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# CULTURAL HUMILITY IN EDUCATION: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF TEACHER PRACTICE AND DEVELOPMENT OF CONCRETE SKILLS IN THE UPWARD BOUND PROGRAM

Onasheho Valerie Toweh  
*University of Massachusetts Amherst*

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CULTURAL HUMILITY IN EDUCATION: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF TEACHER  
PRACTICE AND DEVELOPMENT OF CONCRETE SKILLS IN THE UPWARD BOUND  
PROGRAM

A Dissertation Presented

by

ONASHEHO VALERIE TOWEH

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

September 2023

College of Education

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A Dissertation Presented

by

ONASHEHO VALERIE TOWEH

Approved as to style and content by:

*Sara Whitcomb*

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Sara A. Whitcomb, Chair

*Sarah Fefer*

---

Sarah Fefer, Member

*Ezekiel Kimball*

---

Ezekiel Kimball, Member

---

Shane Hammond  
Associate Dean for Student Success  
College of Education

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to the genuine support I received from my Creator, family, friends, and colleagues throughout graduate school and my training experience. Specifically, I dedicate this dissertation to:

**My Creator and the God of the Universe-** Thank you for placing this dream to become a Psychologist in my heart when I was only 10 years old. I realize that I am fortunate to see how it has evolved and, now that I am done, how it emerged into reality. Over the years, I have experienced several moments of your providence. I have felt your leadership, guidance, and encouragement as I navigated this important training. You never promised that the path to attaining this professional milestone would be easy! While I have experienced triumphs, victories, and prestigious recognition, I have also encountered moments of humiliation, discouragement, and disappointments. Yet, your arms of protection and grace to accomplish what seemed impossible guided me along the way. Completing my doctorate program in Psychology reaffirms to me that where you lead, you always provide, and you desire to make my dreams come true! Thank you, Lord.

**My Family-** You are my greatest fans! I am honored and privileged to be a part of our family clan. I appreciate the virtues you have instilled in me, such as grit, compassion, commitment, and integrity. These virtues, amongst many others, reminded me constantly of the reason I chose to embark on this journey in the first place and why I needed to stay true to who I am. I am both grateful and inspired to have you as a role model and be consistently encouraged by you. You mean the world to me, and I will always appreciate you. Thank you.

**My future spouse and unborn children-**I am excited and looking forward to doing life with you. I cannot wait to share the experiences and lessons I have learned during this period. To

my partner- I hope we push one another along to be all that God will have us be and do for His glory. To my unborn children- You can do and achieve anything God has placed on your heart. I cannot wait to meet you!

**My Tribe**-Your commitment and dedication to my professional training experiences continue to inspire me to my entire dissertation committee, professors, mentors, and colleagues at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. I will always appreciate you.

**Historically marginalized low-income first-generation college students** -Your fortitude, courage, perseverance, and relentless attitude inspire me. As an emerging professional, I aim to continue building upon this work and contribute meaningfully to dismantling systemic barriers. I will facilitate training and consultation based on cultural humility and evidence-based research within public schools and higher education institutions to improve teaching practices and the learning experiences of historically marginalized, low-income, first-generation college students.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Accomplishing this prestigious and huge milestone could only have been possible with the collaborative effort of my “the entire village.” My village believed in me long before this accomplishment. My village cheered me through moments of celebrations and the rough patches I encountered along the way. They advocated on my behalf, provided me with resources, encouraged me, and guided me throughout the journey. I will never forget your acts of kindness and comradery! It meant a lot to me to have you in my life and play such an important role in helping me accomplish this milestone. I will always be grateful to you all.

Specifically, I will like to express my gratitude to:

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**ABSTRACT**

**CULTURAL HUMILITY IN EDUCATION: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF  
TEACHER PRACTICE AND DEVELOPMENT OF CONCRETE SKILLS IN THE  
UPWARD BOUND PROGRAM**

SEPTEMBER 2023

ONASHEHO “O’SHEHO” VALERIE TOWEH, B.A., SOUTHERN ADVENTIST  
UNIVERSITY

M(BUS)., QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Ph.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Sara A. Whitcomb

Even though it has been several decades since the Supreme Court, in *Brown v. Board of Education*, ruled against racial segregation in schools (Yell, 2019), students of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds continue to experience systemic barriers that adversely impact student outcomes across their academic, behavioral, and postsecondary attainment (Musu-Gillette et al.,



2016). Using a qualitative methodology case study approach, this study examined teaching practices within the Upward Bound (UB) Program using a case study approach across three cases through semi-structured interviews involving 10 UB staff. With the ecological systems theory framework as guiding principles, I answered the following research questions:

1. What teaching practices promote student engagement within the Upward Bound program and its diverse student body?
2. What challenges do teaching staff encounter in implementing these practices in the Upward Bound program?
3. What challenges do tutor mentors and clinicians encounter in implementing cultural humility practices in the Upward Bound program?
4. How do tutor mentors and clinicians understand the relationship between cultural humility teaching practices and student engagement?
5. How do the tutor mentors and clinicians perceive the cultural humility training to be socially valid?
6. How does the program director perceive the cultural humility training to be socially valid?

Three major themes with subthemes emerged from the data: (a) Adapting Instruction to Student's Lives, (b) Virtual Engagement Barriers, and (c) Usefulness of the Cultural Humility Training.

For students of racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds, culturally responsive teaching practices make a tremendous difference in their educational outcomes, particularly in allowing for a relatable and relevant learning experience. Teaching practices that promote identity development and critical pedagogy played a major role in positively influencing student engagement. This research study was conducted during the pandemic when Upward Bound

students accessed and engaged virtually. Participants of this study expressed virtual engagement barriers such as the limited ability to initially connect with students, virtual fatigue, and the difficulty for students in balancing their multifaceted lives with remote learning. Infusing Cultural Humility in teaching practices made a difference in students' learning experiences and overall engagement. Participants attested to improving student engagement, as evidenced by their excitement about learning, internal motivation, and value in participating in the Upward Bound program. The current study's implications for research and practice are discussed.

**Key terms:** *cultural humility, cultural responsiveness teaching practices, social justice, student engagement, and ecological system theory.*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	vii
ABSTRACT.....	viii
Table of Contents .....	i
List Of Tables .....	vi
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Overview of Upward Bound .....	1
The Program Director.....	3
The Teaching Staff.....	3
The Tutor Mentors .....	4
The Clinicians.....	4
Gap in Teachers’ Preparation and of other Adults who Support Diverse Students	5
Gap in Clarity about Cultural Humility in Education.....	7
Gap in Implementing Cultural Humility Practices in the Classroom.....	8
Positionality Framework.....	8
Demographic Factors .....	9
Experiences.....	9
Beliefs, Values, and Attitudes.....	10
The Current Study .....	11
Organization of Study.....	12
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	13
The Adverse Impacts of Systemic Barriers Within the Educational System On	
Students Of Racial And Ethnically Diverse Backgrounds.....	13

Teaching Practice .....	16
Understanding Cultural Humility to Foster Culturally Responsive Teaching Practice.....	18
The Ecological Systems Theory Framework.....	23
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN.....	30
Target Population and Participant Selection.....	32
Procedures and Data Collection.....	36
Data Analysis.....	37
Instrumentation.....	39
Reflexivity.....	39
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS.....	42
Details of the Analysis.....	42
Data Preparation.....	42
Engaging in Epoché.....	42
Coding Data.....	43
Developing Themes.....	44
Case 1 Teaching Staff.....	45
Teaching Staff Profiles.....	46
Cario.....	46
Laelia.....	46
Ariana.....	46
Naida.....	47
Isabella.....	47

Teaching Practices that Promote Student Engagement .....	47
Adapting Instruction to Students’ Lives.....	47
Establishing Positive Connections with Students.....	51
Challenges Teaching Staff Encounter in Implementing Culturally Responsive	
Teaching Practices in the Upward Bound Program.....	52
Educators’ Concerns in Delivering Culturally Responsive Practices .....	52
Undoing the Hierarchy of Language Damage Done.....	53
Case 2 Tutor Mentors and Clinicians .....	54
Tutor Mentor and Clinicians Profiles .....	55
Rihanna.....	55
Alona .....	55
Matteo.....	55
Yuan .....	56
E.A. Tutor Mentors’ and Clinicians’ Understanding of the Relationship Between	
Cultural Humility Teaching Practices and Student Engagement .....	56
Adapting an Ecological Approach to Empower Students .....	56
Building and Maintaining Positive Relationships with Students.....	60
Challenges Tutor Mentor and Clinicians Encounter in Implementing Culturally	
Humility Practices.....	62
Virtual Engagement Barrier.....	62
Portraying Educators’ Challenges with Cultural Adaptation Practices ....	64
Unfamiliarity with the Cultural Humility Concept and Related Terms....	64
Case 3 Program Director, Tutor Mentors, and Clinicians .....	67

Tutor Mentors', Clinicians', and the Program Director's Perceptions of the Cultural Humility Training to be Socially Valid .....	68
The Program Director's, Tutor Mentor, and Clinician's Profiles .....	69
Abigail .....	69
Rihanna .....	69
Alona .....	69
Matteo .....	69
Yuan .....	70
Tutor Mentors', Clinicians', and the Program Director's Perceptions of the Cultural Humility Training to be Socially Valid .....	70
The Usefulness of Cultural Humility Training .....	70
Acceptability of the Cultural Humility Training .....	74
Feasibility of the Cultural Humility Training .....	75
Support Of the Cultural Humility Training .....	78
Ideas for Facilitating Discussions .....	81
Chapter 5: DISCUSSION .....	85
Discussion .....	89
Adapting Instructions to Student Lives .....	89
Virtual Engagement Barrier .....	92
Usefulness of the Cultural Humility Training .....	95
Usefulness of the Cultural Humility Training .....	95
Implications .....	96
Implications for Research .....	96

Implications for Practice.....	99
APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT .....	102
APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM .....	104
APPENDIX C: TEACHING STAFF INTERVIEW PROTOCOL .....	109
APPENDIX D: TUTOR MENTOR & CLINICIAN INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....	112
APPENDIX E: PROGRAM DIRECTOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL .....	116
REFERENCES .....	118

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. <i>Definitions of Key Terms</i> .....	27
Table 2 <i>Demographics of Participants</i> .....	35



## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The educator workforce in United States public schools is primarily White, while it serves a racially diverse student population. Statistics show that 79% of public-school teachers identified as White on a nationally recognized U.S Department of Education Schools and Staff Survey (National Center of Education and Statistics, 2018). This racial disparity between White teachers and diverse students could impact teachers' evaluations of student behaviors, learning abilities, and more importantly, their future trajectories (Downey & Pribesh, 2004; Egalite & Kisida, 2018; Joshi & Springer, 2018). There is a shortage of well-prepared teachers to work with the increasingly diverse student population (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Forlin, 2010; Lee et al., 2017).

Interventions geared toward promoting culturally responsive practices that include cultural humility are an essential aspect of preparing teachers to work with diverse students. For this research, I explored the concept of cultural humility through a case study of the Upward Bound program.

### Overview of Upward Bound

In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Educational Opportunity Act into law to address the War on Poverty (Groutt 2014; McElroy & Armesto, 1998; Pitre & Pitre, 2009). The legislation led to the establishment of the Office of Economic Opportunity and TRIO programs for low income, first generation students (McElroy & Armesto, 1998). The initial TRIO programs of the 1960s included Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Services (Pitre & Pitre, 2009). However, since then, legislation established additional programs, such as Educational Opportunity Centers, Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program, and Upward Bound Math/Science Program (Graham, 2011). The TRIO programs were designed

to assist first-generation and low-income students in precollege preparation and completion (Bloom, 2008; Strayhorn, 2011). Unlike student aid programs, which address financial barriers, TRIO programs address a plethora of barriers to higher education for low income students, including social, economic, academic and cultural barriers (Coles, 1998; Villapando & Solorzano, 2005; Perna, 2015).

The focus of this research was on Upward Bound, one of the first precollege TRIO programs and considered a model flagship federal program (Cahalan & Goodwin, 2014; Groutt, 2003). Upward Bound is designed to identify high school students from first generation college backgrounds who are low achieving and need motivation to pursue their postsecondary education (Groutt, 2003). The eligibility requirements stipulate that two-thirds of the participating high school students must be of low-income first-generation status and potentially be the first to attain a bachelor's degree, and the other one-third must be of low-income status or first generation (Cahalan & Goodwin, 2014). Upward Bound serves high school students in the ninth through twelfth grades, offering them support with the college admissions process and assistance in preparing for college entrance examinations. Upward Bound provides academic instruction, tutoring services, counseling, and includes a cultural enrichment component with added value to the regular school program and a well-rounded precollege experience (Bloom, 2008; McElroy & Armesto, 1998; Strayhorn, 2011)

Upward Bound is a year-round program. It includes an intensive summer academic program held on college campuses (Coles, 1998; Perna, 2015). In addition, Upward Bound supports participating students during the school year with after-school and Saturday support services. It also provides college readiness in the form of supplementary academic instruction in reading, writing, mathematics, and science. The overarching goal of Upward Bound is to foster

an advantageous environment in which low-income and first-generation college students can thrive while completing their secondary education and looking to be enrolled in and graduate from postsecondary institutions (Cahalan & Goodwin, 2014).

Upward Bound employees play a crucial role in ensuring that the goals of the programs are accomplished. The faculty are comprised of the Program Director, Teaching Staff, Tutor-Mentors, and Clinicians. A description of each of the staff roles within the Upward Bound program is presented below. The information is heavily referenced from the Office of Economic Opportunity (1966) guidelines and application instructions for the Upward Bound Program. The Clinician role was included to the description specifically for the Upward Bound Program studied in this current study. The clinician role may not be represented across all Upward Bound Program nationally. It is important to note that the Clinician role was included in the description specifically for the Upward Bound Program studied in this current study. The clinician role may not be represented across all Upward Bound Programs nationally.

### **The Program Director**

The program director role is a full-time position for the summer component and academic year. The role involves both planning and implementation of the project. The program director also demonstrates sensitivity to and respect for the type of students to be enrolled in the Upward Bound program.

### **The Teaching Staff**

The teaching staff could be college and secondary school faculty. Eligibility for the role is based on experience. Similar to the program director role, members of the teaching staff also demonstrate sensitivity to and respect for the type of student to be enrolled in the Upward Bound program. The majority of the Upward Bound teaching staff are members of the regular teaching

faculty of their respective institutions. The teaching staff may include assistant project directors and specialists in fields such as art, drama, film, reading, speech, and recreation. The role could be full or part time. Although teachers from secondary schools and college are preferred, the role is extended also to Peace Corp returnees, Vista volunteers, undergraduate and graduate students, and youth workers. In addition, the responsibilities associated with the role include working with students who may have reacted negatively to social and or educational environments. Also, youth workers with experience working with students could serve as counselors and heads within the dormitory and work with students who may be suffering from psychological difficulties.

### **The Tutor Mentors**

The tutor mentors could be from inside or outside the sponsoring institution. Tutor mentors also live in the dormitories with students and play an important role in establishing rapport with the Upward Bound students. Also, to further promote the rapport of tutor mentors with the Upward Bound students, tutor mentors are selected based on the racial or ethnic backgrounds representative of the students.

### **The Clinicians**

The clinicians are primarily a summer position. Clinicians support a life skills class in the summer institute program. The Clinicians are from psychology graduate programs and recruited based on racial or ethnic backgrounds being representative of the students.

Given the Upward Bound program's commitment not only to the academic instruction, tutoring services, and counseling, but also to the cultural enrichment component of their students (Alemán & Gaytán, 2017; Cooper, 2011; McElroy & Armesto, 1998; Museus, Yi & Saelua, 2017), fostering a learning environment that is inclusive of these key educational goals is essential to fulfilling a well-rounded precollege experience. Cultural enrichment is particularly

important considering the Upward Bound program target population: students of low-income status, first-generation students, and students of diverse racial or ethnic backgrounds. This population of students faces unique barriers, including social, economic, academic, and cultural barriers, which could potentially impede their ability to access education. Culture is especially vital, as it contributes to relevance in students' educational experiences and could also impact their trajectory (La Salle et al., 2020).

Understanding students' cultures is beneficial for students of diverse backgrounds. Researchers have demonstrated improved academic outcomes (Doll et al, 2012), social-emotional wellness (Larson et al., 2018; McGoey et al., 2016), teacher-student relationships which could potentially foster their ability to access education (Davis, 2006; Kincade et al, 2020; Pianta et al., 2012), and college-readiness (Farinde-Wu et al, 2017; Welton & Martinez, 2014) when teachers engage in culturally responsive practices.

