the tensions that I experienced, were brought to life every day as an instructional coach the more I reflected on the work I was doing and how I responded to it with what I was given each day.

Further stating and telling of my commitment to my role was written in a weekly reflection on April 25, 2020:

“I have learned so much over the course of this pandemic and quarantine phase in our world and I feel like it has made me a stronger person, employee, coach, and teacher! I just needed to figure it out. I needed to decide that this is my place in the world right now and this is what we have been given. I can only do what I can do and I can only grow with the things that I have in place. I can’t control things that I foresee as needed, but I do have the control of what I am in control of. I love my job and will stay committed at all costs.

Sometimes in life it is best to *stop and smell the flowers* which was an image that I added in my data to unpack the meaning of this place I was in. This, to me, is a way in which I became clearer about tensions and what my true commitments were when unpacking them. I was difficult to tell of them, but telling them and responding to them in how I stayed committed in my role as an instructional coach makes it all worth it. What we learn from what we do holds the highest power of being a human in a world where mistakes are made every day. It is how we bounce back up and try again tomorrow. It is how we show up even in and during the hardest times in life. True reflection is self-worth knowledge building.

Commitment to Tension 1: I am committed to finding time both formally and informally to collaborate with teachers about culturally responsive practices.

As I investigated more and more into the data, being committed to finding time to collaborate with teachers filled my daily tasks by penciling in coaching opportunities any extra minutes I had within my day. Finding ways that served as informal coaching sessions and/or more formal collaborative sessions with teachers through coaching cycles and/or Professional Learning Community collaborative sessions, was something that I was always committed to. I often arrived early to work, worked through my lunch, and/or often stayed late after the children left for the day to work, plan, and/or collaborate with teachers. For example, teachers and I would schedule coaching opportunities after school because we knew that would be uninterrupted time to plan together. I was committed to our time together as data within my professional calendar documented scheduled meetings with teachers. Teachers seemed to appreciate the time that I was able to work with them because they shared their appreciation with me. I discovered how much time I put into sharing culturally responsive practices through multicultural literature with those that meant the world to me the more I sifted through my data collection and reflecting on those experiences in my weekly reflections.

For example, written on November 16, 2019, “I like and feel excited about engaging in the conversations with her; it makes me appreciate the diversity within ourselves and the avenues in which we can support one another.” It was pleasant to have someone that was committed to learning more about my passion and in return learning more about theirs as well. Conversations were those that allowed me to learn from teachers to increase my own pedagogy. Sitting side-by-side conversing and planning was essential and I felt like they were circumstances that were critical to my role. I wanted teachers to see me as one of them, not an evaluator looking to catch

them in an area of improvement to fix an issue, but rather learning collaboratively together through genuine conversations and learning opportunities provided for children.

However, the ways in which I approached informal and formal conversations during the COVID-19 pandemic changed entirely. I was now tied to sending or receiving emails and/or texts and calls instead of dropping by their classroom throughout the day to offer my support to them and their students. These circumstances were not shown to be conducive to coaching supports because it took a different effort in doing so. Teachers were now faced with technology to learn, programs to use to teach online, and other expectations required. They often did not show to have the time to work with me in a culturally responsive way and I knew that was the new reality I was faced with as a coach. It was through my commitment to make these opportunities happen in order to feel like I still had a purpose in the virtual world as a culturally responsive educator due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. I called them, emailed them, sent them texts to offer my support. I greatly missed face-to-face in the school building engagements with teachers, other instructional coaches, administrations, and children within days of having to remain home to continue our work.

Informal coaching conversations. Informal coaching conversations occurred every day and almost at every engagement and opportunity that I conversed with teachers. Documented in data analysis through general notes, I wrote: I want to hear their stories, tell them mine, and connect with them” which enabled me to understand that I was craving their conversations about texts and diversity with them in return. As teachers passed me in the hallway and stopped to ask a question, it was a coaching opportunity for me. Informally conversing with teachers were small moments, bits and pieces, of a greater plan as it was almost always inviting myself into serving as a potential coaching opportunity. I found that my commitment to making time to assist

teachers in non-formal coaching cycles or opportunities is where I strived and where they felt most comfortable whether it would be an individual engagement, small group, and/or whole group session. Committing myself to making time to work with teachers in culturally responsive ways on an informal basis filled my data collection through words such as “success or opportunity” alongside images of flowers, stars, or hearts all of which left me feeling relaxed, comforted, important, and included.

While engaging in informal conversations proved successful in the school building, it drastically changed during the COVID-19 global pandemic. It was not easy to have these conversations on the fly, rather they had to be planned or scheduled, this really took the sincerity of allowing those informal conversations to take place and turn into greater and successful opportunities for instructional coaching thereafter. In most circumstances, I initiated conversations through emails and phone texts which brought happiness and in some cases sadness. Happiness, because I felt included, sadness because I did not have the constant visible face-to-face opportunities like I did when we were in the school building.

Formal coaching conversations. More formal coaching collaboration with teachers were through the use of individual, whole group, small group Professional Learning Community collaborative sessions, and/or modeling sessions all of which took precedence with my daily encounters when having moments of opportunity. I was committed during these sessions to not only provide the professional learning that I had control over, but also committed to highlighting culturally responsive practices through multicultural literature when I had the chance to do so. As I planned coaching sessions, topics generally always included culturally responsive pedagogy combined with multicultural literature. Formally working alongside teachers enabled me to share my own professional beliefs to support not only my own professional pedagogy, but others in

culturally responsive ways. The same is true as we went into a remote learning platform due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Committing to formal and informal opportunities with others held strong in my heart and when I had a window of opportunity to share my culturally responsive passion, I took every opportunity to do so. I recall from one image within my data that showed a bouquet of flowers reading “petal by petal, leaf by leaf, I will keep growing until I am complete and you will have to watch me.” This quote resonated with the formal and informal work that I did with teachers. The more that I worked with them and shared literature that they requested or that I initiated, the more I grew, the more I and others could visibly see the change within me. I was committed to formal and informal coaching opportunities that were either planned and/or those that sprung upon me; this is how I continued to grow as a professional culturally responsive educator and be committed to ensuring time to collaborate with teachers and reflect on my own. It felt like these slow, but steady ‘petal by petal, leaf by leaf’ occurrences were where I bloomed the most in my professional learning practices either in small coaching cycles and/or experiences that supported literacy instruction on a more informal basis.

Commitment to Tension 2: I am committed to building and sustaining multicultural children’s literature classroom libraries.

“I always seem to make sure that diverse literature makes its way into students’ hands at all times. This week was not any different.” These words written on January 11, 2020 shared in the passion for the work that I was committed to doing with and for staff and children. In my heart, the most passionate work as an instructional coach arrived when I was able to share multicultural literature in the classroom. The smell and sight of books, the shelves filled with

many stories to tell speaks of an experience that I encountered through my data collection process. I wrote:

I found myself scanning any environment that I came into contact with: opening pages and smelling the words on the page, filling my breath with literature that brought new learning, new adventures, new experiences, new passions. Building classroom literacy libraries collaboratively with teachers ensured some of my greatest experiences as an instructional coach. I craved these opportunities because I was able to offer what I had learned in my own children's literature courses and degree programs taking that literature that can then be transferred and shared with others around me.

It was made clear when navigating through my data that providing multicultural literature in classrooms was something that I was always committed to. I was dedicated to self-seeking and, in many cases, purchasing multicultural children's literature resources with my own funds for both myself and others. Exploring amazon.com for children's literature was one of my favorite activities to do during work hours and/or on my own time. I was committed to pressing the 'submit order' button when it came to purchasing multicultural books that I could share with others and build upon my own literacy library and get texts into the hands of children and their teachers as an avenue to 21st century diverse culturally responsive practices.

One book in particular that drew me in as I took time to seek multicultural literature for my teachers was *Dreamers* (Morales, 2018). This book, just by the cover, inspired and spoke to me. The cover told a story on its own and I was drawn in the more I learned about it. It spoke to me in ways of diverse cultures, family relationships, challenges that were overcome through character experiences, and mostly by its autobiographical inverse genre that I had always

gravitated towards. Driving up to Barnes and Noble Bookstore to pick up this book that I had ordered just a couple days prior was such an exciting adventure for me because I was hopeful that this book could open culturally responsive opportunities for me, teachers, and the children within my school building. The excitement about this text paralleled to the enthusiasm I felt when first learning about *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018).