Despite these aforementioned outcomes, when teachers and adults who support diverse students do not intentionally develop both knowledge and skill to foster cultural awareness, it could further widen historically systemic, rooted issues relating to academic achievement gaps and impede social-emotional wellness among students of diverse backgrounds. As these systemic issues influence diverse students' outcomes, this next section addresses three broad issues that relate to my problem statement: (a) Gap in Teachers' Preparation and other adults who Support Diverse Students, (b) Gap in Clarity about Cultural Humility in Education, and (c) Gap in implementing Cultural Humility practices in the Classroom.

### **Gap in Teachers' Preparation and of other Adults who Support Diverse Students**

Teachers and other adults who support diverse students in school are often unprepared (Brown et al., 2016; Frankenberg & Siegel-Hawley, 2012; Gay, 2002). Also, there is an

increased cultural divide between teachers and students; 82% of public school teachers identify as White, while it is estimated that by 2024 students of diverse ethnic backgrounds are expected to account for 54% of the student population (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Multilayered, multidimensional, and multifaceted systemic issues contribute to the unpreparedness and cultural divide given the large inequality in provision of education resources in the United States. Furthermore, the inequality is reflected in schools serving mostly historically marginalized and low-income first-generation students, where there are usually large class sizes, fewer teachers and counselors, and fewer and less-rigorous academic courses, extracurricular activities, books, materials, supplies, computers, libraries and special services (Darling-Hammond, 2004a, 2007). These conditions clearly depict the systemic financial, social, and economic barriers that students of disadvantaged and diverse ethnic or racial backgrounds are faced with in their quest to access education.

In addition to the barriers mentioned above, historically marginalized and low-income first-generation students encounter cultural barriers. For instance, teachers' lack of cultural awareness combined with the increased cultural divide between students and teachers could result in misrepresentation of students' behavior, increasing rates of referrals for special education, and inappropriate office discipline referrals (Educator Policy Innovator Center, 2017). Although these disparities seem to have a not-so-covert cause resulting from the complex nature of the systemic issues, it is likely that it contributes to impeding diverse students' access to equitable learning environments, qualified teachers, and high expectations that could promote their academic outcomes (La Salle et al, 2020; Santiago-Rosario et al., 2021). Hence, barriers, especially cultural barriers, need to be addressed to promote more equitable learning environments.

### **Gap in Clarity about Cultural Humility in Education**

There is also a gap in clarity of what an interdisciplinary, culturally sensitive concept like cultural humility could look like when practiced in education, particularly in the classroom setting. The concept of cultural humility emerged from the public health and nursing fields through the work of Tervalon and Murray-Garcia (1998), who coined the *cultural humility* term. Cultural humility is “having an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented rather than self-focus, characterized by respect and lack of superiority toward an individual’s cultural background and experience” (Hook et al., 2013, p. 353). An integral aspect of cultural humility is acknowledging that it is an ongoing process of learning and growing rather than cultural competence, which essentially involves merely gaining factual knowledge (Waters & Asbill, 2013). Tervalon and Murray-Garcia (1998) mentioned three factors of cultural humility: (a) Commit to lifelong self-evaluation and self-critique, (b) fix power imbalance, and (c) develop partnerships with people and communities.

Over the last two decades, the concept of cultural humility has been extended beyond the nursing and public health fields to be used in other fields of study, including mental health, education, and school psychology. Foronda and colleagues (2016) did a concept analysis of cultural humility. The study aimed to identify common themes across interdisciplinary fields to pull together key attributes of cultural humility and determine a standard definition of the concept. Based on Foronda and his colleagues’ (2016) concept analysis, cultural humility is the process of ongoing self-awareness, openness, being egoless, engaging in respectful dialogue with individuals of other cultures, self-reflection, and self-critique. The consequences of cultural humility are empowerment, partnerships, and life-long commitment to advocacy and fixing

power imbalances. For this paper, cultural humility will be defined based on Foronda and his colleagues' (2016) definition, stated above.

Teachers and adults who support students of diverse backgrounds play a fundamental role in actualizing the key attributes of cultural humility in students' development. The key attributes of cultural humility are openness, egolessness, respectful dialogue with individuals of other cultures, self-reflection, and self-critique. If these attributes are practiced, it could foster cultural awareness and enhance the relationships between teachers and adults who support students of diverse backgrounds.

### **Gap in Implementing Cultural Humility Practices in the Classroom**

There are hardly any concrete lessons that explicitly outline how teachers and other adults can implement cultural humility practices in their work with diverse students. Although its attributes demonstrate what the concept of cultural humility could look like if practiced, a gap remains in the practice of how to teach cultural humility to teachers and other adults who support diverse students in schools. Questions can be posed, such as, "what does cultural humility look like in practice? and how can it be practically segmented into tangible lessons that can be utilized for the training of adults and teachers alike who work with diverse students?" These imperative questions have yet to be appropriately addressed.

### **Positionality Framework**

The researcher's positionality statement addresses factors along several key status dimensions relevant to the study's purpose, including demographic factors, experiences, beliefs, values, and attitudes (Haynes, 2021). I introduce myself by highlighting, describing, and explaining the status dimension factors relevant to the study's purpose.



## **Demographic Factors**

Relevant demographic factors are related to the researcher and the study, such as gender, race, ethnicity, national and cultural background, and socio-economic background, and will be discussed in this section.

As a Black African woman, I recognize that my socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, identity, immigration status, education, and college-generation status have shaped what I do and how I navigate the world. I am from a middle-class family and was raised by parents with master's degrees. I also have multiple extended family members with doctorates in science- and social science-related fields. My identity (who I am) and achievements (what I accomplish in life) have been tremendously impacted by modeling and witnessing the lives of the adults I was surrounded by growing up. I was intentional about including culture in this study, as it is an important aspect of my identity and how I show up to spaces. I imagine this is similar for the Upward Bound students, who bring their cultural identities with them to school.

## **Experiences**

In this section, the researcher's experiences, including developmental, social, educational, and professional experiences relevant to the study, will be explained (Haynes, 2021).

My parents are highly skilled professionals and demonstrated to my siblings and me that we could accomplish anything we desired to do. Given their strong influence on us through modeling and investment in our education, we earned master's degrees in various disciplines. However, within my nuclear family, I am the first to pursue a doctorate, as I am the first in my generation. I relate to the Upward Bound first-generation students, as I understand the joy of being a trailblazer while at the same time navigating the struggles of gaining access to education while coming from a diverse cultural and ethnic background. I also relate to the challenges with

learning in spaces where there is limited cultural representation across both the student body and the teaching faculty.

Also, as a school psychology doctoral candidate trained in an eco-behavioral paradigm focused on evidence-based practices, I am interested in other aspects of students' lives that are not necessarily seen at face value in the classroom or school, including culture. This is important because it helps give a better well-rounded picture of who a student is, what their needs are, and how best to support them. My training in an eco-behavioral paradigm inspired this research study, as it is important to me to gather data that could contribute to improving future teaching practices involving integrating culturally responsive practice during instruction, especially when working with diverse students.

### **Beliefs, Values, and Attitudes**

The beliefs, values, and attitudes of the research regarding the study's topic, population, and sample are discussed in this section.

I recognize that the circumstances I grew up in and my privileges, whether human, social, or financial resources, may differ from the Upward Bound students and this research study participants (i.e., teaching staff, tutor mentor, clinicians, and program director), either encountered prior to or during this study. However, based on research and my lived experiences, there are presumptions that the study's participants may have experienced similar barriers in implementing culturally responsive practices (i.e., teaching virtually, being unfamiliar with some students' cultural backgrounds, and lack of formal education training). These similarities helped me connect with, build trust and camaraderie with the participants because I related to many of these experiences.

## The Current Study

Using a qualitative methodology case study approach, this study examined teaching practices within the Upward Bound program across three cases. The first case investigated teaching practices that promote student engagement from the perspective of the teaching staff. It also examined the challenges experienced when implementing these practices within the Upward Bound program. Next, based on tutor mentors and clinicians, the second case explored the relationship between cultural humility teaching practices and student engagement as well as the challenges encountered in implementing these practices in the program. The third case examined the social validity of this study's cultural humility training from three perspectives: the program director, tutor mentors, and clinicians in the Upward Bound program. The following research questions were addressed in the study:

7. What teaching practices promote student engagement within the Upward Bound program and its diverse student body?
8. What challenges do teaching staff encounter in implementing these practices in the Upward Bound program?
9. What challenges do tutor mentors and clinicians encounter in implementing cultural humility practices in the Upward Bound program?
10. How do tutor mentors and clinicians understand the relationship between cultural humility teaching practices and student engagement?
11. How do the tutor mentors and clinicians perceive the cultural humility training to be socially valid?
12. How does the program director perceive the cultural humility training to be socially valid?

## **Organization of Study**

Chapter One provided an overview of this dissertation topic, including the current study's background and purpose, research questions, and positionality framework. Chapter Two comprehensively reviews relevant key literature related to racially and ethnically diverse students. This review examined the importance of teaching practices that are culturally inclusive as well as systemic inequities within the education system that impacted their educational and behavioral experiences. Chapter Two concludes with a summary of the ecological systems theoretical framework and states how conceptualizing the theoretical framework aligned well with the research objectives that examined teaching practices and student engagement with the Upward Bound program. Chapter Three outlined the research methodology used within this study. This section discussed qualitative methods, case study approach, participant selection, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures. Chapter Four outlined the themes surrounding participants across the three mini-cases. Lastly, Chapter Five will conclude with a discussion of findings and provide implications for research and practice.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter investigated literature through four sections: (a) the systemic barriers within the educational system and how these obstacles adversely impact the educational and behavioral outcomes of racial and ethnically diverse students, (b) the adverse impacts of teaching practices that promote monocultural values and standards, and positive link between teaching practices that are culturally inclusive and student engagement, (c) the use of cultural humility, as a culturally responsive teaching practice, (d) ecological systems theory theoretical framework. Notably, as this dissertation advocates for teaching practices that are culturally inclusive, I examined my literature through a holistic lens with the realization of systemic barriers that impact marginalized students' educational outcomes while also focusing on culturally responsive teaching practices that embody cultural humility practices and ways to address inequity in learning spaces through implementing these practices while working with students, particularly students of racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds.

### **The Adverse Impacts of Systemic Barriers Within the Educational System On Students Of Racial And Ethnically Diverse Backgrounds**

Currently, the United States educational system does not reflect a commitment and willingness to serve students of all backgrounds to combat inequity. This has been a well-known and deeply rooted systemic issue (La Salle et al., 2020). Though it has been several decades since the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling against racial segregation in schools (Yell, 2019), students of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds experience systemic barriers that adversely impact student outcomes across their academic, behavioral, and postsecondary attainment (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). There are several systemic issues in the educational system linked to racial and ethnically diverse students, including,

overrepresentation in special education, disproportionate office discipline referrals, inadequate dispersion of educational resources, and unfavorable teacher expectations (Barbarin & Aikens, 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2004a, 2007; National Center of Learning Disabilities, 2020; Smolkowski et al., 2016). In this section, the study focuses on the systemic issue relating to teacher-student racial mismatch and its impact on the outcomes of students of racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds.

Within the educational system, there is a disparity between the demographic of the teaching population and the diversity of students. The teaching population in public schools in the United States represents 79% of the White educators' workforce, while it serves a growing number of diverse students (National Center of Education and Statistics, 2018). The multilayered and nonlinear nature of this racial mismatch could impact teachers' expectations of student academic and behavioral outcomes and could also lead to long-lasting future consequences (Barbarin & Aikens, 2015; Downey & Pribesh, 2004; Sirota & Bailey, 2009). The cultural fit of students and teachers makes a difference in students' trajectories. Researchers have indicated that assigning teachers to students of similar race or ethnicity produces more favorable teacher ratings and increased student academic achievement (Redding, 2019). Hence, there must be a strong commitment to inclusive learning environments (La Salle et al., 2020).

In the absence of cultural fit between students and teachers, students are more likely to be rated as consistently presenting with adverse outcomes such as chronic absenteeism (Holt & Gershenson, 2019), disruptive behaviors (Wright, 2015), disproportionate office discipline referrals (Skiba et al., 2019), and lower academic outcomes (Egalite et al., 2015). These disparities are often attributed to bias resulting from failure to appreciate the cultural context of students, affecting their learning behaviors (Gay, 2002). For instance, when classroom

management strategies are not designed to consider the unique cultural context of students, the strategies consequently do not motivate students of diverse backgrounds to change behavior (Downey & Pribesh, 2004).

This study contributes to research and practice at both the macro and micro levels. For instance, at the macro level, understanding how teacher-student racial mismatch are linked to the educational outcomes of diverse students is vital to gain insight into the root cause of the issue. Similarly, at the micro level, this study contributes to addressing the gap related to educational outcomes by adding to our understanding about the relationship between cultural humility practices and student engagement, which is helpful to bridge the educational outcomes gap through equipping educators with concrete skills that cater to diverse students' needs.

As schools in America become increasingly racially and ethnically diverse, the National Association of School Psychology (NASP) is committed to promoting inclusive learning environments that respect and respond to differences across race, ethnicity, culture, and language (NASP, 2021). This inclusive cultural commitment is demonstrated through partnerships, workforce representation efforts, bilingual publications, online resources, and advocacy, and training is reflected across the practice domain of school psychological service delivery. Furthermore, the role of a school psychologist in promoting culturally-responsive practices is demonstrated by improving cross-cultural communication across consultation, intervention and assessment to adequately meet the needs of students, staff, and parents.

This study aligns with the school psychologist service delivery stipulated by NASP, particularly regarding planning for culturally responsive prevention and intervention practices. The study investigated teaching practices within the Upward Bound Program using a case study approach across three cases. The first case focuses on culturally-responsive teaching practices

that promote student engagement and the challenges teaching staff encounter as they implement these practices in the Upward Bound program. Specifically relating to intervention, the second case examined the relationship between cultural humility teaching practices and student engagement while also considering the challenges encountered in implementing these practices in the Program. In addition, the third case examined the social validity of this study's cultural humility training from three perspectives: the program director, tutor mentors, and clinicians in the Upward Bound program. This research study aimed to contribute to understanding the concept of cultural humility in education. It also focused on understanding the social validity of the cultural humility training program and gaining insights into the usefulness, feasibility, and effectiveness of training, which could be helpful in the future.

### **Teaching Practice**

Teaching practices in America are often tailored to promote monocultural values and standards that further perpetuate historic achievement gaps between White and diverse student populations (Richards et al., 2007). Monocultural values and standards are deeply rooted in the assumption that a monocultural norm is developed by those with power and privilege in society based on deficit and inferiority paradigms (Souto-Manning & Rabadi-raol, 2018). Within the context of the study, monocultural values and standards are nonculturally inclusive teaching practices and fail to recognize the cultural context of individual students, instead assuming that all students should uphold and adhere to the same values and standards. This ideology is problematic because it undermines students of racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds' unique experiences and identities (Goodwin et al., 2008; Pérez & Saavedra, 2017).

This study aimed to contribute to the literature by addressing the gaps resulting from monocultural values and standards in teaching practices and implementing culturally inclusive



practices, specifically cultural humility, to improve diverse students' learning experiences by promoting inclusivity and relatability of the instructional content. Authors of a recent phenomenological qualitative study explored the influence of race and ethnicity on learning experiences of students of color. Students reported that they felt not respected, experienced cultural isolation, and had difficulties relating to instructional materials because of the minimal relevance to their lives (Nganga et al., 2021). This study reiterated the need for teaching practices that are culturally inclusive, especially when teaching students of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. It also highlights the link between culturally inclusive teaching practices and student engagement.

Student engagement is defined as the personal investment of students' positive emotional and behavioral responses that promote school completion, including increased academic outcomes, improved student-teacher relationships, and fostering future-oriented thinking that aligns skills acquisition to their postsecondary endeavors (Christenson et al, 2012). Within the context of this study, student engagement is operationally defined as the student's ability to pay attention and prepare for class, the effort exerted towards their behavior and schoolwork, and their perception of the importance of school. Researchers have demonstrated that students of diverse backgrounds reported that their teachers' culturally responsive teaching practices helped promote a sense of belonging and support (Dickson et al., 2016).

Student engagement is particularly important, as it predicts their overall educational success (Cents-Boonstra et al., 2022). For students of racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds, who have been historically marginalized and experienced systemic barriers that adversely affect their educational outcomes, it is crucial to address how they can be better supported to engage in school. Undoubtedly, there is an overall need for educational reform that

creates and promotes inclusive, diverse, and equitable learning spaces (Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation, 2018), a change that promotes inclusion through a socially just lens is necessary.

Social justice promotes respect, equity, and culturally responsive practices while also advocating for social and systemic change that aligns the local or contextual needs and values (Shriberg & Clinton, 2016). These social justice values align well with the ethical, legal, and training standards of school psychology. For example, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) 2020 “Principles of Professional Ethics” stipulates four broad ethical principles: (a) to respect the dignity and rights of all persons; (b) professional competence and responsibility; (c) honesty and integrity in professional relationships; and (d) responsibility to schools, families, communities, the profession, and society. To abide by these principles, it is fundamental that school psychologists understand the unique role culture plays in shaping all students’ contextual experiences (NASP, 2020). Culturally inclusive practices reflect the connection between social justice and school psychology.

School psychologists serve as gatekeepers ensuring that culturally inclusive practices are upheld so that the needs of all students are met, especially those of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds. This research study sought to use principles described within the field of school psychology to investigate teaching practices that promote student engagement from the perspective of teaching staff within the Upward Bound program.

### **Understanding Cultural Humility to Foster Culturally Responsive Teaching Practice**

Culturally responsive teaching is defined as a student-centered approach that uses cultural knowledge, reference frames, past experiences, and unique styles of ethnically and culturally diverse students to foster increased relevance and efficacy (Gay, 2018). Culturally responsive teaching can serve as a link between equity and cultural diversity, as culturally responsive

teaching promotes the expression of values, beliefs, and knowledge that acknowledge the essence of racial and cultural diversity in learning. The benefits of culturally responsive teaching practices include increased student achievement and engagement, classroom effectiveness, and motivation among students (Hoytt et al., 2022; Wages, 2015). It also fosters cross-cultural understanding and inclusivity and establishes a solid foundation of trust for positive relationships (Samuels, 2018). These features of cultural responsiveness in teaching embody cultural humility.

Cultural humility can be conceptualized as “a way of being” (Foronda et al., 2016, p. 214) that allows one to reflect on their background to be fully aware of how those experiences shaped them and actively contribute to social justice practices. This study contributes to scholars’ understanding of the concept of cultural humility in education by addressing teaching practice gaps through teaching concrete skills aimed at fostering cultural humility within the Upward Bound program and its diverse student body. While implementing cultural humility in public schools was beyond the scope of this study, understanding the barriers to implementing the concept in the Upward Bound program may be helpful in the development of future cultural humility training that can be tailored to the needs of the public schools.

Understanding cultural humility as life-long learning rather than a short-term endeavor is essential. Cultural humility is the process of ongoing self-awareness, openness, being egoless, respectful dialogue with individuals of other cultures, self-reflection, and self-critique. The consequences of cultural humility include empowerment, partnerships, and life-long commitment to advocacy and fixing power imbalances (Foronda, 2016; Foronda, 2020). The shift in the definition from attributes (e.g., self-awareness, openness) to outcomes (e.g., partnership, life-long commitment) takes time. It reiterates the definition of cultural humility as a process that influences our understanding of ourselves and others.

Understanding how the practice of cultural humility influences both the educator and student is essential. Hook et al. (2013) conceptualized cultural humility as maintaining an interpersonal stance focused on others instead of oneself, with attributes of respect and lack of superiority toward others' cultural backgrounds and experiences. In addition, Yeager and Bauer-Wu (2013) included other attributes of cultural humility, such as creating a balance, where individuals are focused on others but also on themselves, making bias explicit, engaging in a life-long learning process, and promoting flexibility. This study contributed to the literature on modeling the implementation of cultural humility through a wrap-around approach.

The wrap-around approach is a centralized systematic method of providing youth with support in an effective manner, as research indicates that it increases the number of youths being served, accountability, and the use of best practices standards (Sather & Bruns, 2016). For this study, the wrap-around approach was implemented in the initial cultural humility training for tutor-mentors and clinicians. They also received ongoing weekly support regarding the implementation with their students. Similarly, students were exposed to cultural humility practices multiple times during the week across various settings. For example, cultural humility was infused in their work with tutor-mentors across academic instructional areas, such as Spanish, science, and college readiness. In addition, the student experienced the integration of cultural humility in their Life Skills class facilitated by clinicians.

Foronda's (2016) definition resulted from a concept analysis of the varying definitions of cultural humility across several fields, including public health and nursing, education, and counseling. The report includes the key attributes and consequences of the cultural humility definition. For this research study, the cultural humility definition included a synergy of Foronda's (2016) and Yeager & Bauer-Wu's (2013) work. Cultural humility is defined as a

process of ongoing self-awareness, openness, being egoless, respectful dialogue with individuals of other cultures, self-reflection, and self-critique; the consequences of cultural humility include empowerment, partnerships, life-long commitment to advocacy, fixing power imbalances (Foronda, 2016), and flexibility or humility (Yeager & Bauer-Wu, 2013).

The concept of cultural humility emerged from the public health, nursing, and mental health fields through the seminal work of Trevalon and Murray-Garcia (1998), who coined the term *cultural humility*. Trevalon and Murray-Garcia (1998) stated three essential tenets of cultural humility: ongoing self-reflection and self-critique, fixing power imbalances, and a life-long commitment to advocacy partnerships. Cultural humility practices in the public health and nursing fields are used to train physicians on how best to work with patients of diverse cultural backgrounds. Hook et al. (2015) mentioned that encouraging physician trainees to reflect on their experiences of working with patients from diverse cultural backgrounds through journaling has helped to unpack implicit bias and fostered openness and self-awareness toward others.

In a pilot study that preceded this research study, journaling through a virtual discussion board was encouraged weekly. The tutor-mentors reflected on the implicit bias in their entries and reported similar outcomes, including increased meaningful interactions with students, stronger tutor-mentor-student relationships, and increased self-awareness resulting from questioning and studying historical issues (Toweh, 2020). Although the sample size included only four participants and cannot be generalized to the overall education field, it is noteworthy that the potential of unpacking implicit bias through journaling using a virtual discussion board shows promising outcomes.

In the mental health field, cultural humility practices are also being introduced in work with clients of diverse cultural backgrounds to improve the therapeutic working alliance between

a counselor and their client (Hook et al., 2013). An assessment has been developed to determine the cultural humility discrepancies between a counselor and clients and, hopefully, to intervene to improve such gaps. Childs (2016) explored the benefit of cultural humility for counseling trainees' supervision. He mentioned how cultural humility is valuable for the supervisee and supervisor relationship.

In school psychology, cultural humility literature is emerging. Similar to Child's (2020) work on supervision, Fisher (2020) did work on school psychology supervision. However, she also added a social justice perspective. Fisher (2020) mentioned the critical role of a school psychologist in promoting self-awareness and equitable access to educational opportunities. Cultural humility can also serve as a bridge between social justice and cultural diversity, as it fosters a deepened awareness that promotes teachers' understanding of themselves and their interactions with diverse students and families. It also encourages student-teacher relationships, enabling improved academic and social-emotional outcomes for students of diverse cultural backgrounds who historically are often at risk (Pianta, 1996, Pianta & Walsh, 1996, Pianta et al., 2012). Teachers must be trained on how cultural humility practices could make a positive difference in students' academic and social-emotional outcomes.

Working from a cultural humility lens may influence a teacher's understanding, instruction, and response to student social-emotional and academic behavior by improving teacher's self-awareness and their interactions with diverse students and families. A school psychologist can facilitate this process through organizational consultation focused on supporting teachers through intentional training on cultural humility. The training offered in this study draws from an organizational consultation frame with the objective of promoting the attributes of

cultural humility in Upward Bound (i.e., ongoing self-awareness, openness, being egoless, respectful dialogue with individuals of other cultures, self-reflection, and self-critique).

### **The Ecological Systems Theory Framework**

The ecological theoretical framework guided this research study. The ecological systems theory demonstrates the interaction between students and their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). It depicts how individual students are members of ecological systems. For instance, each student is nested within structures of the multilayered ecological environment. The nested structures, including the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem, mirror the ecological systems' interconnection. It also demonstrates how environmental changes throughout a student's lifespan influence the evolving individual. Understanding how the collective systems influence individual students is just as important as understanding each student, particularly as it helps us gain a comprehensive understanding that goes beyond the interaction on a face-to-face basis. This study contributed to understanding how culturally responsive teaching practices, specifically within a cultural humility framework, helps in bridging the gap in understanding the student(s) and the collective systems that influence them. Also, the study helped provide insights into the relationship between cultural humility and student engagement, which is essential. It could strengthen culturally inclusive teaching practices and reduce the historical systemic achievement gap for diverse students.

The nested structures of the ecological systems environment consider other individuals in the students' environment, the nature of such connections, and individual students' indirect influences on others in their first-hand interactions (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For instance, the microsystem shows the connection between the student and their immediate setting, such as home, school, and workplace. Setting refers to the physical features where students engage in

activities and participate in specific roles at various times. Essentially, the elements of a setting include location, physical features, time, activity, the student(s), and their roles. Understanding the microsystem and the various setting elements are fundamental aspects of this research study, particularly in understanding students' context within and outside the school environment and in tailoring teaching practices that are relatable and relevant to their needs.

Similarly, the mesosystem, also within the nested structure of the ecological system, includes the major settings that influence students' lives at particular developmental stages, as it depends on the student and their context. For example, for one student, it could be their family, school, or peer group. For another student, it could include church, camp, and workplace (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The mesosystem includes several microsystems. The mesosystem is essential to understand within this research study because it further gives a broader perspective on the interrelated aspects of students' lives at particular stages of development. For example, a teaching staff member who teaches the college readiness class at the Upward Bound program, which supports students with preparing their college application, could find it helpful to know the level of support or lack of support individual students receive on their own applications outside or within Upward Bound. This insight could help with tailoring the support offered in the class to be relevant to the student's needs.

In addition, the exosystem comprises formal and informal social structures that could infringe upon, influence, and alter the immediate settings of students. Furthermore, the exosystem could include the neighborhood, the local, state, and federal governments, mass media, and social networks. Both formal and informal structures shape students' educational experiences. The educational system in the United States is an example of a formal structure within the ecosystem, and students' extended family backgrounds are an example of an informal



system. For instance, understanding the systemic barriers specific to teacher-student racial mismatch and how it could adversely impact students of racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds helps understand the root cause of the issue. This study aimed to contribute to the research and practice by providing tutor-mentors and clinicians with concrete skills they could use in their teaching practices infused with cultural humility.

Also, the macrosystem is the institutional structure pattern comprising culture and subcultures factors. The macrosystem includes social, political, economic, and legal systems. The micro, meso, and exo ecological systems are embedded within the macrosystem. The priority or position students and their caretakers have within the macrosystem influences the treatment and interactions both experience across different settings. Understanding the macrosystem and the other aspects of the ecological systems environment was critical to this research study, particularly from a teaching practice standpoint in developing the cultural humility training offered to tutor-mentors and clinicians. It was also important throughout the research process, from conceptualizing the problem, determining the design, selecting the sample, choosing the appropriate measurement, data collection, and developing and implementing culturally relevant practices. Undoubtedly, there is a need for ecologically-valid and culturally-relevant teaching practices, particularly for students of diverse backgrounds.

The ecological orientation broadens one's perspective of understanding human development and focuses on development in context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). It embodies biological, psychological, and social science disciplines that witness the evolution of students' developmental trajectories. For instance, a hypothetical question may be raised, such as how does this research study contribute to our understanding of the teaching practices that promote student engagement across the biopsychosocial aspects of the diverse students within the Upward

Bound program? Although gathering information from individual students within the Upward Bound program was beyond this study, it was necessary to conceptualize that the theoretical and validity frameworks aligned well with the research objectives.

Within this chapter, I examined the teaching practices and student engagement within the Upward Bound program. I also explored the relationship between cultural humility and student engagement and the challenges encountered during implementation. I also investigated how Tutor-Mentors, Clinicians, and Program Directors perceive Cultural humility as socially valid.

**Table 1***Definitions of Key Terms*

**Key terms:** *cultural humility, cultural responsiveness teaching practices, social justice, student engagement and ecological system theory.*

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Cultural Humility</b>	For this research study, the cultural humility definition includes a synergy of Foronda's (2016) and Yeager & Bauer-Wu's (2013) work. Cultural humility is defined as a process of ongoing self-awareness, openness, being egoless, respectful dialogue with individuals of other cultures, self-reflection, and self-critique; the consequences of cultural humility include empowerment, partnerships, life-long commitment to advocacy, fixing power imbalances (Foronda, 2016), and flexibility or humility (Yeager & Bauer-Wu, 2013).
<b>Cultural Responsiveness Teaching</b>	Cultural responsiveness teaching is defined as a student-centered approach that uses cultural knowledge, reference frames, past experiences, and unique styles of ethnically

(table continues)

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and culturally diverse students to foster increased relevance and efficacy (Gay, 2018).

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**Ecological System Theory**

The ecological systems theory demonstrates the interaction between students and their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). It depicts how individual students are members of ecological systems. For instance, each student is nested within structures of the multilayered ecological environment. The nested structures, including the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem, mirror the ecological systems' interconnection. It also demonstrates how environmental changes throughout a student's lifespan influence the evolving individual.

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**Social Justice**

Social justice promotes respect, equity, and culturally responsive practices while also advocating for social and systemic change that align the local or contextual needs and values (Shriberg & Clinton, 2016).

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**Student Engagement**

Within the context of this study, student engagement is operationally defined as the student's ability to pay attention and prepare

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(table continues)

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for class, the effort exerted towards their behavior and schoolwork, and their perception of the importance of school. Research demonstrates that students of diverse backgrounds reported that their teachers' culturally responsive teaching practices helped promote a sense of belonging and support (Dickson et al., 2016).

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### CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

A case study is a specific entity designed to study the experiences of cases operating within real situations (Stakes, 2006). It is an empirical method that examines a phenomenon or an issue in-depth and within its real-world context, particularly when the boundaries between a phenomenon and context are not entirely clear (Yin, 2018). The issue may be one or more cases within a bounded system (Creswell, 2007). A case study describes and analyzes a bounded system in-depth (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The characteristics of the case study include particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic features (Merriam, 1998). The particularistic feature focuses on a particular phenomenon, event, situation, or program. Next, the descriptive feature derives meaning from the detailed description of an entity under study. The heuristic feature informs one's understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. All three features highlight the unique characteristics of the case study approach as a qualitative method of inquiry. The researcher's rationale for using a case study as a research tool results from the fit between the features of the case study approach and the goals of this research study.

This research study sought a comprehensive understanding of three particular mini-cases involving teaching staff, tutor mentors, and clinicians and the social validity of the cultural humility implemented at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst (UMASS) Upward Bound program. Research indicates that student engagement improves when teachers implement culturally responsive strategies in their work with diverse students (Huo et al, 2010; Krasnoff, 2016). The purpose of this was to investigate by gathering information from various staff (i.e., teaching staff, tutor mentors, clinicians, and the program director) within the UMASS Upward

Bound program about their perceptions of student engagement when culturally responsive practices are implemented. The research questions were as follows:

1. What teaching practices promote student engagement within the Upward Bound program and its diverse student body?
2. What challenges do teaching staff encounter in implementing these practices in the Upward Bound program?
3. Following the cultural humility training, how do tutor mentors understand the relationship between cultural humility teaching practices and student engagement?
4. What challenges do tutor mentors encounter in implementing cultural humility practices in the Upward Bound program?
5. How do tutor mentors perceive the cultural humility training to be socially valid?
6. How does the program director perceive the cultural humility training to be socially valid?

In the first case, the researcher investigated by gathering rich, descriptive information from teacher staff to understand teaching practices and student engagement within the context of the Upward Bound program and its diverse student body while examining the challenges teaching staff experienced during implementation.

In addition, the second case focused on understanding how tutor mentors and clinicians understand the relationship between cultural humility and student engagement. It also investigated barriers tutor mentors and clinicians experience during implementation. In the third mini-case, the researcher examined the social validity of the cultural humility training from an administrative and staff standpoint. With the heuristic case study feature in mind, the researcher

strove to illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon mentioned above (i.e., across the three mini-cases) by capturing and meaningfully conveying the participants' perspectives.