Documenting my encounter with finally having *Dreamers* (Morales, 2018) in hand, in one weekly reflection, I wrote:

I finally have the book! The images told a story, the words painted pictures, and the themes reminded me, encouraged me, empowered me, and inspired me to keep my journey in this work alive. I immediately knew it would be a part of my weekly newsletter for the next week. I added it to my weekly newsletter and cannot wait to share it with staff and students.

The words within this text, “Books became our language. Books became our home. Books became our lives.” (Morales, 2018, p. 22) were influential and left me craving experiences with others to share the words, pictures and messages. This was a text that could allow me, teachers, and children to make connections to our world, shared in learning about other cultures around us, and to learn from vivid words and images through someone else’s story; just like *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018).

Dreamers (Morales, 2018), a story about passion, strength, hopes, and dreams, shared with others the week of January 27-31, 2020 in a weekly newsletter held close to my heart. Morales (2018) tells her own story in the cover of this text and not only did I hear her passion in telling her story, but mine as it was unfolding while doing so. Texts that can bring so much passion to someone are such great rich learning experiences that last a lifetime. I was fortunate

enough that I was able to share this story with a group of second graders. It was through our genuine conversations about the text that I witnessed curiosity, wonder, and desire for stories being told; their faces and voices in and around this text consumed my heart; “We are stories. We are two languages. We are lucha. We are resilience. We are hope. We are dreamers, soñadores of the world” (Morales, 2018, p. 27). Multicultural texts that became part of my own personal and professional literacy library soon became part of classrooms which was such a great joy to witness for myself as a culturally responsive educator. “*How does having hopes and dreams for the future help improve our lives?*” was a question that I wrote in my daily calendar on January 28, 2020 referring to extensions in classrooms using *Dreamers* (Morales, 2018).

Building classroom literacy libraries and seeking literature on my own (if needed) enabled me to share literature in diverse ways such as engaging in conversations, writing, bringing the story to life through art, just to name a few. These types of engagements with texts when working with teachers and their students fueled the passion within my heart. For example, holding a book and flipping through pages of a text brought such an empowering life experience for me. I sensed the same enthusiastic and exciting reactions I witnessed from teachers and students as they seemed to feel the same way. Weekly reflections shared my enthusiasm for these opportunities and the reflection that I referenced as the joy that students felt in return; learning opportunities that connected all of us in culturally responsive ways.

Alongside potential read aloud opportunities for classrooms and classroom wide literacy bins, I created book bags for individual students. I strived to include the best (in my opinion) multicultural stories that I had access to that I could find to fill students’ bags. Moving through the leveled readers from one wall to other while pulling book sets to create meaningful reading experiences for children was a highlight of mine. In fact, many teachers requested that I create

book bags for their students because of my own visible passion for connecting children with literature. Book bags are collections of books including different genres and topics that a child could read in the classroom and/or take home; they usually consist of five or more books in a gallon size Ziplock bag. “Continually finding ways to help teachers organize books, include different variety of cultural representations, and literature that started conversations to share my own love of children’s literature, especially cultural literature with them” were engagements I flourished through as a culturally responsive educator the more I read in my field note data. My commitment to building and sustaining classroom literacy libraries for both myself and others fueled the burning passion within my heart and gave me a sense of purpose and a place within my role as an instructional coach where I could truly shine. I have been labeled and called “the book lady” by children and I am deeply grateful and appreciative for that title. It is humbling when others could visibly see my passion for literacy.

Further documenting an experience that highlighted my intense passion and commitment to building classroom libraries with great resources was written on March 8, 2020. I wrote:

I was able to share experiences this week with three classrooms that ‘filled my bucket!’ Sharing literature with them and allowing them to work on their Heart Maps makes me so so so happy. I see their interests, I hear their stories, I see who they are and where they come from. I see how this, in return, ‘fills their bucket’! We as a society have to be kind and helpful, learn about ourselves, learn about how we are built from that. These small moments fill me, bring me to life, and share experiences that enable me not only to learn about them, but allow myself to learn more about how I can be a coach that is strong, knowledgeable, and caring. I truly love kids and love to share literature with them.

I hear the passion through these words and truly realize the work that I did was not only rich experiences for others, but for me as well. I am fortunate to have been in the life of many teachers and students sharing what I love with them. My heart is content when I am around others that I could see my passion through their eyes. Like Alma's, *in Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018) passion which guided and made her heart content. This commitment documented by written reflections that spoke of things that went well when in classrooms within the week. To me, coaching opportunities are like buckets of beautiful roses awaiting their next purpose. *Who's hands would they be held in? Where would they be in this world? Who will get to enjoy them? What purpose will they serve? What will they bring to others just by being present?*, questions that brewed within and consumed my thoughts. Coaching opportunities were those that I craved the more I was able to engage in them.

During the months of remote teaching, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, supporting students in creating literacy books bags was nonexistent which broke my heart. For example, students no longer were provided with hardcopy books to take home. I also was not entirely sure if small group reading was even taking place so I found it difficult to ensure and therefore commit to sharing resources that supported academic reading with them. My commitment became assisting teachers in finding shared reading opportunities with their entire class as a whole. In fact, *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018) was one of the very texts that I recorded to share with students during live instruction if educators desired to teach or reteach the book. I cared enough about its content and message. It left me feeling content in my heart that children could hear the story and build connections and ways within one's life. I cared enough that if I was not the one to share it with them in the school building, that they would be able to still get the opportunity if their teacher shared it through virtual learning. This thinking

kept me fueled as the unknown and uncertainty of my virtual role was then consuming me. I was grateful for these opportunities even in a remote learning environment, whether they were offered or not, as they could enable children with reading opportunities; opportunities to be in texts that ultimately built readers. Most importantly, texts that served as an avenue to knowledge building and understanding the world in greater depth all of which could benefit readers.

Commitment to Tension 3: I am committed to self-knowledge building and offering others professional development opportunities.

Providing teachers with multiple ways of professional learning opportunities was something that I was always committed to accomplishing. Within a weekly reflection, I wrote:

I cannot wait to share a *What is multicultural literature? And What does it look like in the classroom?* professional development workshop for new teachers next week. I feel as if I can share my knowledge with them to get them thinking of how they can include ML [multicultural literature] in their literacy lessons. This is where I believe I shine the most as a mentor for them.

Reflecting on this experience made me happy, made me miss the new teachers, and really brought a new sense of new learning for myself. I knew how excited I was about providing workshops for new teachers that included not only multicultural literature, but also instructional strategies like student voice, initiating conversations, asking questions that went beyond the typical *who, what, when, where, why*, questions allowing small group opportunities, just to name a few. My commitment to providing professional development that consumed my passion was evident in the data through workshops that I provided teachers. For example, as mentioned above, I provided a workshop titled, *Multicultural Literature in the Elementary Classroom* centered around the text, *Just Ask! Be Different, Be Brave, Be You* (Sotomayer & López, 2019).

As teachers and I sat around the table, I shared my expertise on the subject. I saw their curiosities about the content and text, I sensed a newfound purpose for texts in the classroom. As they shared their own knowledge and questions with me, I found a new purpose. This, to me, is what coaching was all about; educators collaborating about classroom learning opportunities for children. As teachers scanned the pages of this text and engaged in genuine conversation with me and one another, it reminded me of the very meeting where I had first learned about *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018). I recall scanning the pages and feeling hopeful for the opportunities that could arise from it. I recall having an urgency to share the text with others. As teachers left the workshop they expressed their gratitude for the content provided. They asked if I could share this read aloud with their students. The workshop opened coaching doors far greater than I could have ever imagined. These were the opportunities that brought us together in texts which were the very experiences that I had always craved in my role. Because of my commitment in attempting to reach every educator in some capacity, I sent the workshop information in my weekly newsletter for all to enjoy. Professional development opportunities such as this one in particular shared my passion that only kept growing larger and grander as my professional career moved forward, especially when I reflected on how to continuously enhance such experiences with teachers and their students.

In sharing my culturally responsive knowledge through the use of multicultural education and other instructional strategies fueled my passion even more; giving me enthusiasm to keep engaging in those circumstances with others as often as I could. I learned that sharing my pedagogy with them provided them with new insight into their new experiences as developing culturally responsive educators and when they shared their experiences with me too. I was committed to providing different workshops either before school and/or through grade level

collaboration sessions that supported culturally responsive curriculum through multicultural literature. If I was not building professional development opportunities, I was thinking about how I would ensure these possibilities any chance that came my way.

My commitment to my own knowledge building of culturally responsive practices was shared through weekly newsletters revolving around the professional resource, *Bright Ribbons: Weaving Culturally Responsive Teaching into the Elementary Classroom* (Howard, 2007).