In addition, the case study approach was also appropriate for this research study because it systematically gathers detailed, in-depth data from multiple sources such as observations, reports, interviews, documents, and audiovisual material (Merriam, 1998). This study included several sources of information, such as interview transcripts, audiovisual recordings, and memo notes documents, which helped gather rich information about the phenomenon and address the research question across the various participants.

### **Target Population and Participant Selection**

This research study's population included the entire staff and student body within the UMASS Upward Bound program (See Table 2). The participants were comprised of teaching staff, tutor mentors, clinicians, and the program director, who represented the study's sample. The participants' characteristics varied across gender, educational background, cultural identity, and the paths that led them to their roles within the Upward Bound Program. Regarding demographic statistics, 10 participants identified as either male, female, or queer. Pertaining to their educational background, some of the participants were formally trained educators. In contrast, others had rich expertise in various fields without formal training that earned them a college education degree. In terms of the path that led them to their current Upward Bound roles, in general, the teaching staff were recruited through professional networking due to the relevance of their expertise to the students. Tutor mentors and clinicians were mostly recruited based on the alignment of their interests with the objectives of the Upward Bound program, which broadly included bridging equitable access to education, tutoring, psychology, and mental health.



Pertaining to their cultural identity, five participants identified as having Puerto Rican heritage, one as Irish American, one Chinese, one Afro-Colombian, one Afro-Latina, and one Black.

This research study was a qualitative case study with three mini-cases. The first case exclusion criteria were other teaching staff who were not suggested and are not part of the master teachers within the Upward Bound program. The inclusion criteria were suggested teaching staff (master teacher) recommended by the Program Director of the Upward Bound program. For the purpose of this study, master teachers were operationally defined as exceptional practitioners who deliver instruction excellently while also embedding culturally responsive practices to promote relevance to the students.

The second case exclusion criteria were other staff of the Upward Bound program that are not tutor mentors or clinicians. The inclusion criteria were tutor mentors and clinicians recruited for the Summer Institute Program. The third case exclusion criteria were other staff of the Upward Bound program that were not tutor mentors, clinicians, or the program director. The inclusion criteria were tutor mentors and clinicians recruited for the Summer Institute Program as well as the Program Director of the Upward Bound program.

This study's sampling strategy focused on the richness of information gathered from participants across the mini-cases. There were 10 interviews administered for this study. Alder and Adler (2011) recommended a sample size comprising at least 12 participants with consideration for the graduate researcher's time constraints to be available for gathering data given the duration of their program. In addition, given the purposive nature of recruiting participants for the study and the voluntary participation from recruits, sampling continued until participants were not available to be recruited voluntarily. Out of the initial pool of participants,

some appeared not to be interested in participating, as evidenced by not responding to emails intended for recruitment despite several attempts to follow up.

**Table 2***Demographics of Participants*

Participant	Gender	Educational Background	Path to Role	Cultural
P1 TS	Male	Teaching Artist	Similar interest in artist field as the director	Puerto Rican; Ghana, West African (Grandmother); New York
P2 TS	Female	Graduate PhD Student in Education Policy and Leadership Program; Masters in Higher Education	Colleagues involved in the Upward Bound program.	Latina; first generation immigrant; parents from Columbia and Venezuela; African heritage; Afro-Latina
P3 C	Queer Woman	Graduate PhD Student in Psychology Program; Bachelor of Art in Psychology	Involvement in Psychology/Mental Health	Puerto Rican and Black; Mother, Puerto Rican; Father, Black
P4 C	Male	Graduate PhD Student	Aligned with professional development in adolescents	Mix of American New England Culture and Puerto Rican Culture
P5 TS	Female	Education Psychology; Masters in Policy Studies in Education	Aligned with interest in bridging access to resources, equity. Support and activating agency for youth; met the director in graduate school	Puerto Rican

P6 C	Female	Graduate student in Psychology; Post Doc	Interest in supervising the clinicians and filling gaps in people's planned breaks.	Family is Jewish.
P7 D	Female	Bachelors's, Masters, PhD in International Education	Interest in access to resources and education.	Irish American working class
P8 TM	Male	College student majoring in Chinese American Emotional Health (senior)	Interest in tutoring education	Chinese

### **Procedures and Data Collection**

After the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the participants, which was comprised of teaching staff, tutor mentors, clinicians, and the program director in the Upward Bound program in the Northeastern region of the United States, were identified purposely and recruited via email. Recruiting of participants was systematically conducted in two steps. The first step involved the program director recommending participants for the study. In addition, the program director sent a personal email to potential participants to introduce the researcher. The second step involved the researcher sending a follow-up email to the participants outlining the purpose of the study, sharing available times for interviews, and the consent form. Additional reminder emails (with opportunities to reschedule or cancel) were sent within 24 to 48 hours

from the start of the interview. The interviews were conducted after obtaining the consent forms from the participants and confirming scheduled times and dates.

All interviews were administered for 60 minutes via Zoom. Audio recordings and anonymized transcripts were used for analysis. A qualitative interview protocol was used to guide the questions for the interview. The structure of the interview protocol was semistructured so that the interviewer probed further to clarify information that was not necessarily intended to be asked during the interview but was determined based on the flow of each interview. Each interview usually began with defining key terms, including culture, cultural identity, and cultural humility, after which the researcher probed participants with questions on the interview protocol. The researcher sought professional guidance about the interview protocol questions and attended a qualitative interview workshop where materials on qualitative interviewing were shared (George Mwangi, 2020).

### **Data Analysis**

Following the process of interview completion of the participants, the audio-recorded interviews were sent to Rev.com for transcription. The audio recordings were humanly transcribed and were generally ready in 24 to 48 hours. Once the transcripts were ready, the researcher sent each participant a transcript of their interview to ensure that the content of the transcribed interview was representative of their responses. The process of checking in with participants is called member check-in. Member check-in involves receiving feedback from the participants to improve the authenticity and credibility of the study's findings (Brit et al., 2016; Caretta, 2015; Mero-Jaffe, 2011). Some participants reported being satisfied with the transcripts, while others had concerns about language. For instance, some bilingual participants reported a misrepresentation of their words in some parts of the transcripts from Rev.com. The researcher

worked with each participant to address the concerns by editing the transcripts to represent their voices.

Following the member check-in process, the researcher got familiarized with the transcript data by thoroughly reading each transcript, reflecting, and independently being involved in the open coding process by going over each transcript line by line. After thoroughly reviewing each hard copy of the transcript, the researcher moved on to the Nvivo software for the next coding stage. The researcher referred to and was guided by Adu's (2019) book for step-by-step procedures for the thematic analysis process. First, the researcher began by sorting the data. Sorting involves grouping codes to help address the study's research questions. Next, using the individual-based sorting strategy, which involves assessing the characteristics of each code, the researcher then placed the codes into clusters with the research questions in mind and labeled each cluster in such a way that it represented the features of the codes within it.

Specifically, the systemic approach of labeling each cluster involved determining the dominant codes. The researcher identified the dominant codes from the list of codes based on their frequency and number of cases under each research question respectively. The dominant code was then selected based on the highest frequency and cases. Next, the dominant codes were grouped into individual clusters, which involved creating a cluster table, placing the dominant code in a clustered column, and then reviewing the features of each code by focusing on the descriptions and comparing them to the dominant code to ascertain their shared relationships. Each cluster was carefully determined through consideration of the characteristics of the codes with the research question in mind. After this, each cluster was labeled to represent the features of the cluster and addressed the research questions.

## **Instrumentation**

The instruments or interview protocols (See Appendices A, B, and C) were comprised of various questions, including background/demographic, knowledge, and experience/behavior questions. The background/demographic questions captured the teaching background, a description of the path that led the participant to the teaching role, and their cultural identity. In addition, the knowledge questions varied across the three cases, as questions were asked based on their relevance to the research objectives and questions. For instance, questions relating to good teaching practices were included in the interview protocol for teaching staff. In addition, knowledge questions across the mini-cases captured the participants' definitions of cultural humility. Next, experience/behavior questions included questions related to cultural humility practices and student engagement. Lastly, questions relating to barriers to implementing cultural humility practices were captured (see Appendices A, B, & C).

## **Reflexivity**

In this section, the researcher's theoretical paradigm will be explained (2021).

As a researcher, my theoretical paradigm aligns closely with interpretivism. This paradigm suggests that there are multiple realities, and people make meaning of the world based on their background (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These realities are influenced by the researcher's and participants' backgrounds and experiences (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2011). As a Black African woman, I could relate to several participants in the study and students with the Upward Bound program who shared similar backgrounds (i.e., racial or cultural identity). However, while we shared these characteristics, many unknowns still relate to backgrounds and experiences.

The heterogeneous nature of culture and the unique perspectives the participants in the study bring to the table further reiterate the importance of acknowledging the multiple realities emphasized in interpretivism. With this in mind, it was important to me to include questions that captured these salient aspects of participants' cultural identity in the interview protocol. For instance, questions were included that contributed to promoting a better understanding of their path to the role in the Upward Bound Program and how their experiences have shaped their knowledge and implementation of culturally responsive practices. This understanding helped me gain insight into the participants' context and a more comprehensive understanding of how their experiences and backgrounds were formed within an interpretative theoretical lens.

Interpretivism paradigm assumptions are based on four elements: ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Ontology is the study of being, which highlights how an individual's perception of reality influences their interpretation or the lens through which they see the world (Scotland, 2012). The researcher's knowledge production is influenced by their ontology, impacting how their reality is shaped and what they accept as truth. To address the issue proactively in the current research study, it was important for the researcher to capture the participants' multiple perspectives (i.e., across teaching staff, clinicians, tutor mentors, and the program director) while being open to the viewpoints that participants bring. The semi-structured interview format allowed for flexibility in capturing these perspectives. It also allowed the participants to freely share their thoughts and experiences about the research phenomenon. It helped gather rich information to address the research questions for this current study.

In addition, epistemology is the study of knowledge (Cooksey & McDonald, 2011). To address the epistemology assumption, the researcher engaged in self-reflection to become aware



about of any influences (i.e. relating to the researcher's background, experiences, and preconceptions) and set them aside so that it does not overly influence the research phenomenon and the participants from which the data is been gathered through a process called bracketing. Bracketing is done to prevent the influences of one's perspectives and preconceptions from influencing the qualitative research analysis process (Adu, 2019). For example, it was important to the researcher to reflect on their positionality before embarking on data analysis.

Further methodology refers to the extent to which the research design, methods, approaches, and procedures are used to investigate the research phenomenon (Keeves, 1997). To address the methodology assumption, the researcher intentionally chose a qualitative methodology with a semi-structured interview approach to gathering data from the participants. It allowed me to get to know the participants and inquire further (i.e., by probing further questions that were not on the initial transcript), if necessary, pertaining to the research objectives. There was also a member check-in after the transcripts were ready to allow participants to give feedback about the extent to which such a document represented their voice.

In addition, axiology represents values considered when making decisions relating to the philosophical approach (Finnis, 1980). In order to assist with addressing the axiology assumption, the research gathered information about the participants context through demographic questions. The context of the participants was useful in both understanding the participants background and how-to interpretation the data, as it was assisted with developing rich codes and themes to address the research questions. Also, presenting participants demographics could be useful to future researchers so that they are able to transfer the findings to similar situations.

## **CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS**

The overarching purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore teaching practices, student engagement, and the social validity of cultural humility training. The findings were organized in response to two research questions for each of the three cases. The three cases included a combination of themes and subthemes relevant to each research question.

### **Details of the Analysis**

For this research project, all the interviews were recorded and transcribed and then imported into NVivo, a qualitative data software. The details of the procedures followed for data analysis were guided by systematic data analysis steps, including data preparation, engaging in epoche, coding the data, and developing themes (Adu, 2019).

#### **Data Preparation**

The data analysis process began by preparing the 10 interview transcripts for the analysis. The process involved assigning each participant a pseudonym, deidentifying the data to protect the participants' privacy, and reviewing each transcript multiple times to understand the data and determine the most appropriate qualitative analysis tool to be utilized. I chose to analyze the data using NVivo.

#### **Engaging in Epoché**

By engaging in epoché, I prepared myself mentally by reflecting on my perspectives, preconceptions, and expectations and laying them aside (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). The three main procedures I followed included: identifying my perspectives, preconceptions, and

expectations; taking time to reflect on them; and intentionally preventing them from influencing the process of coding and theme development.

### **Coding Data**

Coding the data involved selecting the most appropriate coding strategy. I identified relevant information, known as empirical indicators, and placed labels on them, called codes (Strauss, 1989). Based on the case study research approach, I decided that the interpretation-focused coding technique was the best suited coding technique because it creates codes that show the meaning the researcher derives from the rich information identified in the data. To organize the data before using the interpretation-focused coding technique, I labeled each of the six research questions into respective tags called anchor codes (Adu, 2019). The essence of assigning labels to the research question was to better organize codes and themes under their respective research questions when analyzing the data in NVivo. The research questions and their anchor codes are below:

1. What teaching practices promote student engagement within the Upward Bound program and its diverse student body? (Teaching Practice\_Student Engagement)
2. What challenges do Teaching Staff encounter in implementing these practices in the Upward Bound program? (Challenges Teaching Staff Encounter\_Implementation)
3. How do Tutor Mentors and clinicians understand the relationship between cultural humility teaching practices and student engagement? (Tutor Mentors (TMs) and Clinicians \_Relationship Cultural Humility\_Student Engagement)
4. What challenges do Tutor Mentors/Clinicians encounter in implementing cultural humility practices in the Upward Bound program? (Challenges TMs and Clinicians Encounter\_Implementation)

5. How does the TM's and Clinicians perceive the Cultural Humility training to be socially valid? (TMs and Clinicians\_Perception of Cultural Humility training\_Socially Valid)

6. How does the Program Director perceive the cultural humility training to be socially valid? (Program Director's perceptions of CH training\_Socially Valid)

Using the interpretation-focused coding strategy, I examined relevant information from the data to address the research question. I generated meaning out of the relevant information selected. Codes were developed based on the meanings that emerged from the excerpts. A code is a phrase used to label the relevant information selected from the data. I read each of the transcripts thoroughly and imported each of the transcripts into Nvivo. In Nvivo, I labeled each research question and included information about the empirical indicator meaning, the code, and a brief description of the code.

### **Developing Themes**

I developed themes by using the individual-based strategy and presumption-focused coding to generate themes. I grouped codes for the first four research questions into clusters using the individual-based strategy. I began to review and compare the features of the codes to determine their similarities while considering the research question I needed to address. Specifically, I developed a table on Microsoft Word with columns representing clusters. I placed the dominant codes into the first column, representing the highest number of cases and counts.

The remaining codes were compared with the dominant code to determine the shared relationship. If codes had a shared relationship, they were placed into the cluster that housed the dominant code. A code was placed into the next cluster when it did not have a shared relationship with the members of a particular cluster. After sorting the entire code into clusters

(themes), I labeled each cluster based on the features of their assigned codes. I kept track of the total counts of each cluster, and I added the counts for the cluster members.

### **Case 1 Teaching Staff**

In Case 1, I explored teaching practices implemented within the UMASS Upward Bound program. Specifically, I examined teaching staff participants' perceptions of student engagement when implementing culturally responsive practices. In the case study approach, teaching staff shared their account of teaching practices and student engagement within the context of the Upward Bound program and its diverse student body while reflecting on the strengths and challenges experienced during implementation. The data collected from these semi-structured interviews contained rich insights that unveiled themes related to barriers and practices promoting student engagement within the Upward Bound program. In the interview, each teaching staff member answered the two research questions related to case 1:

1. What teaching practices promote student engagement within the Upward Bound program and its diverse student body?
2. What challenges do Teaching Staff encounter in implementing these practices in the Upward Bound program?

In analyzing the data, it became clear that teaching staff drew from their lived experiences gathered from their teaching expertise, family, and cultural background, as well as the feedback of students to foster student engagement within the Upward Bound program. Teaching staff described how their lived experiences and backgrounds impacted their teaching practices. To unpack these findings, I briefly describe the teaching staff's backgrounds and accounts based on their responses to the research questions.

## Teaching Staff Profiles

The data presented in this research study include the accounts of teaching staff with rich and colorful teaching experiences used to promote student engagement among the diverse students within the Upward Bound program. While the teaching staff shared similarities culturally, distinct differences undoubtedly existed that highlighted their non-monolithic nature. The following brief accounts represent each teaching staff member.