Although not a multicultural picture book itself, it was a professional resource that supported pedagogy and did have avenues to classroom instruction for teachers and myself to engage in together. This text was a resource that shared diverse classroom activities, best practices strategies, multicultural children's book titles, just to name a few. This text was initially shared in my first newsletter of the school year and within other newsletters throughout the year different content from the text were provided. I felt like I not only grew my own professional learning through this text, but also the growing knowledge of others.

Providing professional learning workshops for teachers revolving around culturally responsive practices through multicultural literature was not possible during the COVID-19 pandemic and remote teaching as other professional development deemed necessary by the district and school site were required. I felt that if I added anything else to teachers' plates, in a sense, it would not be supported or even worthy of what everyone was now experiencing. We were provided with an article through email soon after (April 3, 2020) we were now in full remote learning. This article, *Coaching During a Crisis: Advice From Experts* (Bouffard, 2020) provided some ways in which to make sense of my role as a remote coach. Although it provided some needed implementations within our role, but I felt like it was going to take more than a few paragraphs to allow me to fully understand what I was now living; yet thankful for the

information provided by the district. Items included in this article were: *Be clear in your role, Accommodate varying needs, Stay connected with your principal, Keep the focus on equity, Find your district's tech expertise, Connect with your networks, Look for windows of opportunity, Be patient with teachers -and yourself.* I needed to dig deep into these and commit to self-knowledge opportunities to make sense of them. I knew that it was going to take more far more knowledge building than one article to understand my role during the COVID-19 pandemic to further share professional learning with others and I was committed in doing so.

In addition, bringing some ease to my confidence with providing professional development as a brand-new remote coach was participating in a virtual coaching webinar centered around being a remote coach in late April 2020. This was the first formal district professional development we had received since going fully remote in mid-March 2020 and I was grateful for this opportunity as it brought new knowledge to my new role and connected some of the uncertainties that were present. This professional development that was offered to us was from, the late, Jill Jackson who had always been such an influential coaching consultant over the years for me. I knew that I was going to learn so much about my new role as a remote coach due to this professional development webinar. I felt comforted. In this new way of thinking and learning for me, coaching is like freshly tilled soil anxiously awaiting its first seed. Although not a webinar on culturally responsive practices through multicultural education, this webinar did provide me opportunities on how to support teachers in this new way of coaching. I did find other avenues, however, through my weekly newsletters, to keep that culturally responsive passion alive in a remote culturally responsive coaching way. I was grateful for any professional learning that came my way.

One of the greatest forms and commitment to culturally responsive curriculum was the professional development opportunities generated through weekly newsletters. Weekly newsletters were not mandated in my role, rather an avenue that I implemented to keep my role of being a professional developer in place at all times. Weekly newsletters were generated from what I craved and felt the urgency to share with others. Newsletters were placed where I felt the most freedom to share what I felt was needed; I was in full control of weekly newsletters and most often they included multicultural literature as a vehicle to culturally responsive practices. In addition, my own reflection and self-seeking professional learning opportunities were visible in the work that I was committed to for both myself as well as the professional learning of others through newsletters. I spent numerous hours knowledge building and seeking culturally responsive practices and resources to share with others once per week; this was a deep commitment to myself and how my weekends were usually filled. For example, professional development resource topics that were provided in newsletters included: *Online Teaching Can be Culturally Responsive*, *Tips and Tricks: Teachers Educating on Zoom*, *Distance Learning in a Culturally Responsive Way*, just to name a few. On January 16, 2020, I wrote, “how can my newsletters be more effective to meet the needs of all teachers?” I had always been thinking about how I could be more effective in the knowledge that I shared with educators. Images of multicultural literature filled the covers of my newsletters and ways in which teachers could share culturally responsive practices within their classroom filled the columns of the newsletters too; images that brought renewal, comfort, pride, and connectedness for myself personally and professionally.

Within a newsletter for the week of May 11, 2020, book titles that were included were *Fry Bread: A Native American Story* (Noble, 2019), *Visiting Day* (Woodson, 2002), and *Each*

Kindness (Woodson, 2012), just to name a few. Alongside these texts within the same newsletter were *ABC's of Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices* which I generated from my own knowledge building practices. Items such as *A is for active learning partnerships*, *B is for believing in yourself and others*, *C is for cooperative groupings*, *D is for diverse learning opportunities*, *E is for emotionally supportive*, and the list goes on and on. My newsletters had always shared my passion as I wanted them to reflect me and the knowledge I wanted to share with others. This newsletter in particular was one of most valuable and inspiring newsletters as I had many compliments and responses from teachers asking me to share those books in their classroom with their students. This was a validation and commitment to myself as a culturally responsive educator. I felt as if my coaching newsletters is like a flower bed filled with vibrant and resilient roses bringing life to others, at least that is how I envisioned it to look like. My newsletters were my saving grace when it came to remote coaching due to the COVID-19 global pandemic in sharing multicultural literature through culturally responsive practices with educators. Had it not been for my urgency to share weekly newsletters, I may have not kept my own passion alive throughout the remainder of the school year.

Written in a weekly newsletter on December 2, 2019, I wrote:

Newsletters were a place where I can share literature with teachers and 'plant a seed' for both myself sharing literature in the classroom or sparking their interest to search and implement multicultural children's literature. Using this method to educate teachers...

Further, written on December 2, 2019,

This week in my newsletter I shared the book *I am Human: A Book About Empathy* (Verde & Reynolds, 2018) with teachers. A newly released book that I

have purchased. I shared the message that this book shares and encouraged teachers to read it to kids. I also offered to come into their classrooms this week and share the book if they'd like. Unfortunately, no bites were taken. I am hopeful that this book can be shared with kids when I am asked to model a read aloud. Books like *I am Human* (Verde & Reynolds, 2018) are not only multicultural, but also great at sharing growth mindset messages for kids. This book is filled with ways in which kids learn more about themselves and who they are. I am certain that there are lessons and messages to be taken from this book that can support the learning and growing knowledge of kids and the world we live in today.

Culturally responsive incidents through literature, I truly believe in that.

Although a tension when teachers do not share an interest in literature that I provide and offer, I was fully committed to providing opportunities that allowed me to share it with them in some way. My newsletters were I felt "free to share my thinking, my support, my resources. I am safe here; this is where I can shine as a coach" written on March 23, 2020 in a weekly reflection, especially because of the COVID-19 pandemic. "My newsletters are a place where I could dig deep into my heart and share those passions with teachers and students" documented during data analysis while jotting down general notes about my newsletters. Further, "it is my commitment share them for others to enjoy, to really put myself out there professionally to share my passion." Newsletters brought comfort and safety and I could hear that passion reading through data collection artifacts in entirety. I could hear a heart just wanting to share what I loved in hopes of inspiring diverse learning within others.

A professional development that we were provided with at the end of the school year was the most influential for me during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although it was not a professional

development that I planned and/or provided, it was one that impacted me in many ways and in a sense kept me fueled when I felt uncertain about my purpose. In a weekly reflection, I wrote:

One training that means the most to me this week was the one on self-care. This professional learning is the message that I needed more than any other academic professional learning out there. I learned so much about myself as a person, the direction of life, my purpose for being here doing the things I love and am passionate about. I feel like this was the professional development that really brought on new rose buds into my world. I felt, smelled, touched, saw, heard, new life within my career. How our attitude brings purpose to our journey, how are attitude brings engagement with others. I couldn't be happier that it was the last professional development session that I had to attend. How important it is to take care of ourselves first. Be proactive, creative, and active in all we do. Bring structure to our life, make a plan.

I could go on and on about the essential aspects of this professional learning as it was that impactful not only in my life, but in my career as well. I thought about how I included 'self-care' in one of my newsletters in late April 2020 and how needed that must have been for some. I was committed to sharing what I was feeling and needing at the time in my newsletters and hopefully others were feeling the same way too. *Self-Care "Filling Our Cup"* during the COVID-19 global pandemic was the newsletter topic that week. I was hopeful that teachers would respond with what was filling their cup during these hard and uncertain times; professional learning at its all-time best right now; taking care of each other in a social-emotional way of learning, navigating through difficult and challenging times, and most importantly, supporting one another.