### **Cario**

Cario is a Latinx male who is a teaching artist. He was born and raised in New York. Cario's cultural identity has been influenced by his Puerto Rican family background and the traditions of his godmother from Ghana in West Africa. Through his professional network, he became a teaching staff member at Upward Bound.

### **Laelia**

Laelia is a Latina female working toward completing a graduate program in the Education Policy and Leadership Program at the Doctoral Level. She holds a master's degree in higher education. Laelia's family and cultural background include an Afro-Latina heritage, as her parents are from Columbia and Venezuela. She is from an immigrant family and is a first-generation college student. Laelia became involved in the Upward Bound program through a colleague who was involved and introduced her to the program.

### **Ariana**

Ariana is a female educator born and raised in Puerto Rico. She migrated to the United States of America as a teenager. Ariana's first language is Spanish. She shared, "Language is important for me in my cultural identity." She holds both masters and doctoral degrees in Education. Ariana became acquainted with the Upward Bound program through her professional

network. She became involved due to shared interests in the program's objectives, including bridging access to resources, equity support, and activating agency for youth.

### **Naida**

Naida is a Black Queer Female Educator. She is certified in science, biology, life sciences, and studio arts, as she teaches in a high school. Naida holds a doctorate. She culturally identifies as a science and art teacher with a doctoral degree.

### **Isabella**

Isabella is a cisgender female. She holds a bachelor's degree in social work and a doctorate. Isabella's family is from the Pacific coast. She identifies culturally as Afro-Colombian and Catholic.

## **Teaching Practices that Promote Student Engagement**

### **Adapting Instruction to Students' Lives**

Adapting instruction to students' lives means modifying the instructional content to align with students' cultural backgrounds. This theme represents participants' perspectives on teaching practices that promote student engagement within the Upward Bound program. It highlights students' struggle to connect what is being taught in the classroom to their lives.

Cario asserted:

[...]many of the black and brown children that we may deal with in Upward Bounds are coming from educational settings where expectations are very low for them and where, even when the expectations are high, the expectations are based upon a particular amount of cultural elitist, meaning that the standard for these black and brown children is being set by children of European descent. And so one is not allowed to be themselves.

The challenge of students masking their cultural identity could become a barrier to student engagement. During the interview, Cario posed a rhetorical question and described his thoughts about engagement. He stated:

[...]how are we practically, meaningfully, and intentionally engaging with diversity? For me, the foundation of engagement is that we deal with each individual based upon the unique qualities they bring to a space.

Creating safe spaces where students can freely contribute to their learning while feeling recognized and accepted is essential to student engagement. Annie asserted:

[...] I think when students feel seen, they can be more present in the content. Unlike invisible students who have no presence and so, they feel marginalized, invisible, and unimportant. They're going to act that way in the classroom in terms of both their engagement and even their presence with the class or with the material.

Annie emphasized that students' ability to relate to the content fostered engagement.

Cario shared a similar thought as he also declared:

[...] we begin to see students, maybe for the first time in their educational experience, become excited because they're being seen and feeling valued for who they are versus feeling as if they have to conform, code switch, hide some of those parts of who they are.

Cario shared that allowing students to contribute instead of hiding their identity permits them to be authentic about presenting themselves in their learning spaces. Intentional teaching practices are critical for this to occur. One such teaching practice is promoting identity development and critical pedagogy.



### *Promoting Identity Development & Critical Pedagogy*

Ariana introduced identity development and critical pedagogy in her teaching practice. She focused on preparing students to respond from a counternarrative perspective, particularly preparing students to deal with identity issues or microaggression. She asserted:

Most models do not describe the students that I work with because most of the data reflect the experiences of White students in higher education. So, Upward Bound focuses their messaging on not just encouragement to go to college but also engages them in developing a counternarrative that responds to messages such as "you don't have to lose yourself in college," "You can keep your identity," "You're going to find that you may experience microaggression but here are tools for that...", "You may experience stereotype threat"... I notice students really pay attention in class and are engaged because it's relevant to them.

Ariana noted that relevant content captures students' attention and is essential for promoting student engagement.

Another teaching practice that fosters student engagement is engaging in intentional discussions related to identity development with students. For example, Cario shares his cultural traditions as well as rich and colorful professional experiences with his students. He declared:

[...]speaking about these things with my students, basically carrying on the traditions that come through my family lineage, but also through my artistic lineage, my artistic mentors, who in the black classical music tradition, in the jazz tradition, in the Afro Puerto Rican folkloric tradition, the idea of constantly trying in practice with the development of identity is a key part of my pedagogy, but also my methodology.

Cario shared various aspects of his identity with his students in an effort to promote

identity development and engagement. A key ingredient to student engagement is building and maintaining student-teacher relationships.

### ***Assigning Students Activities Relevant to their Lives***

Laelia does daily check-in activities with her students to get to know their interests and get a sense of the most recent popular culture to promote engagement. Laelia asserted:

“I start all of my Upward Bound sessions with a check-in question. And they can be questions about, I can think of some specific ones we’ve done like, “What is home for you? What do you define as home? What’s your favorite place to eat in your neighborhood or somewhere far from...” Just kind of these questions that get students, one to think about their own interests, but also give them a sense of, “Oh, yeah this is something that’s really important to me. And I get to share it with everyone.” And it’s not necessarily directly connected to what our lesson is. So it’s this way of just kind of grounding ourselves in the session. But again, also a way for me to open my own eyes and my own understanding of what it is that our students are enjoying right now.”

The check-in activities assisted Laelia in getting to know her students and what they enjoyed. Isabella assigns her students research-based homework. To promote student engagement, she uses this teaching practice to encourage her students to conduct relevant research on the history of the Spanish language.

Isabella also encourages her students to share knowledge from their homework with the class:

So they have to do research on that and they have to come back to the classroom and talk to the older students about it, and if they don’t know, I can share with them, but I’m also

consistently asking them to share their knowledge about that language, or what they do research about within the classroom.

Isabella follows up with her students after they have research to offer support if further explanation is needed. Cario also engaged in the teaching practice of assigned homework. Cario shared that by assigning students homework relevant to their lives, he learned about his students' unique needs. He explained, "[...]shaping, exercises, writing prompts, questions that allowed me to find out in a non-invasive way, what some of those issues were and then how I could best support them."

Teaching practices that expose educators to issues students face outside of the classroom could assist teachers to tailor their teaching practices to their students through relevant pedagogical practices. It is also important for promoting positive connections with students.

### **Establishing Positive Connections with Students**

Educators' intentional effort to develop positive connections with students is essential to engagement, particularly for students of diverse backgrounds. Ariana explained what making positive connections looks like in her teaching practice. She declared:

I try to engage in spaces where people can sit together in a circle. I engage my groups in checking in activities to encourage opportunities for learning about each person in the group. I participate in all activities. I make sure that people identify who they are, and they use their names and their preferred pronouns. I offer one-on-one with students just so that I have personal time with each of them.

Ariana focuses on creating safe spaces where students feel comfortable, welcomed, and accepted. This teaching practice fosters inclusion, where students are encouraged to be fully themselves in the learning space, and is also broadly adopted within the Upward Bound program.

Ariana also asserted, "The efforts of the students in the program are rewarded, are seen, and are acknowledged. Students are connected, and they are prepared." Ariana makes the connection between the program acknowledging students' effort and improved student engagement, as evidenced by being prepared to learn. This is an important aspect of being proactive in addressing student needs.

### **Challenges Teaching Staff Encounter in Implementing Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices in the Upward Bound Program**

#### **Educators' Concerns in Delivering Culturally Responsive Practices**

The theme *educators' concerns in delivering culturally responsive practices* refers to issues they face during implementation. The theme represents the perspectives of the teaching staff on the challenges faced when implementing culturally responsive teaching practices. Cario, a teaching staff member at the Upward Bound Program shared the challenge of engaging in sensitive discussions with students when racial representation is not typical. He asserted:

[...] we're dealing sometimes with student populations where the minority population is accustomed to being the majority population. So we have White students who are in the minority in the room. So when we begin to talk about issues of culture, issues of race, it can be challenging because one doesn't want to end up perpetuating these practices of exclusion or making other students feel as if they don't have a place in the conversation.

Cario's accounts revealed the importance of navigating sensitive discussions with the classroom racial representation context in mind so that all students feel included. Ariana, a teaching staff member also shared similar thoughts, particularly around being mindful and engaging in discussions with sensitivity so as not to trigger students. She explained:

[...] for me what's always challenging is I don't want to trigger trauma. And so, for me, that's always something that I try to negotiate in myself and in the work because, we talk about systemic issues and systemic problems and depression. And even though I experienced that growing up and I still have proximity to that, I don't live that right now. And some of them are going back into that place. They're going back into the school. As educators, we also know that change doesn't come so quickly. And so, I think that's the most challenging thing. We must maintain a sensitivity in our approach to this critical work.

Cario and Ariana expressed concerns about delivering culturally responsive practices, specifically related to engaging in sensitive conversation, and recommended paying attention to the classroom racial representation and being sensitive to avoid triggering students in the discussion. Sometimes educators are involved in undoing the damage.

### **Undoing the Hierarchy of Language Damage Done**

The challenge of many students being educated with the notion that there is a hierarchy of languages could create problems at schools. Isabella expressed:

[...] I think that many of our students were educated with this idea of the hierarchy of languages. So what languages in the world it's important to learn, and what others are not that important, or and, sometimes that can be a challenge within the classroom. Students who come to the classroom and tell me that they were bullied at school because they speak Spanish, right? That Spanish is attached to their background as migrants, as somebody who has parents who came from Central America, or from Mexico, that is not America, but that, and less from South America, but definitely that or, yeah.

Isabella highlighted the challenge with the idea of the hierarchy of languages and shared the consequential damage being done at school relating to bullying. Isabella also shared how second generation Spanish immigrants whose parents need translators are often ashamed. She shared:

Many of those kids have been born, raised second generation in the United States. Their English was flawless, but their parents, some of them didn't speak a word of English, or they were the translators of their parents, and they were ashamed of that. By the end of the programs, some of them stop feeling ashamed about that.

Isabella expressed how the second generation felt ashamed about their parents having limited knowledge of English; however, she also shared hope by mentioning that some students are no longer ashamed by the end of the program.

### **Case 2 Tutor Mentors and Clinicians**

Case 2 examined the perceptions of tutor mentors and clinicians in the relationship between cultural humility practices and student engagement as well as the challenges encountered in the implementation process within the UMASS Upward Bound program. In the interview, each tutor mentor and clinician answered the two research questions related to case 2:

1. How do tutor mentors understand the relationship between cultural humility teaching practices and student engagement?
2. What challenges do tutor mentors and clinicians encounter in implementing cultural humility practices in the Upward Bound program?

In analyzing the data, it became clear that tutor mentors' and clinicians' perceptions emerged into the following themes and subthemes, including adapting an ecological approach to empower students, building and maintaining positive relationships with students, as well as

virtual engagement barriers, portraying educators' challenges with cultural adaptation practices, and bridging the gap in identity awareness.

### **Tutor Mentor and Clinicians Profiles**

#### **Rihanna**

Rihanna is a queer female working towards completing her doctorate in psychology. Culturally, she identifies as Puerto Rican and Black, as her mother is Puerto Rican and her father is Black. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in psychology. Rihanna became involved in the Upward Bound program as a clinician due to her involvement and training in Psychology and Mental Health.

#### **Alona**

Alona is a female. At the time of the interview, she was working toward completing her Doctorate in psychology. Alona identifies, based on family and cultural background, as Jewish. She was involved in supervising clinicians as well as facilitating some of the life-skill sessions with students.

#### **Matteo**

Matteo is a male doctoral student receiving training in psychology. He was involved in the Upward Bound program as a clinician. Matteo's personal and professional goals of working with adolescents to support their mental health, well-being, and skill development aligned well with his interest in the Upward Bound program. Matteo culturally identifies as Puerto Rican mixed with the American New England Culture.

**Yuan**

Yuan is a male college student. He is a senior majoring in Chinese American emotional health. Yuan became involved in the Upward Bound Program due to his interest in Education and Tutoring.

**E.A. Tutor Mentors' and Clinicians' Understanding of the Relationship Between Cultural Humility Teaching Practices and Student Engagement****Adapting an Ecological Approach to Empower Students**

Adapting an ecological approach to empower students means considering students' lives from a holistic point of view and not only at face value. It involves taking time to understand students' home life, community, and culture in order to help support their learning through cultural humility teaching practices. The theme represents the tutor mentor and clinician's perspectives on the relationship between cultural humility teaching practices and student engagement.

***Creating an Accepting Learning Environment***

Rihanna shared how she draws on a cultural humility lens and incorporates students' voices so that they feel comfortable being transparent about expressing the roadblocks that could get in the way of their school work. Rihanna asserted:

I think that cultural humility or the lens of cultural humility caused students to reflect on this balance of homeschool life and the challenges that are associated with that. I think without that lens, I'm not sure that you see that sort of parallel. It seems like, or I certainly feel the students that I worked with, saw school as a very important aspect of their lives, but they also were very transparent in saying, "There's all of these other things that are happening in my life that are very important as well, and it's challenging to



pursue both of these things together or to put 110% of my effort into school and these goals associated with school also while pursuing all of the things or managing all of the pressures that are associated with home as well."

By allowing students to reflect on their experiences, Rihanna could bond and better understand the realities of her student's lives outside school. Cultural humility teaching practices, such as incorporating bonding activities into working with students, are essential for building and maintaining relationships.

Alona, a female Clinician declared:

So I think that we try to incorporate a relational activity, specific relational activity into our sessions. So whether that's starting with a would you rather this or that question, thinking about how you get to know students outside of the group material or content. And then when delivering content going back I think that the active and empathetic listening is definitely part of that. But also showing genuine interest, genuine care and that unconditional positive regard through interactions with students, and also encouraging them to interact with each other and really creating a cohesive group dynamic too.

Alona integrates relational activities into her teaching practice to get to know her students. As the group bonds, more opportunities emerge to practice cultural humility.

Matteo verbally expressed the changes he observed in the students he worked with in the summer. He shared:

I noticed some interesting things in terms of I think students trying to expand themselves for being more accepting of different viewpoints. I think being in a place like Upward Bound, that values openness, values acceptance, I think rubbed off on some of the kids a

little in terms of just being super open and accepting to, for example, like when the conversation around sexuality happens. Sometimes a bunch of teenagers talking about a friend who is gay or even an acquaintance who is gay can turn into an unfruitful conversation. I think everybody tried really hard to be respectful and positive and open to everyone in the Upward Bound program.

Matteo attested to observing a wraparound approach, where the Upward Bound program's values, openness, and acceptance influence student attitudes toward one another.

The relationship between cultural humility teaching practices and student engagement is understood to strengthen students' comfort level, particularly in sharing their academic roadblocks. It is also noted to foster a better understanding of students' realities and promote a wrap-around approach, where students are influenced to imbibe the Upward Bound program values, specifically related to openness and acceptance, which are also fundamental characteristics of cultural humility.

### ***Promoting a Holistic Approach in Addressing Student Needs***

Understanding ways to address students' needs holistically means giving students agency to contribute their ideas to resolving issues instead of offering solutions and denying them the opportunity to find solutions. Yuan recommends using motivational interviewing strategies to accomplish this collaborative effort with students. He explained:

[...]so let's say I'm working with a student and they're struggling with something. So then a student might be like, "Oh, I'm struggling with X, Y or Z, blah, blah, blah." And a typical thing might be immediately for a teacher or whatever, to just start throwing solutions at them. Like, "Oh, well okay, let's do this, let's do that." Without trying to ask them more or trying to really understand why is it they're struggling, about what they're

doing? What ideas they have for how maybe they could struggle less? Because a lot of motivational interviewing is also giving people the floor to find answers themselves because often, our greatest wisdom is once we have a connection to it or even just something that comes out of ourselves. So it's kind of really about being more of a guide than being the source of everything they need.

In giving students agency to be problem solvers, the role of the educator (i.e., tutor mentor and clinician) becomes one of guardianship as opposed to independent solution providers. This life skill (i.e., problem-solving) empowers students and encourages them to continue developing this skill further for themselves. Matteo shared similar thoughts as Yuan. Matteo declared:

I would say one really big part was co-creating objectives and avoiding taking the role as experts in any type of way. I would say avoiding presenting myself as this really knowledgeable, all-knowing person and instead trying to facilitate a space where everybody feels like equals and feels like we can all share in a non-judgmental space.