I knew early on throughout my career that the circumstances that I could have control over would be the doors that I needed to walk through every chance I had. The *windows of opportunities* serving as professional learning opportunities allowed me to share my ideas and knowledge with others and I was not open to letting anything that I could not control take over. As I shared professional development opportunities with new teachers and multicultural literature in the classroom, I felt complete as I knew through the discussion we engaged in that multicultural literature was going to be a daily aspect of what they were going to look for, seek out, and include in their literacy lessons with students. I saw enthusiastic smiles, heard a compassionate desire to including texts in lessons in words they spoke of, and witnessed a yearning to learn more by them asking to further provide such opportunities.

Commitment to Tension 4: I am committed to balancing both teacher and student-centered coaching models.

As an instructional coach, I was always committed to embracing and balancing both teacher and student-centered coaching models within my daily engagements with teachers. Finding ways to balance the two coaching models was an aspect of my coaching role that I was committed to entirely. Seeking out professional learning for and/or finding creative and different avenues to weave both coaching models into a weekly schedule became priority. I recall as I looked back through the agenda artifacts in my data collection how frustrated I felt during the professional training that I was participating in because “this was something new and I didn’t know how in the world I was going to shift to this work with teachers.” I knew it was going to take some unique and creative ways in which I not only stayed committed to supporting teachers in, but supporting both coaching models that were in currently in place. I felt uncertainty with how I would succeed in this new approach, but I never gave up on the idea or the implementation

of it, I just had not yet know about its process and how it looked in the classroom setting in action in real time. The unique and creative ways in which I stayed committed to this balance were: 1) using teacher-centered coaching models to support teacher teams and individual teachers, and 2) using the student-centered coaching model to support new teachers as part of the New Teacher Support Mentorship Program requirement.

Teacher-centered coaching models were designed to support teachers through an approach that enabled teachers and coaches to work alongside each other through different coaching cycles to enhance pedagogy. As I worked with teachers through a teacher-centered approach, I was able to bring in literature that supported classroom themes, interests, and mentor texts to support curriculum and most importantly multicultural literature as an avenue to culturally responsive practices. Centering our conversations around literature objectives provided during small group sessions ensured that it was possible to engage in a student-centered approach, I just needed a glimpse to make it possible. I found that working through this approach was an avenue that allowed more freedom and I felt safe in doing so. I was also able to support and utilize the teacher-centered coaching model through team collaboration. I would often invite my own thinking and knowledge on how to include multicultural literature into lessons to support culturally responsive curriculum while teacher teams were lesson planning during Professional Learning Communities collaborative sessions.

To revisit an event that I mentioned earlier in my findings, during a unit planning session during a Professional Learning Community collaboration session, I shared my knowledge of multicultural literature with the team as they were thinking about how to incorporate different versions of books from different cultural backgrounds around the world. I was grateful that they allowed me to share what I knew and what I had to offer. They took my suggestions, they

allowed me to plan with them, and they even invited me into their classroom to read some of the cultural versions of literature that we had planned to use. As you can imagine, this experience and others like it, not only filled my heart, but gave purpose to the culturally responsive beliefs that I had set the foundation to the culturally responsive educator that I am today. Again, I received a thank you email memo with a photo of a beautiful red rose. This is when I knew I was not only doing the right work. Just like roses need its environment to thrive, living things that have a place and purpose, and the things that bring them so much love and vibrance to others around them, I knew that coaching was my dream to live and breathe every day. The experiences when I was sharing my passion with others empowered my soul to keep doing what I needed to do to instill and/or hopefully spark interest in others to reciprocate that same feeling about multicultural literature as an avenue to culturally responsive pedagogy. In this instant with this team I felt as if instructional coaching is like a rose in a sense of it always needing oxygen that kept it going. In a weekly reflection, I wrote, “live your life in full bloom” which referred to an image of flowers that spoke a message to me. I felt like I bloomed in my practices and helped others to bloom in their practices too.

The new initiative of student-centered coaching that arose within the school year brought uncertainty to my role as it was something new. Being committed to teacher support, however, I found ways in which I could support this approach in elementary spaces and I was committed in doing so. The more I engaged in self- knowledge building and incorporated each step of the cycle with teachers, the more I found how this approach was possible in a culturally responsive way for me, but only in limited circumstances. This approach, over time, opened new doors for me in supporting new teachers and their new and growing pedagogy due to conversations that we had outside of the coaching cycle itself. I took this approach and dived deep into its seven steps

coaching cycle components with a few new teachers, but quite limited in a culturally responsive way. For example, in one circumstance, a teacher and I were able to take an English language arts essential standard derived from the Common Core State Standards in which literacy could be tied to initiate the coaching cycle within a reading selection in a scripted curriculum. The teacher and I worked creatively through the cycle to fulfil a common goal, but on a more informal level in a sense testing the waters. My commitment to the coaching model and how I could support culturally responsive pedagogy with multicultural literature brought new light and a new focus of using student data to drive instructional coaching practices when working with this one teacher.

Although limited opportunities arose from student-centered coaching, between the time it was initiated and the time the COVID-19 pandemic arose, I was always committed to its implementation and how I could effectively engage in it within my coaching duties the more and more that I learned about it. In all honesty, a student-centered coaching approach in a remote platform was harder than I imagined, much less in a culturally responsive way. In fact, once the COVID-19 pandemic hit, this one engagement that was in the pre-planning phase never was fulfilled. The COVID-19 global pandemic threw us all for a loop and now other things were taking precedence. I had not any formal training on how to combine culturally responsive pedagogical practices through multicultural education and student-centered coaching which resulted in navigating the best that I could because I had a great desire to weave them together in an effective way for diverse learners who need culturally responsive learning opportunities any chance possible. This was an area in my instructional coaching duties that I did not feel comfortable in, did not feel experienced with, yet committed to trying the very best I could to be successful in doing so.

Commitment to Tension 5: I am committed to building and sustaining teacher agency.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, relational circumstances overwhelmingly contributed to both the tensions and commitments as an instructional coach within this S-STEP. It was through many different coaching experiences that I was committed to relationships that contributed to the building and sustaining teacher agency either at the individual level or at the team level. The capacity in which I was committed to supporting teachers was visible change when revisiting classrooms, engaging in lesson planning with them, and/or hearing team collaboration conversations all revolving around culturally responsive practices through and within literacy experiences. Seeing the change unveil through them, changed and brought new learning to me and my role in supporting them in return. Building and sustaining this change brought insight and professional growth on many levels. “Building relationships through literature” written in data analysis in directly referencing to my commitment shared in my passion for not only building relationships with educators and children, but building and sustaining relationships through literature which was where I felt my greatest passion for diverse literature stem from. Differences that can connect us through strong relationships are the roots of a rose that securely holds those relationships together.

The relational aspects visible allowed others to be comfortable with me and share my thinking and learning with them. I provided an avenue of thinking for teachers when they searched for diverse literature for their students to enhance their professional practices which is one of the greatest missions I could have ever accomplished as an instructional coach and culturally responsive educator. The more teachers that sought out my support, the more I became more solid in my own professional practices; the will to keep learning myself enabled an empowering commitment to my professional career. After an exciting and purposeful encounter

with a team asking me during a collaborative session about which texts they could include in their lesson on a civil rights theme, I wrote in my calendar: “promoting change, no matter the hurdles I have to endure, and being able to witness that change within others makes for a key component to my own true feeling of joy and gratitude.” One of the texts shared with them was *Separate But Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family’s Fight for Desegregation* (Tonatiuh, 2014), a book that shared diversity, family, important life events, just to name a few. Even the smallest of coaching moments that arrived within my day brought happiness and purpose and my commitment to sharing my culturally responsive passion through multicultural literature with others. These small, yet powerful and meaningful circumstances ignited a spark within my coaching practices that was like fresh water to a rose in the midst of summer.

Lastly, being committed to building and sustaining teacher agency was an important element and characteristic to my instructional coaching role whether it is in person or through a computer screen coaching virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I learned how I supported teacher agency and how a strong foundation was not built within a school year, but rather over the course of several years as an instructional coach the more I reflected on my practices. When teachers and I were supporting one another, we both felt secure. When I was able to open our online teaching platform and converse with them, I felt essential relationships forming and sustaining through difficult times. When I turned the pages of my calendar, I saw hearts, smiles, flowers that were drawn throughout, I felt accomplished. When I felt the urgency to send another memo or humorous photo (of Zoom attire) to make them laugh or smile or just to check-in or to ask how I could support them, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, I felt persistent in my work and trying to reach out in any way that I could. Written in one weekly reflection, I mentioned that “relationships during this difficult time are such a large aspect of getting though

challenging times and staying connected to the work that I am doing.” I was committed to staying connected in any way that I possibly could during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Relational circumstances were the solid and essential foundations to all of my commitments of my role and made known through data throughout the school year. The true learning and growing as a professional during this school year inspired me to keep learning, keep supporting others, continue to build relationships, and continue to share what remained to be the glue that held my heart together; culturally responsive practices through multicultural children’s literature, even through so much uncertainty, challenges, and difficulties that the COVID-19 pandemic had caused.