Matteo also includes students' voices and fosters a safe and accepting learning space to share their opinions, an essential component in understanding the relationship between cultural humility practices and student engagement. When students feel safe, they are more likely to express their vulnerability freely to their teachers, particularly outside the classroom.

Rihanna shared:

I think students were expressing a lot of those pressures and struggles with, "I'm working two jobs," or, "I'm supporting and watching lots of younger siblings," or, "I don't have much time in the day to be able to navigate all of these things." I think what I would notice is certainly an increased effort while we were in the classroom and just

difficulties managing that effort outside of the hours that we were in the life skills course together.

Rihanna attested to an increase in student vulnerability influencing their ability to demonstrate more effort at school, although such effort may be reduced at home due to conflicting life priorities.

In adapting the ecological approach to empower students, the relationship between cultural humility and student engagement is understood as creating an accepting learning environment and promoting holistic approaches to addressing student needs.

### **Building and Maintaining Positive Relationships with Students**

Relationship building is a foundational aspect of cultural humility and influences student engagement. Rihanna asserted:

I think that the cultural humility aspect really increases engagement, or at least from what I have seen. So just with students paying attention, I feel like they are more closely paying attention and more willing to participate a bit, and that's how I'm kind of gauging attention overall. And I think a little bit possibly assumption on my end is just a connectedness to the content, or being able to see themselves reflected or make connection point to some things that we're learning could possibly be within that. It certainly seems like, or my perception is, that when there's a cultural humility framework or a connection in some sort, students are certainly seem to be paying attention a bit more.

Central to building relationships is connectedness or relatability, which means an individual's ability to relate to the content they are learning. Matteo shared that relationship

building is an essential part of student engagement, specifically homework completion. He declared:

I personally noticed that the kids who I felt like we were able to build a stronger relationship which tended to have higher homework completion, for example. I think that points to the importance of relationship building and the importance of trying our best to build stronger relationships with all students.

Cultivating relationships with students could be critical to their learning ability, especially in demonstrating what they have learned through homework completion. In addition, cultural humility is a framework that contributes to relationship building, as it encourages conversations that strengthen the reliability of what they are learning and interactions that help build relationships. Rihanna shared that cultural humility practices are foundational to building relationships with her students. She expressed:

[...]. I think that the practices, when they were able to be rooted in the sessions that I engaged in with students, I feel that was the framework that allowed me to build strong relationships with students. I would say for me, the utility of this framework, of this ideal, this concept embedded within the work, in these explicit conversations and dialogues, and practices and interactions with students were the foundation for building just strong partnerships with students, strong relationships overall.

Rihanna shared that when cultural humility practices are explicitly embedded in students' learning, it boosts relationship building. Pertaining to understanding the relationship between cultural humility teaching practices and student engagement cultivating relationships with students is foundational for learning, as it strengthens their ability to connect and relate to the

content covered, improves their ability to complete their homework, and overall strengthens positive relationships with students.

### **Challenges Tutor Mentor and Clinicians Encounter in Implementing Culturally Humility Practices**

#### **Virtual Engagement Barrier**

The theme virtual engagement barrier means challenges encountered teaching in the virtual setting due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The theme represents the perspectives of tutor mentors and clinicians on challenges in implementing cultural humility practices. Yuan expressed some difficulties he experienced while virtually working with the Upward Bound students.

He shared:

Well, I just feel like it's tough. I mean, personally I'd love more dialogues. I think because I know other Tutor Mentors felt the same way because we talked about this. There's also just a lot less activities you can do. So I think that makes it harder too. And also I'm a big music person. For me, a lot of times, connecting with people would involve some music. And also the classes that I was in, the teacher would've done music stuff. He's a musician full time. So I feel like the activities we can only really do are like writing stuff, which is important, but even that, the way of sharing it's just different. It's like you can't even see them reading it. It's just really, I don't know. It's odd. And I just, I think even just the number of activities that we couldn't do are really important and really connecting people and understanding one another.

Yuan highlighted limited dialogues, fewer activities, and difficulty connecting with students as virtual engagement barriers. Rihanna also shared similar sentiments as Yuan relating to the virtual engagement barrier. She asserted:

I know people can get tired from Zoom which I completely understand. I don't know for me personally, because the writing was also tough. Because there were some responses I was looking at and I just could not think of anything. So I don't know. For me personally that was tough.

Rihanna expressed concerns about the virtual setting and how it impacted her personally. Similarly, Alona shared some challenges she faced during the pandemic. She expressed:

And I think just the pandemic, I think things are extra hard and especially just life is hard right now, especially for these students and being home and not in an environment that's really necessary, it might be, it might not be, I don't know what their home environments were like. I know it's hard for me to work at home, so it's just a different environment than what Upward Bound typically is. So I think all of those factors I think the pandemic being a big factor made things hard, it's hard to do hard things when everything around you is hard.

Alona revealed some difficulties she faced personally during the pandemic. She also empathetically anticipated some challenges her students may have experienced in their home life.

Matteo shared a similar pandemic-related concern, specifically related to the difficulty of virtual implementation. He asserted:

I would say that everything has to be understood within the caveat of the remote implementation. I think that was a pretty big barrier to engagement, to be honest. I think it made a lot of our work more challenging.

Matteo highlighted that remote implementation posed a major challenge to student engagement. The virtual engagement barrier was a shared concern expressed by Yuan, Alona, and Matteo. However, their unique perspectives were insightful, as they helped capture specific details about their challenges such as difficulties connecting with the students, limited activities, and dialogues.

### **Portraying Educators' Challenges with Cultural Adaptation Practices**

The theme *portraying educators' challenges with cultural adaptation practices* highlights the difficulties in implementing cultural humility practices, particularly amid conceptually and terminologically related gaps, gaps resulting from graduate training theoretical orientations and challenges in modifying cognitive behavioral therapy to align with cultural humility. It represents the specific challenges clinicians experienced in implementing cultural humility practices and reveals their perspectives on the roots or origins of the issues they addressed. While a portion of the subthemes included the accounts of some clinicians, the majority of the content of this theme represents the account of one clinician (Matteo). Matteo's unique and insightful perspective was captured in this theme.

### **Unfamiliarity with the Cultural Humility Concept and Related Terms**

Limited knowledge due to unfamiliarity with the cultural humility concept and related terms was a shared experience of both a clinician and student. Alona expressed how the cultural humility concept and practices were entirely new to her. She shared:



I think one thing that was challenging for me was just this with my first year with Upward Bound. And so it was just a learning curve for me about knowing what the expectations are, what the group is, this population I never worked with before, especially not within the context of a summer program, which was all unfamiliar to me. So I would say a barrier for me personally was a lot of newness. So to take something wasn't super familiar or comfortable with, and then try to infuse cultural humility practices on top of it was a lot and I definitely did my best.

Alona expressed how her unfamiliarity and limited experience with the cultural humility concept made it difficult for her to implement such practices in her work with the students.

Rihanna expressed what unfamiliarity looks with a cultural humility related term like identity. She asserted:

[...] we were asking students to engage in the process of looking at their identities and critically reflecting on them. Well, I do consider it to be a challenge, but I think the students hadn't done that activity before so there was at least one student, for example, that had voice. They hadn't really done this, they hadn't thought about what their identities were or reflected on this question as explicitly.

Rihanna highlighted the difficulty of engaging students in unfamiliar culturally related activities. She also shared how it can be challenging for students to reflect on their experience with cultural humility when they have yet to gain experience in understanding and applying the concept, especially if the conceptual framework of cultural humility was not embedded in their graduate school training.

### ***Theoretical Orientation of Graduate School Training***

The theoretical orientation of graduate school training refers to the conceptual framework of teaching and learning. It informs the lens through which coursework is presented to graduate students in training. Matteo shared how his unfamiliarity with implementing cultural humility stemmed from the theoretical orientation gap and how it impacted how all his coursework was presented.

Matteo explained:

I think it was also hard trying to go from a more traditional life skills orientation to one that prioritizes cultural humility. It was hard but worth it. I think it's still worked out well. I would definitely say it was still feasible, but also challenging. I think the main reason why it was challenging is because this lens of cultural humility is not the lens that all of our coursework operates from within, and so because of that, it was a little bit of, I guess, a new lens for our case conceptualization, if you will. [...] I'm uncomfortable with that and I think it's just a flaw in our field in general."

Matteo highlighted this theoretical orientation gap and connected it with his dissatisfaction with the field of psychology. For example, it is challenging to prioritize cultural humility when evidence-based therapeutic interventions were not originally designed with that in mind.

### ***Difficulties in Modifying CBT to Align with Cultural Humility***

An evidence-based therapeutic modality, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is well-researched and is commonly used as an effective clinical intervention. However, to foster relevance among diverse populations, consideration for infusing cultural humility with CBT needs to be prioritized. Matteo expressed how modifying and aligning CBT with cultural humility can be difficult. Matteo asserted, "it's hard to implement these evidence-based mental

health interventions, or practices, and sometimes operates through a cultural humility lens because that's not how the practices were researched, so that I personally found challenging.”

Early CBT research was not initially designed as an intervention tailored specifically to a diverse population, so it can be challenging to modify and align cultural humility with CBT. Particularly shifting the focus from a "one size fits all" approach to adapting it to suit diverse students' needs. Matteo expressed his thoughts in an example. He shared:

We were focused thing on emotion identification and also thinking about supporting kids to recognize when they are experiencing a challenging emotion and consider replacement behaviors for how they typically respond to that challenging emotion. We are pointing to specific emotions and saying these emotions are potentially problematic, like anger and your choice to behave in a certain way when you feel anger. Saying that your choice to do this is problematic and suggesting replacement behaviors was one example where I think it was hard to infuse culture humility into this really standard CBT/behavior analysis approach to supporting kids to manage challenging emotions. Because just the label of challenging emotion in itself is a little bit of a sticking point for me sometimes because if the kid doesn't have a problem with the emotion they're experiencing, then who am I to tell them that they should not experience this emotion?

Matteo's account above highlighted his struggle with teaching with standard CBT/behavior analysis approach while attempting to infuse cultural humility into his work with diverse students in the Upward Bound Program.

### **Case 3 Program Director, Tutor Mentors, and Clinicians**

The third case (How do tutor mentors and clinicians perceive the cultural humility training to be socially valid? and How does the program director perceive the cultural humility

training to be socially valid?) focused on the usefulness of cultural humility training and opportunities to empower learning, as well as the use of reflective supervision cultural humility practices. Within these themes, subthemes were discussed where relevant and as they related to the research questions across the three cases.

In Case 3, I investigated the perceptions of tutor mentors, clinicians, and the program director of the cultural humility training from a social validity standpoint. In the interview, each tutor mentor, clinician, and the program director answered the two research questions related to case 3:

1. How does the TM's and Clinicians perceive the Cultural Humility training to be socially valid? (TMs and Clinicians\_Perception of Cultural Humility training\_Socially Valid)
2. How does the Program Director perceive the cultural humility training to be socially valid? (Program Director's perceptions of CH training\_Socially Valid)

In analyzing the data, it became clear that tutor Mentors' and clinicians' perceptions emerged into the following themes and subthemes, including adapting an ecological approach to empower students, building and maintaining positive relationships with students, as well as virtual engagement barriers, portraying educators' challenges with cultural adaptation practices, and bridging the gap in identity awareness.

### **Tutor Mentors', Clinicians', and the Program Director's Perceptions of the Cultural Humility Training to be Socially Valid**

Tutor mentors', clinicians', and the program director's perceptions emerged into themes and subthemes related to the usefulness, acceptability, feasibility, and future support needed for the cultural humility training.

## **The Program Director's, Tutor Mentor, and Clinician's Profiles**

### **Abigail**

Abigail is a female educator with a doctoral degree in education. Abigail is of Irish cultural heritage, which she describes as matrilineal. She operationally defined matrilineal as “the aunts and everyone all come together and hold events, and help the young people and try and get them to the next stage of their life.” Abigail became involved in the Upward Bound program resulting from resonating with the matrilineal culture of supporting the young people in the program.

### **Rihanna**

Rihanna is a queer female working toward completing her doctorate in psychology. Culturally she identifies as Puerto Rican and Black, as her mother is Puerto Rican and her father is Black. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in psychology. Rihanna became involved in the Upward Bound program as a clinician due to her involvement and training in psychology and mental health.

### **Alona**

Alona is a female. At the time of the interview, she was working towards completing her Doctorate in School Psychology. Alona identifies, based on family and cultural background, as Jewish. She was involved in supervising Clinicians as well as facilitating some of the life-skill sessions with students.

### **Matteo**

Matteo is a male doctoral student receiving training in psychology. He was involved in the Upward Bound program as a clinician. Matteo's personal and professional goals of working with adolescents to support their mental health, well-being, and skill development aligned well

with his interest in the Upward Bound Program. Matteo culturally identifies as Puerto Rican mixed with the American New England Culture.

### **Yuan**

Yuan is a male college student. He is a senior majoring in Chinese American emotional health. Yuan became involved in the Upward Bound program due to his interest in education and tutoring.

## **Tutor Mentors', Clinicians', and the Program Director's Perceptions of the Cultural Humility Training to be Socially Valid**

### **The Usefulness of Cultural Humility Training**

The theme usefulness of cultural humility training refers to participants' perceptions of the benefits of the training and how it impacted their ability to apply what they have learned with their students. More specifically, it represents the perceptions of tutor mentors, clinicians, and program directors on the social validity of cultural humility training.

### ***Increased Engagement***

The subtheme *increased engagement* means better academic, socioemotional, and behavioral outcomes in students following infusing culturally inclusive practices. In addition, the theme represents the perception of the Upward Bound staff regarding the social validity of the cultural humility training.

Infusing culture, as part of diverse students' learning experience shows promise for their overall engagement. Abigail shared:

I mean, in my experience and in the experience of our program where it's useful for us as the kids get excited about learning, and they feel internally motivated, they feel valued to

be in there, you get less behavioral problems, you get less problems with, not with no shows or attendance or trying to go to the bathroom for the third time in a period, right. Increased positive behavioral outcomes such as less off-task behavior, evidenced by going to the places within the school unwarrantedly (e.g., going to the bathroom) and increased internal motivation, where students feel more valued and appreciated, could contribute to students being more engaged and available to learn.

Similar thoughts were shared about student engagement following the implementation of cultural humility practices. Matteo reported:

Yeah. I think in general the students appreciated engaging with adults who genuinely valued what it is that they were saying and thinking and feeling. I think of the cultural humility training that supported us as clinicians to really value the students as individuals. I think coming at it from that mindset was just really helpful. I think that is one piece that allowed us to develop good relationships with the students and so I think that was one piece that they probably enjoyed.

Infusing cultural humility practices has the potential of double-sided benefits, as students felt appreciated and supported by staff, and staff also attested to developing good relationships with students. The interactions with students helped in fortifying positive bonds.

The cultural humility framework served as a toolkit useful in unlocking and sustaining good relationships with students. Rihanna stated:

I think that the practices, when they were able to be rooted in the sessions that I engaged in with students, I feel that was the framework that allowed me to build strong relationships with students. I would say for me, the utility of this framework, of this ideal, this concept embedded within the work, in these explicit conversations and dialogues,

and practices and interactions with students were the foundation for building just strong partnerships with students, strong relationships overall.

Implementing cultural humility practices through explicitly engaging students in dialogues and conversations also unraveled the potential of building strong partnerships with students, which seemed favorable to their overall learning experience as their self-awareness evolved.

Explicit opportunities for students to engage with cultural humility as part of their learning experience were incorporated into weekly classroom discussions. Rihanna attested to the usefulness of such a practice. She shared:

[...] I would speak to helping students to be able to be a bit more self-aware in the value of their own experiences and the lessons that come from that, I think, also within the relationship building. And I would say just explicit opportunities for students to look at others' perspectives. I think those were some useful aspects, or very intentional practices or activities that we were able to engage in with students that were particularly helpful and useful.

Rihanna's account revealed that her perception of the cultural humility training was socially valid, specifically in terms of usefulness and increases in students' self-awareness and ability to acknowledge others' perspectives. Rihanna used perspective-taking activities to engage students in Cultural Humility conversations explicitly. She expressed, "So having an example of a situation directly being able, or being a discussion point for students in a group to be able to think about, to put themselves within other's shoes, or to ask questions about what that might look like, feel like."

Rihanna's account revealed the benefits of the cultural humility training to improve the students' self-awareness and ability to use perspective-taking to acknowledge others' viewpoints.