Summary

On March 21, 2020, I wrote: “coaching is like a flower in the waters in a flower bed after a heavy storm; striving to survive, and striving to still bring life, strength, and will to support others around it.” Revisiting my data in great depth brought so many different emotions about the school year and my time as an instructional coach and culturally responsive educator. I was committed to navigating through any coaching waters I needed to in order to show and prove my commitment to supporting others no matter the circumstances I was faced with. I felt the most passionate about the literacy work that I did when I was sharing rich literacy experiences with teachers and their students. I felt complete when I was with them and their students engaging in literature experiences that shared a message that often times we cannot do or feel comfortable enough to do on our own; this I felt was the true purpose for literacy and the notion of how navigating through culturally responsive practices through multicultural literature is essential to demographic and social change (Butler, 2020; Bomer & Bomer, 2001; Shor, 1992; Short, 2011; Souto-Manning, 2009). I learned a great deal about myself as an instructional coach, a culturally

responsive educator, and researcher through those heavy waters and storms and it was through my own will to succeed that I was able to bring strength to every situation. In a weekly reflection one can see a photograph of a quote saying, “sometimes when you think you are in a dark place you think you’ve been buried, but you’ve actually been planted” (Christine Caine). It was through the tensions and commitments that brought me to this place, a place where I was essentially being planted to share and continue my love for instructional coaching and multicultural literature through culturally responsive pedagogy; a place where the living contradiction within this work was made clear and further professional growth was possible. By the end of *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018), Alma knew where she was planted in the world of her ancestors from whom she was named after which reflects how the tensions and commitments to my own learning journey spoke about.

This chapter presented the findings uncovered with this S-STEP in all aspects of my role; sometimes braving the storm, staying afloat, being strong in all circumstances, and sheltering my own professional beliefs and needs all the while. The findings were organized according to the research questions within this chapter: 1.) What tensions do I experience as a living contradiction in my work as an instructional coach for elementary teachers of diverse learners who need culturally responsive literacy instruction? which were time, resources, professional development/meetings, coaching models, and resistance. Findings for research question 2.) How do my personal understandings of these tensions honor my commitment to enlarging teachers’ culturally responsive pedagogical practices through the use of multicultural children’s literature in their classrooms? included my commitment to finding time to collaborative with teachers, building classroom libraries, providing professional development opportunities, balancing

multiple coaching models, and supporting teacher agency. Discussion of the findings from my S-STEP, along with implications for research, practice, and policy follow in chapter 5.

Chapter 5

Discussion of the Findings and Implications

This chapter encompasses an autoethnographic summary of my study's findings, conclusions, and implications for future research, practice, and policy. The purpose of this study was to examine my own teacher education practices. My research activities included exploring and telling a personal account of myself as an elementary instructional coach striving to support teachers. The data for this study was conducted and collected using four different documented artifacts from my own teacher education practices within one academic school year. This research could be helpful to readers whom are interested in studying and investigating their own teacher education practices for the purpose of personal and professional growth.

Summary

The analysis reported in my S-STEP was based on two research questions:

- 1.) What tensions do I experience as a living contradiction in the work as an instructional coach for elementary teachers of diverse learners who need culturally responsive literacy instruction?
- 2.) How do my personal understandings of these tensions honor my commitment to enlarging teachers' culturally responsive pedagogical practices through the use of multicultural children's literature in their classrooms?

As indicated in chapter 4, the major concepts from the findings for the first research question revolved around five different tensions that I experienced in my instructional coaching role. First, finding *time* to work collaboratively with teachers was of most significant within my role. Secondly, having *limited available resources* to share in classrooms served as a barrier to the literacy experiences that I endured on a daily basis. Thirdly, engaging in multiple and various

professional development and/or meetings that I facilitated or participated in brought limitations in sharing practices and literature with teachers and their students. Fourthly, having to balance between two different *coaching models* within my role was challenging. Lastly, experiencing *resistance* to coaching opportunities that I provided or were a part of throughout the school year brought uncertainty.

The major concepts for the second research question centered around five self-commitments to the tensions that I ensured within my role. First, I was committed to finding *time* to collaborate with teachers either within the contract day or after hours as well as those that served as formal and informal conversations. Second, committing to assisting teachers in building classroom libraries with *available resources* for individual students was priority. Third, my commitment to providing *professional development workshops* for teachers that included culturally responsive practices through multicultural literature secured my purpose. Fourth, my commitment to balancing multiple *teacher and student-centered coaching models* within each instructional day was essential to my role as an instructional coach. Lastly, my commitment to the instructional coaching role was building, supporting, and sustaining multiple levels of *teacher agency* within current practices.

The following conclusions were made based on the findings from the two research questions asked and researched in this self-study of my own teacher education practices including the tensions I faced as an instructional coach and how I responded to those tensions in my commitment to being an effective instructional coach and a devoted culturally responsive educator.

Tensions I Faced as an Instructional Coach

Some people could be given an entire field of roses and only see the thorns in it. Other could be given a single weed and only see the wildflower in it. Perception is a key component to joy. -Amy

Weatherly

The tensions I faced as an instructional coach sometimes felt like thorns in my role; however it required a different perception and mindset for myself in order to see them in a different way. My own perception and mindset of the tensions I felt were only manageable and tolerable because of how I viewed them, made meaning of them, and embraced them enough to pave way to see potential given many different circumstances within the school year. Reflecting on this quote and tensions in a weekly reflection displayed perseverance and how I came to accept tensions that I was feeling as joyous events that could offer me more as a professional educator. Perception, in an S-STEP approach, proved effective.

The first research question was: What tensions do I experience as a living contradiction in my work as an instructional coach for elementary teachers of diverse learners who need culturally responsive literacy instruction? I determined that the five different tensions within my practice at times hindered some collaborative work with teachers. Overall, tensions led me to conclude that I needed more flexibility within my day to collaborate more effectively and consistently with teachers to support diverse learning opportunities. Exploring my own practices and exploring observed tensions enabled me to not only expand on my pedagogy, but learn how to navigate through them no matter what was brought forth (Hamilton, 1998; 2008). The inner exploration of self-enabled me a directional experience governed by genuine depth.

I found that I focused my time on required tasks (as I should have), but often times did lack the flexibility in my day to share and support culturally responsive practices through

multicultural literature. The required and mandated tasks filled my day and at times did not leave flexibility to weave in culturally responsive experiences for teachers who teach diverse learners. Scholars like Gay (2013), Ladson-Billings (1994), and Hollie (2017) stressed the importance of educators having adequate diverse learning opportunities for children through diverse lessons. These experiences were vital opportunities that held meaning through the collaboration with others and were those that were held most deeply within my heart. I was committed to finding time within my day any chance I had to share diverse lessons with teachers and their students, but changed entirely once the COVID-19 global pandemic was upon us.

I determined that not having access to adequate resources and materials within my reach limited what I had available to share with teachers and their students. In order to provide more efficient and effective culturally responsive practices through multicultural literature in classrooms with teachers and their students a rich variety of genres is essential in a literacy environment. When educators have access to resources for their students ensures successful culturally responsive literacy experiences (Holquist & Porter, 2020). Educators whom provide their students with high quality literature cultivates a literacy environment that is secure and safe in understanding cultures within and around them especially with the new remote learning mode that most schools are currently engaging in (Holquist & Porter, 2020). When students have multicultural literature in their hands they are turning pages, listening and speaking, having grand conversations about and around the words and images, and self-identifying in not only places that look familiar, but also in the greater world around them (Peterson & Eeds, 2007). They are engaging with multicultural literature that supports culturally responsive practices in today's diverse world and expands their lives, ways of living, hope and imagination (Butler, 2020; Short, 2009). These literature experiences were another avenue that ensured fundamental

literacy engagements in classrooms and new avenues within a COVID-19 pandemic would have to be further researched in order to do so for instructional coaches. As I write these words, it gives me a great desire to pick up a book myself in this moment and regain moments of learning about others, their cultures, their beliefs, and mostly their place in the world; a true aspect and purpose of multicultural literature.

Providing teachers with a variety of professional development opportunities is one of the most critical roles of an instructional coach (Chein, 2012; Knight, 2000). Sharing culturally responsive pedagogical professional development learning opportunities with others, especially as a culturally responsive educator, ensures that children are given equal opportunity for cultural experiences when teachers directly instruct children in such lessons (Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1994). I learned that I needed more flexibility in professional learning opportunities where I could share culturally responsive workshops and/or trainings to teachers and staff, especially once we were in a remote learning setting due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is vital to understanding how to implement culturally responsive curriculum into elementary spaces whether the professional development was provided whole group, small group, or on an individual basis. I strived to weave this into my role any chance I had. It is essential to consider professional development opportunities at all costs when it comes to ensuring that educators shift their instruction to meet the needs of the growing and diverse demographics that fill classrooms today (Howard, 2007). Relevant and essential professional development opportunities were those that I strived for each and every day within my role.

In essence, I needed more flexibility in navigating through multiple coaching models within my time spent in classrooms. As the student-centered coaching model came into play well after I was collaborating with teachers in a teacher-centered approach, it would take time to

balance each. A teacher-centered approach to coaching enables coaches and teachers to work through coaching cycles where they focus on improving pedagogy based on teacher's individual goals and supporting teachers in their attempts to focus on improving their pedagogies to enhance overall student learning and achievement (Knight, 2007; Young & Taffeta, 2008). In contrast, a student-centered approach relies strictly on student data including observation, assessment, and academic needs to drive the coaching cycle (Sweeney & Harris, 2016). My findings were challenged based on literature about what typically defines instructional coaching because each approach to coaching was focused and driven differently. Shifting instructional practices to not only meet the needs of my own professional growth, but also for teachers of diverse learners was critical and took great creativity in how I went about my support for them. Howard (2007) argues that in order for one to see the needed change within their own practice, they must be willing to shift their own pedagogies to meet the diverse world around them. I had to learn how to balance the two approaches, but I knew it was going to take some time and more knowledge building on my part to do so. I knew the importance and goal of each approach as well, I just needed the flexibility in learning more about the approaches and how to implement them adequately. The COVID-19 pandemic shifted and brought challenges the work of balancing and even implementing each coaching approach entirely.

Ultimately, supporting strong instructional practices within a school building had always been a great passion of mine. I wanted to be an instructional coach that not only supported teachers, but all staff by offering all that I could to help and support them in their own teacher pedagogy. It takes cultivating and nourishment from instructional coaches to build and sustain relationships within any school culture especially for diverse classrooms that need culturally responsive experiences which I continued to put at the forefront of my work (Burke, 2010).

Promoting instructional change within an educational setting is not easy work and it takes courage and bravery to do so (Jackson, 2014; Kramer & Schuhl, 2017). I often felt like fostering teacher agency and learning how to navigate through those circumstances was my greatest challenge, but also my greatest passion to do so. I tried to find my way into teacher's pedagogical practices and support them in their beliefs any way that I could while sharing my passion of culturally responsive pedagogy with them; I was not always successful in doing so, but I did learn how to improve upon and overcome those experiences through this S-STEP study.

Although many circumstances as an instructional coach served as tensions within this study, I concluded that the tensions within my role were ultimately coaching opportunities. These opportunities opened doors for me and the support I provided to teachers and their students. The daily encounters that I focused on were essentially what I needed in order to share my passion of culturally responsive practices through multicultural literature with others that I was hoping for all along. I believe this was the true transformation of myself examining my own instructional practices and how I could enhance the pedagogy of those around me in return and learning how to navigate each in a remote learning way due to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

How I Responded and Brought Meaning to the Tensions I Faced as an Instructional Coach

I wasn't born to "just teach." I was born to inspire others. To change people, and to never give up; even when faced with challenges that seem impossible." -Unknown

The self- commitments which were uncovered throughout the study ensured that I was not focusing on the challenges and tension that came my way, but rather how I responded to them. My commitment to be an effective coach and a culturally responsive educator showed my passion and perseverance in ways that I visibly saw others inspired by what I was committed to sharing with them. I showed up, I never gave up, and I took on the fears and uncertainties in

everyday situations. When I was asked to complete tasks, I did them. I took every call. I took every memo and message as a commitment to the work I did with educators, even if that meant that I did not have time to eat lunch that day. This quote, documented in a weekly reflection, in early May 2020, told of an aspect of *my story to tell* on how I felt about my purpose and commitment in education with all that I was involved with.

The second research question examined on how I responded to the tensions I faced in research question #1 and my commitments to enlarging teachers' culturally responsive pedagogical practices through the use of multicultural children's literature in their classrooms. Frambaugh-Kritzer (2016) mentions that self-study research is imperative to understanding one own's practices through intensive self-inquiry to further learn about and improve upon what is investigated; essentially making sense of the inquiries at hand. Frambaugh-Kritzer (2016) further indicated that interconnectedness, being transparent within the learned negotiations, and positioning one-self into our own understanding of identity throughout the process is crucial in facing challenges and overcoming them in S-STEP methodology. Exploring and understanding one own's practices could support immediate change to ensure an approach to professional growth which supported my own personal understanding and tensions that I faced and how I stood committed to working collaboratively with teachers and their students in all capacities possible (Berry & Crow, 2009; Kitchen, 2009). These explorations were not only needed, but necessary.

I concluded that I was committed to implementing and sharing my culturally responsive educator beliefs with teachers and their students no matter what I was faced with each and every day. When I was faced with challenges, I met with critical friends to help me navigate through my thinking, using them as a springboard to provide me with feedback about coaching

opportunities, as well as them sharing their perspective with me through discussion when needed. Engaging in such encounters with critical friends proved to be an avenue where I could share my passion of culturally responsive pedagogy with others and learn from them in return. As with S-STEP, I was the sole researcher and participant within the study, but sharing and collaborating with critical community members ensured a collaborative partnership that was rich in inquiry and valuable for me to learn more about my teacher education practices (Frambaugh-Kritzer, 2016; Schuck & Russell, 2005).

I honored my commitment of facing challenges by being a culturally responsive educator who accepted and noticed the limitations by making meaning of them and staying true to what I felt I needed to share with teachers and acting upon it in a professional manner. In addition, honoring my commitment to prepare other educators for culturally responsive pedagogy through multicultural education within our growing and diverse world took precedence (Butler, 2020; Islam & Park, 2015). This precedence of enhancing diverse learning opportunities heightened mid- COVID-19 pandemic when I had to figure out how to be a virtual coach and remained true to my role. White, et. al., (2015) mentions that being flexible in active agents within the instructional coaching role is essential because of the day-to-day uncertainty of what the role of the coach may look like. I fully embraced the COVID-19 mid-pandemic shift and stood committed to my passion and the work that I was engaging in with educators each day even in small and limited capacities.

Most importantly, I discovered that when I felt pressure and tension from one task or another within my day it was the commitment within my passion that cleared and guided a path to share culturally responsive practices through the use of multicultural literature. DeNicolo and Franquiz (2006) highlights how multicultural literature encapsulates several important aspects of

language, attitudes, beliefs and cultures, and by sharing these literacy aspects with teachers and their students is what I strived to do every day. Honoring these aspects of multicultural literacy within my work day ensured that I was committed to contributing to the real-world experiences for educators as our new normal of daily life had become quite diverse (Livingston & Birrell, 1993). It had always been my underlining responsibility as an instructional coach and a culturally responsive educator to provide these experiences because it was something that I had lived, breathed, immersed my heart in, and felt joy in doing so.

When I did not have time to work collaboratively with teachers, I made time to do so. When I did not find the diverse literature that excited me to share with teachers and their students, I purchased with my own funds diverse texts to share with them. When I had the opportunities to share workshops and professional development with teachers, I centered it around reading multicultural literature as an avenue into culturally responsive pedagogical practices. When I was given a new coaching model to now include looking at student data, I jumped on the wagon and weaved it into sharing my new knowledge of it with new teachers who were learning how to steer and grow professionally through their own new pedagogies even if they were very limited within the implementation. In addition, committing myself to teacher-centered coaching as well drove my work with others. When I was faced with resistance to my coaching supportive role, I found ways in through in-person and digital opportunities to foster teacher agency within educational spaces.