Consultation meetings were a useful time to brainstorm ways to incorporate these discussions with students.

### ***Consultation Opportunities***

The weekly structure of the summer institute program was such that Clinicians and Tutor Mentors met in separate consultation meetings with the researcher and their supervisors to plan for the upcoming week. Alona, a Clinician in the Upward Bound Program expressed how she benefited from such meetings. She shared,

“I would say when you gave examples of ways that you infused cultural humility with your own group, that was really helpful. Those concrete examples of how someone else does it, was helpful for me to then self-reflect and apply within the context of my own group.”

Alona highlighted the benefit of the weekly meeting, specifically how the concrete examples shared helped apply Cultural Humility practices with her students. Matteo, a Clinician in the Upward Bound Program, also shared how he benefited from the weekly consultation opportunities. He shared,

“I think the most helpful piece was the opportunity for consultation where I was able to talk with you [the Researcher], Ariana, Valerie who knows the program really well and knows the students and families really well, and also the other clinicians. That was one piece I really enjoyed because then in those conversations, we had people who knew a lot about many different components that were important in order to have a really complete picture of everything. I thought that was one of the most helpful pieces to complement bringing the training alive from the PowerPoint to the room with the kids.” Alona and Matteo attested to learning from the weekly consultation meetings practical strategies to apply when infusing Cultural Humility practices with their students.

### **Acceptability of the Cultural Humility Training**

The theme acceptability of the cultural humility training refers to the receptivity of students to learning about the concept and its application to their learning. The theme includes participants' perceptions related explicitly to the social validity of the cultural humility training. The students revealed their acceptance of the cultural humility practices through their willingness to engage in topics that had the potential of challenging their thinking. Abigail reported:

I did hear some feedback from students about a couple of places that I knew it was intentionally discussed. One was in the life skills group, and another one was in the time, in the one on one with the tutor mentors. One of the pieces of feedback was that it was just really eye opening to have people talk about this explicitly and in a way that wasn't stereotyping, that challenges stereotypes. So I think there was some appreciation among the students that came up in the conversations and that it was presented in a way that said "Okay, really to do this well, we have to do a lot of listening and a lot of not jumping into our first assumptions.

Abigail shared that students' ability to engage in cultural humility related discussions were appreciated, but listening to students by staying away from assumptions was also helpful. Cultural humility practices through a weekly scheduled supervision time where clinicians, the clinical supervisor, and the program director met once a week, reflected on the current week, and planned for the upcoming week was helpful. Participants had the opportunity to witness examples of the cultural humility infusion and also engage in self-reflection. Alona stated:

I would say when you gave examples of ways that you infused cultural humility with your own group, then that was really helpful, as those concrete examples of how someone else did it, was helpful for me to then self-reflect and apply within the context

of my own group. So I think that one thing that was most helpful to me, in terms of the training, was hearing someone else's experience and me being able to adapt and apply to my own experience in facilitation.

Supporting cultural humility facilitators seemed to help them adapt and implement the concrete examples in their facilitation. In addition, also being open to the idea of learning from students and giving them opportunities to participate in their own learning by c-leading discussions that embody cultural humility appeared to be well liked. Rihanna revealed:

I think that from my own perception and interactions with the student and feedback from students, I think that having that lens in my interactions with them, with my co-leader, I feel like that was a strong point within our life skills sessions. I feel like students really resonated with those ideals that embody cultural humility, and I feel like they really enjoyed that aspect of it. And I feel like they took to it as something that was different than what they're used to in either academic settings or even community settings as something that they're not used to, but that they certainly seemed to really like, and those were some of the reflections that they had shared. I certainly feel like students were very receptive to it, willing to engage and seemed to really enjoy having that sort of community culture that embodied cultural humility.

Students appeared to accept ideals that resonated with the concept of Cultural Humility and adopted the community culture due to their receptivity and willingness to engage in interactions that reflect the concept.

### **Feasibility of the Cultural Humility Training**

The theme feasibility of the cultural humility training means the practical nature of the training. It revealed concrete skills participants took away from the training and could

implement. It also highlighted some challenges that got in the way. The theme represents the perceptions of the program director, tutor mentors, and clinicians of the training's feasibility.

### ***Good Use of Supervision Time***

Supervision time was designated and scheduled during the Summer Institute Program. During that time, clinicians meet with their clinical supervisor, the researcher, and the program director to discuss any updates related to life skills, including progress or challenges with infusing cultural humility into content areas covered with students. The participants share their experiences pertaining to the training's feasibility. Matteo revealed:

I thought it was super feasible in general because we were already meeting for supervision regardless and so to have you hop on and discuss cultural humility with us I personally found very enjoyable and a good use of our supervision time. I thought that way that it was structured was very feasible. [The Researcher] also shared a few documents with us, for us to review outside of those times, which I also thought was feasible because they weren't excessively long or anything like that, or excessively challenging to understand.

Matteo appreciated the ongoing supportive discussions and the succinct nature of the resources the researcher shared weekly post the cultural humility training. He expressed that it was a good use of the time allocated for supervision.

Similarly, Rihanna was also grateful for supervision, as she declared:

[...] I think the sort of more informal training or the discussions that I was able to have within Upward Bound, within our own supervision and clinician meetings, and within the training that I was able to look over as well, for me, it seems like it is a feasible training in terms of ensuring that clinicians or mentors have a solid understanding of the

definition for what cultural humility is and the language around how to create a community that resonates or embodies cultural humility.

Rihanna cited specific examples that made the cultural humility training feasible, such as understanding the concept and its application to a community looking to embody cultural humility practices.

Alona also expressed her impressions of the feasibility of the training. She shared:

I think that they were helpful, the suggestions that were provided were super applied to what we were doing. So I think that we put them into practice, so they were practical because of your knowledge of the context. And I think that a lot of that like I said, I think a lot of that practicality comes from because it was [the Researcher] and [the Researcher] know the context and the background that are part of the supervision group. So you were able to provide suggestions that were definitely practical, helpful and useful.

Alona shared how the researcher's knowledge of the clinicians' context and background helped provide them with support related to the concrete skills for implementing or infusing cultural humility practices into the content related to the Life Skills class.

The "how to" aspect of Infusing Cultural Humility into instructional content is vital to efficacy in the implementation process. Rihanna expressed:

I think maybe the most useful aspect that I could look at from the training was setting that precedent of community values that are, I think, resonate with some of those cultural humility components. For example, the sort of dos and don'ts of the language of using we or I statements, right? Or respecting one another's perspectives, and all of those tenants, I think were extremely any feasible practices that I was able to embed pretty seamlessly

within those sessions, and just co-creating those with students, highlighting those with students, reflecting on those each and every time we met as a group with one another.

Rihanna shared how the training provided support in modeling ways to implement Cultural Humility practices with the students.

### **Support Of the Cultural Humility Training**

The support of the cultural humility training theme refers to feedback about how the participants would have liked to be supported in future cultural humility training. The theme represents the perception of the program director, tutor mentors, and clinicians regarding the training.

#### ***Explicit Reflection Activities***

Creating a safe space where participants feel supported and heard and can be vulnerable is essential to facilitating and continuing support through consultation after the Cultural Humility training. Rihanna shared:

I think something that would have improved the experience for me would have been opportunities for other clinicians or the trainer per se to take a look at maybe some of the explicit activities or explicit moments within the lessons or activities that I'm engaging with, with students to be able to reflect on those or critically think about those moments, right, as a way to improve my own skills as a clinician. Because I think there may have been points, for example, within some of these sessions with students that maybe I was engaging in a cultural humility practice, but I'm a bit novice to that so maybe I wasn't exactly aware of that. So helping to bring my awareness of those or other opportunities where I may be able to have been a bit more explicit in my practices around that throughout those different activities with students. I think that reflection, really explicit

reflection around what I did with students, some of those conversations, and then thinking about that from that cultural humility lens, just more opportunities to do that with pretty concrete examples from conversations and dialogue with students would've been helpful.

Rihanna would have appreciated more opportunities for explicit feedback about the activities she was engaged in with the students, as she felt that it would have been helpful for her to reflect on her teaching practices and also grow in her self-awareness.

Yuan shared how reflection activities can be implemented flexibly, where the participants are able to express themselves in the way that they feel most comfortable. Yuan declared:

I think it would be really cool to write and then to share our writings. But online there's never that point where it becomes something that we do together. So I guess that might have been just because I know for myself personally, I looked at the virtual boards but I didn't think I wrote on any of them. And so it was just because I was looking at certain stuff and just couldn't think of a response. And I think if it was something that we were discussing about, I think it's more likely that I would have stuff to say, as opposed to the writing where... Again, I think it really just depends on the person, but for me, I mean I am more of a talking person than a writing person. I always have been. I mean, that's just from my perspective as more of a talker than a writer.

Yuan shared his thoughts about reflecting on his teaching practices via the virtual discussion board. The virtual discussion board was created to encourage tutor mentors to reflect on their experiences in a community setting, where they can learn from one another and be vulnerable about aspects they struggle with so that they can support each other and also so that the researcher understands how best to support them. Yuan shared that being flexible about how the

reflection is done needs to be considered in the future, as some participants might prefer discussions to writing.

Alona also shared her thoughts about receiving explicit feedback. She asserted:

I think because we use slides, I think having someone else review an outside person view our slides in our lesson plans ahead of time, and point out perhaps opportunities that we could infuse cultural humility in ways that we hadn't thought of before is one idea. And then on the follow up side, if there were a way for someone to observe a group within whatever limits is appropriate for Upward Bound and provide direct feedback on using cultural humility practices, I think that would be incredibly helpful.

Alona shared how specifically she would have liked to receive feedback from the researcher through reviewing slides in advance, receiving direct feedback, and observing a group.

Matteo also expressed a similar thought process about observations:

I would say one thing, the first thing that came to mind was not just stopping at training and consultation, which I think were both wonderful, but also allowing for observation both ways. Like allowing me as the clinician to observe what effective life skills, cultural humility implementation looks like. But also it would be nice to also be observed and to then get feedback on my own practices just to help make sure that what I'm doing actually makes sense.

Matteo shared how observations in the future should be done using a 360 approach, where participants can observe another group, and their group is also observed. These observations create real-world learning experiences for the participants and support them by receiving relevant feedback.



## **Ideas for Facilitating Discussions**

Relating with participants based on their struggles or concerns pertaining to the implementation of culturally inclusive practices could open up an opportunity for them to feel validated, vulnerable, and more likely to try infusing cultural humility into their teaching practices. Abigail shared:

I think that a lot of what I said applies there if we switch it to think of maybe first starting out with a place of how do you feel like you'll be able to connect with students who are ... Because for our tutor mentors, the big piece is always some anxiety that they'll connect well with students. I think that's really common for tutors. Will the kids like me? Will they connect with me? How do I break in? A lot of times they're shy at first to get started and connect. Right? So almost tying it to those concepts. So starting out with the question, almost normalizing, everybody thinks about this at first. How will I connect with the students? How will they like me? Okay, how will I connect with the guys? The guys are different from me, I'm a girl or I'm a young woman, right? How will I connect with the folks who are Muslim/ I'm a strong Christian. How will I connect across these things? Then having conversations about what some of the tools are and how they help us make those connections is the starting place. Then I really do think that as part of our weekly meetings, that we need to have 15 minutes where we talk about this as a reflective practice and how that's going.

Abigail expressed how these questions could help normalize any anxiety tutor mentors might be experiencing and reflect on their weekly experiences with the implementation of cultural humility.

Abigail also expressed the importance of giving tutor mentors the opportunity to reflect on what they observed as they work with the teaching staff or faculty. She asserted that:

One way is to ask them how the faculty are doing with it, and where they have examples of how the faculty are doing it well, and where they could support faculty and do it better, giving their voice into the process and then ask about their experiences again. Because then we're already saying things like, "Wow, these master educators are struggling with it," or are working on it and are doing it. So it again normalizes it so that, "Oh hey, here's something that I want to be bringing into my practice this next week too."

Abigail shared that validating the implementation process such that it is relatable and something that they are experiencing rather than something out there or something that is only for master educators or Teaching Staff to implement, in other words allowing Tutor Mentors to recognize their contribution to the implementation process by allowing them to share their experiences from their voices.

### ***Better Integration Through a Wrap Around Approach***

A wrap-around implementation will provide a system-level approach, where cultural humility is infused throughout the practices of the Upward Bound program so that students and staff engage with the concept in more than one way. Abigail shared:

So for me, I really often think it helps a big team, we've got a big team. We don't want to be communicating a ton of ideas at them. They get overwhelmed, they shut down, whatever. If we have a idea of the week, if we were working with the faculty and thinking about that idea and the tutor mentors and thinking about that idea, then leaving it to the tutor mentors to figure out what thinking about that idea looks in the dorms, then

you start to have a wraparound approach, which I think it was hard to do remotely in the way I envisioned, but I do think would be valuable in this context.

Abigail's thoughts around getting everyone on the same page shows promise for the implementation of cultural humility practices within the Upward Bound program. That way, students and staff are likely to understand the concept not just as something that is practiced or discussed in certain activities but rather something that is what Upward Bound program does throughout its programming.

Yuan shared a similar thought to Abigail's about the importance of integration. He asserted:

[..]it's something where if it is brought in front of not just the tutor, mentors, but all the tutor, mentors and the students, and it's something that they could both share together, I think that would really be the most helpful. [...]I think it's really something that'd be really empowering for the students and the staff to go through together rather than like this little trick that the staff [...].

Yuan shared that the students will benefit from weekly consultation discussions on cultural humility, similar to the tutor mentors, as it would make them better connect with the concept and how it applies to their lives.

Similarly, Abigail adds.

"[...] the wraparound perspective and the leadership's support for embrac[ing] cultural humility efforts in and out of class are important pieces for other programs seeking to strengthen from a cultural humility perspective. As a strengths-based educational access program, understanding and engaging students' cultural strengths is essential to students knowing the value of their place in the academic spaces of college."

Abigail emphasized the importance of making cultural humility a vital aspect of the Upward Bound practice, as it helps prepare students for the college learning experience by tapping into their cultural strengths.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This study examined the interviews of 10 teaching staff, tutor mentors, clinicians, and the program director of the Upward Bound program. Through semistructured interviews, the participants shared their experiences. This final chapter provides an interpretation of themes that emerged from the participants' interviews, and a connection between their perspectives and the ecological systems theoretical framework. This chapter will also discuss the study's implications for research and practice and potential limitations in my study and future research directions.

Through the case study approach to analysis, participants responded to the following research questions:

1. What teaching practices promote student engagement within the Upward Bound program and its diverse student body?
2. What challenges do Teaching Staff encounter in implementing these practices in the Upward Bound program?
3. How do Tutor Mentors and clinicians understand the relationship between cultural humility teaching practices and student engagement?
4. What challenges do Tutor Mentors and Clinicians encounter in implementing cultural humility practices in the Upward Bound program?
5. How do the Tutor Mentors and Clinicians perceive the Cultural Humility training to be socially valid?
6. How does the Program Director perceive the cultural humility training to be socially valid?

The research findings will be summarized and discussed across the three cases in this section. Specifically, three broad themes emerged from the analysis: adapting instruction to student's lives, virtual engagement barrier, and usefulness of the cultural humility training.

The first major theme, *adapting instruction to student's lives*, answered the first research question in case one about the teaching practices promoting student engagement within the Upward Bound program and its diverse student body. Teaching practices that promote identity development and critical pedagogy played a major role in positively influencing student engagement. All students have the potential to achieve if provided with adequate opportunities and support. For students of racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds, culturally responsive teaching practices make a tremendous difference in their educational outcomes, particularly in allowing for a relatable and relevant learning experience.

Teaching staff used culturally responsive teaching practices such as explicitly teaching students how to respond to identity issues or microaggressions. Providing the diverse students within the Upward Bound program with concrete tools that reaffirmed maintaining their identity and ways to cope with microaggressions helped students pay attention and fostered their engagement, as the content was relevant.

In addition, teaching staff also facilitated intentional discussions aimed at identity development with the students at the Upward Bound program. Teaching staff engaged students in discussions about their identity. For instance, teaching staff taught students their traditions from family and artistic lineage. Organizing intentional and open discussions allowed for vulnerability, fostering identity development and engagement. A key ingredient to student engagement is building and maintaining student-teacher relationships by establishing positive student connections.