Overall, when I sensed or felt tension with my role, I searched deep within my heart and found the commitment I had for diverse educational experiences in elementary spaces to help steer and guide the way and it worked almost every time. Scholars, like Burgess and Houf (2017) and Muhammad and Hollie (2012), express a message that it is up to leaders within a school

building to be the ship that steers others in not only the right direction, but the direction that is needed to advance and grow with the changing world. Once the COVID-19 pandemic drew upon us, our growing world was now changing right before our eyes and so many new questions and adventures to now endure and seek to keep afloat. For me, as a school leader, I was committed to immersing myself in this work and staying true to who I was even when things got difficult, even in a remote learning way. This included seeking opportunities to build community, build capacity within my own learning and the learning of others, supporting transformations within myself and others, and withholding a positive attitude, being enthusiastic, and being resilient all the while. It was always my passion and commitment to do so.

Returning to The Living Contradiction

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the seeds of S-STEP are sown in living contradiction (Whitehead, 1989). The living contradiction within this S-STEP was my desire and commitment to being a culturally responsive educator and also being an effective instructional coach according to the literature which framed the work revealed in my story. The tensions within my work as an instructional coach served and contributed to the lived contradiction, but through meaning making of those tensions was I able to self-commitment to the work that I did within my role as a culturally responsive educator and being an effective instructional coach. I learned and concluded that understanding and unpacking the tensions allowed me to professionally grow and enhance my pedagogy in reference to this contradiction. I also concluded that understanding my teacher education practices in greater depth, through data analysis, was where I able to acknowledge the tensions within my work to enhance my practices in a more effective way because of it. Having a better understanding of the living contradiction within my study enabled

me to uncover future practices needed for S-STEP research, instructional coaches, and school and district level policy.

Implications for Future Research, Practice, and District/Higher Level Policy

Implications for future research, practice, and policy is relevant to this study because of the nature of intensive investigations within myself that it projected. The findings and conclusions within this study enabled me to gain a clearer vision of myself, what I needed to change and improve upon within my own teacher education practices, and how the support of policies in place could enhance the direction in which I was headed and the future for the instructional coaching role.

Future Research within an S-STEP Methodology

Implications for future research within S-STEP methodology (Self Study of Teacher Education Practices) is difficult to say the least because there are currently not enough studies to support how one understands their own teacher education practices and how others could learn from its process. I am curious about this area within the S-STEP community as future research could benefit the inclusion of the instructional coaching role within the field of education when taking a deeper look into one's practices. Future research within S-STEP could explore single point practices in greater depth which could provide more insight learning into professional practices and how to improve upon that one specific content area. In addition, replication of the study to (re)examine practices for professional growth and development could benefit the current S-STEP scholarship which is currently limited. For example, (re)examining education practices over a longer period of time, focusing on one element within teacher education, investigating the implementation of teacher and student-centered programs at other schools, and/or co-collaborating with other educators to further investigate their teacher education practices.

Future S-STEP research could also investigate the role that instructional coaching has on culturally responsive pedagogies through multicultural literature experiences to support diverse learning populations. Future S-STEP research within this area should also include reflecting on instructional practices with educators that are new to the instructional coaching role as it may provide an in-depth exploration in to the role. My own research study has the potential to be part of the greater community of S-STEP because of its reflective process and analysis within deep meaning of my own authentic and genuine lived educational practices and contributes to the growing and expanding scholarship (Howard, 2003; Lassonde, et. al., 2009; Marzano, 2012; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 1998; Schön, 1983). S-STEP is a budding scholarship that has great potential to improve teaching and the understanding of one's own professional teacher education practices, especially within an autoethnographic approach.

Future Practice in Instructional Coaching

The future of the instructional coaching role includes several future practices which are needed within this arena in education and dependent on the success of implementing coaches within elementary spaces. Lindsey, et. al., (2007) expressed how culturally responsive coaching activates educators' (including their own) thinking, beliefs, values, and behaviors all of which could be supportive in sharing interactions with other educators to increase professional practices. The following five recommendations are inclusive and supportive of the instructional coaching role and its effects on overall enhancing self and teacher pedagogy.

- 1.) Instructional coaches need more flexible time in their day to help and support teachers. Knight (2007) and Jackson (2017) emphasize that instructional coaches must have the time in their schedules to work with teachers in order to effectively support teachers' professional practices. Instructional coaches need time to reflect, provide professional learning

opportunities that support the growing diverse world, and have the flexibility to integrate their own professional pedagogies to not only support their own growing curiosities of content elements, but support the growing curiosities of others as well.

2.) Instructional coaches need access to resources that support the learning of diverse learners. Gay (2013) and Ladson-Billings (1994) continues to support the notion of including culturally relevant educational opportunities within a classroom setting at all cost. This importance and notion are no different when thinking about how the instructional coaching role requires adequate and essential access to multicultural resources that support teachers in culturally responsive education. When educators have access to rich literature, literacy opportunities and experiences flourish for all involved especially for leaders who are supporting practices within educational spaces (Butler, 2020). These are critical experiences in today's learning environment and for educators to not only think about, but implement.

3.) Instructional coaches need professional knowledge building training not only to increase their own teacher education practices, but also to help and support those that they work closely with (Gorham, 2013; Joyce & Showers, 1980; Knight, 2007). When instructional coaches are provided with meaningful professional learning opportunities that are in support of our growing and supportive diverse world they are equipped to therefore share those practices with others through collaborative sessions that inevitably increase diverse student learning (Teemant, 2013). Future practice could also include investigating how critical literacy plays a role in culturally responsive practices and how the two could shape and support one own's teacher education practices. I could not explore this avenue of how critical literacy in great depth (Janks, 2000) could be bridged with culturally responsive pedagogical practices through multicultural

literature within this particular study, but I am passionate about exploring and researching this new frontier within my professional practice in the near future.

4.) Although separate entities and different in their approach, instructional coaches need flexibility in navigating through multiple coaching approaches that support the enhancement of teachers' pedagogy to therefore enhance student learning. Scholars, like Knight (2007) and Jackson (2017), encourage an approach to coaching that overall increases teacher pedagogy that then in turn increases student learning. However, having to balance an approach that encouraged the reverse role needs further study of practice to efficiently understand the need for either both approaches to work simultaneously or focus on one at a time within elementary classrooms. Allowing instructional coaches to navigate through multiple avenues to provide professional development to teachers should be considered as the primary role within the field (Knight; Chien, 2013). Ensuring professional learning that is vital in today's growing diverse educational shifts is not only necessary, but holds great importance in the field.

5.) Instructional coaches need adequate time to collaborate with other instructional coaches to learn more about supporting and nurturing teacher identity. Martin and Spencer (2020) and Hamilton and Pinnegar (2000) mention that understanding one own's pedagogy reveals windows into improvements, changes within practices, and growing professionally. When instructional coaches have the opportunities to share their practices it supports and nurtures their professional growth to therefore enhance and support other educators' professional growth that they support. Returning to the perspective of Palmer (2007), stated "teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one's inwardness for better or worse" (p.15). When one dives deep into their own teacher identity, we continue to teach who we are and what we believe in and refining and humanizing our own teacher education pedagogies (Palmer, 2007). As

instructional coaches uncover their identity, it opens grand opportunities to further explore the avenue of teachers sharing the resources they love and are motivated by when working collaboratively with instructional coaches; therefore bridging and weaving growing pedagogies together.

Future District/Higher-Level Policy

The findings and results within this S-STEP prove beneficial at the district, school and higher community level. Future implications for district level should stem from current research as well as essential and effective teacher educational practices within the field. Based on the finding's, districts should consider if and how instructional coaching supports are truly needed and to what capacity within elementary spaces they could impact. Essential questions similar to the research of implementing instructional coaching should consider to what extent instructional coaching duties should take precedence and what aspects of the instructional coaching role are rooted and cultivated within the obligations of instructional coaches and teachers working collaboratively. Additionally, districts should consider what specific instructional coaching approaches (either teacher-centered or student-centered) is needed to best support the desired outcome of the instructional coaching role and the district's mission and vision for **all** (Dufour & Marzano, 2011). Such implications that should be considered when districts consider implementing an instructional coach within their building to support and potentially enhance pre-kindergarten through sixth grade elementary landscapes.

In addition, schools should consider how instructional coaches are tasked to do duties that encourage full collaboration with teachers. Schools should consider the wide range of instructional coaches' knowledge and pedagogies and help to cultivate an environment where they are able to share their beliefs with others to further support professional learning (Abrego,

et. al., 2012; Rodriguez, et. al., 2014; West, 2012). The findings suggest that when teachers and instructional coaches are working collaboratively, it provides a positive culture of learning for all and harmoniously nurtures the school's mission and vision in greater capacity (Dufour & Marzano, 2011). The limitations within a larger education field specifically center around only how instructional coaches are used within a building. Having one instructional coaching perspective when it comes to the instructional coaching role as this study outlines, attempts to supporting a greater community within the field, but is limited in the impact at hand. It is vital that districts and schools continue to support the current research and provide educators with ample opportunities for professional growth that allows them to not only learn new ways of teaching, but instructional coaching as in my case within this dissertation study (Kramer & Schuhl, 2017; Murer, 2012).

Reflection

She is clothed with strength and dignity and she laughs without fear of the future. When she speaks, her words are wise and she gives with instructions with kindness.” -Proverbs 31: 25-26

This scripture mentioned above, added to my weekly reflection within data collection, spoke to my faith that guided my learning and research journey. The telling journey that I had endured over the course of this dissertation study, personally, professionally and spiritually, had been meaningful in so many ways and feared not of what lied ahead. I had always strived to be the best instructional coach and culturally responsive educator for teachers that I could within the last nineteen years in education and in many ways I believe I was fully committed in doing so. Investigating and understanding my own practices to therefore prepare others to be culturally responsive in their own practices proved to be a valuable and meaningful process for myself because I learned how to enhance and/or make necessary changes in my practices and make

meaning of them in order to drive further practices and learning throughout this study (Krasnoff, 2016).

I now have a greater knowledge base and understanding of who I am and what I believed in as an instructional coach, researcher, and culturally responsive educator, yet understanding I still had room to professionally grow, especially as a remote educator due to the COVID-19 pandemic. More specifically, I now understand the capacity to which I had to navigate through challenges that brought me to greater and more grand teaching experiences. I now understand that just because there were challenges does not limit one's capabilities of success, but further guides and promotes curiosities. Because of those experiences, I had professionally grown in ways that I have only dreamed of and seeing my progress unfold and transform within my own self brought forth a glowing light that I had not only discovered, but in many ways rediscovered. This, to me, was a space for me to not only appreciate life, but the professional teacher education opportunities that I was able to do with both strength and willingness. Written in late May 2020, reflecting on my thoughts within the course of this research study, I wrote:

Like a butterfly, I have been brave and definitely transformative. I've transformed spiritually, mentally, physically, emotionally, and professionally. I am a different person today because of the challenges and successes that came my way. I am a coach that is determined and committed to student learning and the support of adult learning how to navigate this new world we are now living in. It is my hope that the experiences are those that help others grow in their experiences.

I heard hope. I heard growth. I heard a passion within me that I had not had the chance to discover before because of true reflection that this study offered me. Further, I cannot wait to witness what this S-STEP research journey has set me up for and what further awaits me because

of it in my professional career as an educator. Possibilities could include further investigating the instructional coaching role, including participants in a study to include their perspectives and thinking about instructional coaching for culturally responsive practices through multicultural literature, teaching university level courses for pre-service educators in teacher education programs (*an ultimate dream*), and collaborating with others in the education field to learn more about self-study research, just to name a few. Taking the time in my own academic studies to learn, practice, refine, reflect, and bring meaning to was the greatest endeavor I could have done for myself as I immersed in my own practices and as Howard (2007) references was changed by it. The best place to begin is within and I can only imagine what is next for me personally and professionally moving further with full strength and not with fear.

As mentioned in chapter 1, like Alma and her desire to share and tell of her story in *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018), I was also able to tell and share my own instructional coaching story through this dissertation study; I will forever be grateful that I had the opportunity to do so. Having an opportunity to not only complete a doctoral research study, but a research study that involved my own teacher education practices was the greatest opportunity of all. When Alma had finally learned of the story of all the names she had, she felt excited, rejuvenated, found her place in the world and most importantly learned more about who she was and how her story was “just right” for her within *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018, p. 28); I could honestly say the same for myself through this dissertation study. Because of a single multicultural piece of literature, my world was able to connect with others in theirs, my story was able to be shared, my story was able to be heard.

In closing, metaphors that we live by help us to discover, unfold, and provide meaning to what and who we truly are; in a sense creating blueprints of our lived experiences which include

a symbolic representation of the self-knowledge one encounters and endures (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Martinez, et. al., 2001; Moser, 2007). A former and inspirational instructional coach once told me, your passion will always be the fuel that drives your purpose; I now understand her wise words and the power within them. To me, instructional coaching is like a rose --sometimes extremely pulsating in its own silhouette of layers and beauty and sometimes darkened and withered, yet both still encompassing a divine purpose.

Epilogue: Full Circle-Transition in Positionality

Transition is an ongoing process in any profession and happens in many different ways and phases over the course of one's career and requires an intense psychological mindset while doing so (Bridges, 2003). The transition in my career as an instructional coach within my S-STEP is of importance to tell as I find it to bring *my story* full circle. My positionality within this S-STEP transitioned when embarking through data analysis, findings, and conclusions which I felt the urgent need to include here in the conclusion to my story. After many heartfelt conversations with family, friends, as well as critical friends, I decided to return back to the classroom setting to continue my career in teaching in the late spring of 2020 for the upcoming 2020-2021 school year. I loved coaching deeply and so very thankful for my time that I was able to share, learn from and teach other educators, so making this transition did not come lightly. This was not an easy decision to arrive at and ultimately I resorted to my faith within my heart and soul to not only get me through it, but have comfort in doing so.

Ultimately, the transition occurred for many reasons, but some salient. I felt a great desire to, again, share my passion of culturally responsive practices through multicultural literature with my own classroom children. I felt a great desire to teach a classroom of children and let that glowing light for literacy felt within my heart to remain lit every day if I chose. I felt a great desire to share literacy practices with children that I learned as an instructional coach and university instructor through texts that other educators had shared with me. I felt a great desire to have the flexibility and choice in reading a text, having meaningful conversations with children around the words and pictures, and share my love of literacy with children every day. I felt a great desire to share my passion for literacy every day with them and hopefully witness overtime the growing passion for literacy within them in return. I felt a great desire to continue my

growing knowledge of culturally responsive pedagogy through multicultural education because I investigated my own professional practices. I had a great desire to have full control over who I shared literature with, when to share texts, where in my day to share books, which avenues would choose to share literature, what titles I chose for the day, and how I engaged in those opportunities with children. I had a great desire to return to my roots and fulfil a dream of being an educator that loved literacy that my mother and fourth-grade teacher instilled in me many years ago. I had a great desire to utilize the five years of experience as an instructional coach and the learned coaching opportunities from it with a group of students of my own. I had a great desire to share multicultural literature that graduate colleagues and instructors in my doctoral and internship programs had shared with me. I had a great desire to share texts with children that other instructional coaches and administrators had, over the years, offered and introduced me to. I had a great desire to share literature that my classroom teacher colleagues shared with me over the years. I had a great desire to continue my literacy journey in empowering ways for others.

In fact, the moment that I made the official transition from instructional coach back to my teacher roots, I had begun to recreate lessons in my mind that coaching opportunities provided me. I began to think about which books I would share and how soon in the new school year I would begin *Heart Maps* with my groups of students. Sharing texts that were close to my heart like *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018), *Where Are You From?* (Mendez & Kim, 2019), *Just Ask! Be Different, Be Brave, Be You!* Sotomayer & López (2019), *Visiting Day* (Woodson, 2015), or *Each Kindness* (Woodson, 2012), just to name a few. I thought about what remote *teaching* was going to look like and what opportunities I would share with a group of children during the COVID-19 pandemic. The more I reflected, the *great desires* were fully brewing and a newfound love of my own teacher education practices quickly began to unfold.

In closing, the quote below that I included in a weekly reflection at the end of the school year, that I had recently come across, provided a picture into where I was mentally in my profession career and personal life. These thoughts and feelings summed up where I was at the moment while having to endure transition and scary uncertain times due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. The thoughts and feelings were my *peace* moving forward even though I did not know what lied ahead of me both personally and professionally.

And then it happens...One day you wake up and you're in this place. You're in this place where everything feels right. Your heart is clam. Your soul is lit. Your thoughts are positive. Your vision is clear. You're at peace, at peace with where you've been, at peace with what you've been through and at peace with where you're headed.

I am thankful today for the experiences I had as an instructional coach and deeply miss those experiences as I type this reflection, yet grateful for the foundation that it had set me up for as a committed culturally responsive classroom *teacher*. One can only imagine how lucky and blessed I am to have had the opportunity to fulfil these *great desires* that consume and live within my heart as well as the *great desires* to further witness what I still have left to do in fulfilling my literacy dreams with others as a culturally responsive educator.

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