Teaching staff in the Upward Bound program also included group activities such as engaging in checking-in routines to learn about the students and individual activities focused on dedicating personal time with each student. Students were also assigned activities relevant to

their lives, where the teaching staff asked them check-in questions to get to know their interests and what they enjoy. This helped create a safe space for students to feel comfortable, welcome, and accepted. Also, assigning students assignments that were noninvasive helped the educator understand what they needed and how best to support them.

The second theme, *virtual engagement barriers*, answered the second and fourth research questions on the challenges teaching staff, tutor mentors, and clinicians encounter in implementing culturally responsive teaching practices in the Upward Bound program. This research study was conducted during the pandemic, when Upward Bound students accessed and engaged virtually. Participants in this study expressed virtual engagement barriers such as the limited ability to initially connect with students, virtual fatigue, and the difficulty students faced in balancing their multifaceted lives with remote learning.

Connecting with students virtually presented its unique challenges, as participants reported limited active participation among the students during discussions. For instance, when students read their written responses out loud, it was easy to miss nonverbal facial gestures with their cameras turned off. In addition, compared to the Upward Bound in-person program, there were multiple daily opportunities to interact with students. By contrast, it drastically differed virtually, as it took much longer to form positive connections with students than in-person interactions. Several icebreaker in-person activities could not be easily modified, virtually making it challenging to connect with students.

Participants also revealed that the virtual setting impacted them personally. For example, participants reported that they experienced virtual fatigue. Writing on the virtual discussion board weekly to reflect on their teaching practices was challenging, as they were less motivated to write. In addition, participants expressed that they encountered difficulties working from home

during the pandemic, and they empathetically anticipated that their students may have experienced some challenges in their home life, as the virtual environment was different compared to what the Upward Bound program typically is in-person.

Finally, the third major theme, *usefulness of the cultural humility training*, answered the fifth and sixth research questions relating to the cultural humility training and participants' perceptions from a social validity standpoint, specifically about the usefulness of the training. Participants, which included tutor mentors, clinicians, and the program director, revealed increased engagement and consultation opportunities as salient aspects of the cultural humility training that were useful.

Infusing cultural humility in teaching practices made a difference in students' learning experiences and overall engagement. Engagement was operationally defined as better academic, socioemotional, and behavioral outcomes in students (Christenson et al, 2012). Participants attested to improving student engagement, as evidenced by their excitement about learning, internal motivation, and value in participating in the Upward Bound program. These positive experiences influence their behaviors, as students become less likely to have attendance issues and off-task behavioral problems like attempting to skip classes by taking multiple breaks to the bathroom.

In addition, participants reported that students were grateful to engage with adults who valued their words, thoughts, and feelings. Participants further revealed that they felt that the cultural humility training helped support them to value students as individuals and allowed them to develop good relationships with their students. Participants expressed that infusing cultural humility into their weekly classroom discussions. For instance, intentionally incorporating



opportunities for students to look at scenarios from others' perspectives was helpful in improving their self-awareness and acknowledgement of others' perspectives.

Also, participants, specifically the clinicians, appreciated the weekly consultation meetings that followed the initial cultural humility training. They found concrete examples of how to implement cultural humility practice helpful. The clinicians also benefited from the wealth of experience in the weekly sessions with the researcher, clinical supervisor, and program director, as the conversations helped them present the training to the students in a relatable manner.

### **Discussion**

This section of the chapter engages the relationship between existing studies in literature and the findings of this dissertation. I highlight the ways in which this study contributes to the existing literature through the findings by discussing the three key takeaways from chapter 4: adapting instructions to student lives, virtual barriers, and the usefulness of the training.

#### **Adapting Instructions to Student Lives**

The theme adapting instruction to students' lives means modifying the instructional content to align with students' cultural backgrounds. This theme represents teaching staff participants' perspectives on teaching practices that promote student engagement within the Upward Bound program.

The current study found that aligning instruction to students' cultural contexts positively influences student engagement. Within the context of this finding, engagement was described as dealing with each student based on the unique qualities they contribute to a space. Mize and Glover (2021) argued that it is problematic when there are limited diverse perspectives within the instructional content, which may result in an ancillary threat to identity development, especially

for students whose perspectives of doing and being differ from those of the dominant culture. However, the current study findings indicated that when instruction is adapted to align with students' lives, students feel seen, heard, and valued for who they are and less motivated to code-switch to hide aspects of their lives. This finding is consistent with the literature. Thomas (2016) indicated that when students feel included based on their experiences and identities, there is a simultaneous improvement in their educational achievement and engagement.

Similarly, culturally responsive teaching practices that incorporate critical pedagogy and identity development hold promise in engaging diverse students. Teaching practices such as explicitly teaching students how to respond to identity issues or microaggression and engaging in intentional discussions aimed at identity development are examples that emerged from participants of the current study. The following quote from one of the participants of this study (a teaching staff member) explains the necessity of inclusive teaching practices and how it contributes to student engagement:

Most models do not describe the students that I work with because most of the data reflect the experiences of White students in higher education. So, Upward Bound focuses their messaging on not just encouragement to go to college but also engages them in developing a counternarrative that responds to messages such as you don't have to lose yourself in college, you can keep your identity, you're going to find that you may experience microaggression but here are tools for that..., you may experience stereotype threat... I notice students really pay attention in class and are engaged because it's relevant to them.

In contrast to monocultural values and standards that fail to recognize individual students' cultural contexts and instead assume that all students should uphold and adhere to uniform values

and standards (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2009, 2014; McCarty & Lee, 2014; Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014, 2017; Souto-Manning & Rabadi-raol, 2018), findings from the current study attested to perceptions of improved educational outcomes for diverse students, especially when the content is relatable and relevant to their learning experience.

The study findings also indicated that engaging in checking-in routines to learn about the students and assigning students assignments in a noninvasive way worked effectively for diverse students. Culturally inclusive teaching practices, such as the checking-in routines, consisted of various questions and prompts relating to students' interests and cultural backgrounds. For instance, one of the routines involved capturing what was important to the students, which made the teacher staff aware of who the students were to get to know them better. Similarly, giving students' assignments, including exercises, writing prompts, and questions, provided teaching staff with an understanding of what the students needed and how best to support them. These findings aligned with existing literature, as previous research shows that connecting with students through understanding their cultural background is an effective teaching practice for diverse students (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2001; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Furthermore, adding to the current study findings related to the checking in routine, Bouillion and Gomez (2001) affirmed some additional ways of promoting this connection with students, such as incorporating artifacts that are reflective of student's interests, using real-life examples, and including problem-solving instruction as a way of connecting students to the community, nation, and broader identities across the globe.

The ecological systems framework guided this current study and demonstrated the interaction between students and their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). It depicted how individual students are members of ecological systems, and each student is nested within

structures of the multilayered ecological environment. Hence, as Bouillion and Gomez (2001) described, connecting with students across the nested structures is particularly beneficial for diverse students (i.e., connecting students to the community, nation, and global identities). Specifically, a real-world example based on the current findings is when teachers' pay close attention to individual student differences and work toward understanding student culture, they create opportunities for students to express themselves and their cultural background, promoting a healthy environment for diverse students to excel in the classroom.

### **Virtual Engagement Barrier**

The theme *virtual engagement barrier* refers to challenges pertaining to teaching virtually due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The theme represents the perspectives of tutor mentors and clinicians on challenges in implementing cultural humility practices.

The current study revealed that participants expressed a virtual engagement barrier related to the limited ability to connect with students during the Covid-19 pandemic. Specifically, participants reported that, with students' cameras turned off, connecting with students was challenging due to limited active participation. It was also easy to miss out on nonverbal facial expressions. In addition, compared to the Upward Bound in-person program, there were multiple daily opportunities to interact with students. In contrast, however, it drastically differed virtually, as there were fewer organic opportunities to form connections with students than in in-person interactions.

The virtual engagement barrier finding is consistent with previous research, as it highlighted the reality of teaching virtually during the pandemic. It also revealed educators' dilemmas regarding turning cameras on versus off. Some argue that turning on the camera is vital for connecting with students and promoting student engagement (Herman, 2020; Heek et

al, 2021). Others highlighted that the reality of students turning on their cameras is culturally insensitive and inequitable and further elevates White racial privilege (Will, 2020; Finders & Muñoz, 2021). Despite the different points of view across the literature, it is important to emphasize that educators are critical in pushing toward educational equity for students (Mize & Glover, 2021).

Shin (2022) added that genuine care and empathy are foundational to authentic human connections; hence, providing students with various options for demonstrating their engagement, such as encouraging the use of chat and breakout room features on Zoom or other virtual platforms, should be considered. This proactive response to maintaining connections regardless of students' cameras being turned off was adapted by the Upward Bound program during the pandemic. The program director encouraged educators not to incite students to turn on their camera, as a way of respecting their privacy.

Pertaining to the virtual engagement barrier, participants also revealed that they experienced virtual fatigue. For instance, writing on the virtual discussion board weekly to reflect on their teaching practices took a lot of work, as they needed more motivation to write. Hence, diversifying reflection options for the participants to include discussions, video or audio recordings, and considering other strategies suggested by the educators would be helpful for future research.

Another virtual engagement barrier participants mentioned was related to challenges students encountered in balancing their multifaceted lives with remote learning. Mize and Glover (2021) highlighted that students of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds experienced compounding loss during the pandemic, negatively impacting their family's income, and wrap-around services, including food supplies, health, and therapy needs provided by the school

district, were no longer available. This compounding loss may have resulted in several students in the Upward Bound program getting jobs during the pandemic while attempting to balance learning demands in the virtual setting. As a proactive strategy to support students who may have had to deal with balancing multiple aspects of their lives during the pandemic, Shin (2022) argued that educators should develop a sociocultural consciousness, one that ultimately acknowledges and validates students' lives and considers the complex and diverse backgrounds that exist in schools (Bartolomé, 1994), which aligns well with the ecological systems theory.

The ecological systems theory demonstrates why it is important for educators to develop a sociocultural consciousness, especially one that is consistently reflective of the multifaceted structure of the ecological system and its implications for students both within the context of school environments and beyond. For example, within the context of the Upward Bound program, it reiterates the importance of educators considering the multilayered structures of ecological systems that make up the students' environment particularly in their teaching practices by adapting instruction to student lives through checking routines, engaging in open discussions, and assigning noninvasive homework while discovering the needs of students and how best to support them.

The relationship between students and their environment shows how each student is nested within multilayered structures of the ecological system. This understanding is helpful, as it challenges educators' thinking to reflect on their students not only within the context of the school environment or one structure of the ecological system but rather within the multifaceted structure of the ecological system. This dissertation's finding *adapting instruction to student lives* reiterates the importance of educators considering the multilayered structures of ecological systems that make up the students' environment.

### **Usefulness of the Cultural Humility Training**

The theme *usefulness of cultural humility training* means participants' perceptions of the benefits of the training and how it impacts their ability to apply what they have learned with their students. The theme represents the perceptions of tutor mentors, clinicians, and program directors on the social validity of cultural humility training.

### **Usefulness of the Cultural Humility Training**

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The usefulness of the training in this current study is operationally defined within the context of the social validity of the training. Social validity refers to the social relevance of the goals, procedures, and importance of the intervention (Wolf, 1978). For the current study, the intervention was the cultural humility training. Schwartz and Baer (1991) argued that the intention of assessing the social validity of an intervention or training is to provide supplemental information relating to the participants' perceptions of the goals, procedures, and the efficacy of the procedures aimed at achieving the intervention or training overarching goals. He posited that social validity has two essential features: collecting information from the participants about the training and using the information collected for sustaining or changing the training. While using data gathered from the participants of this current study to improve the training was beyond the scope of the study, this current study focused on collecting information from the participants relating to their perception of the cultural humility training. The study will likely inform future

researchers about the usefulness of the cultural humility training, specifically related to increased engagement and consultation opportunities.

### **Implications**

The objective of this section is to provide this research study's implications for future research and recommendations for practice.

#### **Implications for Research**

This section provides recommendations for future research. While the findings in this study are insightful, there were some program-related limitations, such as virtual barriers as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, and study-related limitations, including attrition of participants, especially tutor mentors, and failure to include the ecological validity theoretical framework in the conceptual and planning onset of the study, as opposed to the reviewing it in the aftermath of the study. In the future, findings from this study and other evidence-based studies need to be referred to when preparing for virtual learning to help mitigate and bridge virtual barriers.

The virtual nature of instruction created flexibility, allowing students to learn in the comfort of the home. However, remote learning also presented challenges. There was a huge learning curve for educators around the building in maintaining student engagement while also learning about the technologies involved in teaching and learning, connecting with students, and tailoring it specifically to the students one is teaching.

This study contributed to understanding ways to bridge the aforementioned virtual barrier gap relating to virtual learning. For example, a teaching staff member created noninvasive assignments where students could share their experiences and needs, which allowed the educator to know about the situation and address such needs. Also, several educators mentioned that they began each class with a check-in question or activity to allow students to express their emotions,



which was helpful so that the students felt cared for and validated. In addition, the tutor mentor and clinicians attributed implementing cultural humility to helping create an environment or foundation for trust and also building relationships with students so that students felt seen and heard. Though making this connection with students seemed to take longer virtually than in person, the program director shared that it eventually happened by implementing cultural humility weekly with the students.

Also, the attrition of participants was a challenge, especially tutor mentors. Before the Upward Bound program Summer Institute, where this research study was implemented, five participants were recruited to participate in the program. These participants volunteered to participate in the cultural humility training; however, during the data collection, only 20%, specifically 1 out of 5 participants, volunteered to participate in the interview. Creative ways to recruit participants were implemented, such as extending the opportunity for clinicians to participate in the study. These strategies helped bridge the gap or initial vacuum created by the attrition of tutor mentors. It also gave room for a more holistic perspective on cultural humility training. In the future, applying to research grants that would help fund incentives could be helpful in mitigating attrition.

Also, considering the history of the Upward Bound program in working with tutor mentors suggests that there have been challenges in introducing and accepting new initiatives to them, as it has often resulted in resistance. In the future, setting a solid foundation for trust with tutor mentors would be necessary. In the study's findings, the program director mentioned that facilitating discussions with the tutor mentors about potential challenges they could encounter while implementing cultural humility with their students would create an opportunity for them to be vulnerable about their concerns and needs, and will allow the researcher to address them.

Hence setting an expectation of trust and collaboration could help minimize attrition in the future.

While the richness and insightful perspectives of teaching staff, tutor mentors, clinicians, and the program director will contribute to the literature and practice, particularly about culturally inclusive teaching practices, student engagement, cultural humility in education, and the social validity of the cultural humility training within the context of the Upward Bound program, it essential to note that research outcome cannot be generalized to the public schools.

The study's contribution will help understand culturally responsive teaching practices, student engagement, the barriers to implementation, cultural humility in education, and the cultural humility social validity training, particularly in understanding how best to support students of racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds. In the future, conducting similar studies in public schools will be insightful, particularly in gaining knowledge about cultural humility practices in the classroom and schoolwide. Insights gained could help inform teaching practices and be generalized within the public school system.

In addition, the study findings indicate that consultation opportunities were a valuable aspect of the cultural humility training. Participants benefited from learning concrete skills and teaching practices that they could practice with their students weekly. Participants also benefited from the presence of the researcher, clinical supervisor, and program director; though their roles were different, their contributions to conversations based on their experiences helped tailor instruction to cater to diverse students' needs by infusing cultural humility practices. For future research in schools, these findings would help reinforce the importance of ongoing support networks through professional learning communities and strategic teaming opportunities where

educators can continue to receive the training support they need to support the implementation process with fidelity.

In addition, the ecological validity framework was only fully conceptualized at the later stages of the study when data had already been collected. As a result, within this study, the framework was conceptualized from the program evaluation perspective. For instance, in Case 3, about cultural humility training, the researcher examined what aspects of the training aligned with the framework based on participants' responses to the interview. However, in hindsight, incorporating the ecological validity framework throughout this research project's phases may have been more insightful, from the onset to the final planning stage. That way, one can understand how the framework applies across the different research stages.

Understanding this now, in hindsight, reiterates the importance of having a framework that guides the research study. In the future, using the framework for guidance consistently throughout the various phases of the research project is necessary from an empirical perspective regarding the systematic approach to conducting research. From a practical perspective, ensuring that the research intervention is implemented with fidelity is also essential, which influences the study's outcome.

### **Implications for Practice**

These findings suggested several courses of action for the Upward Bound program and other college access preparatory programs. This section of implications discusses direct actions that educators can take to support students of racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds through culturally responsive teaching practices like cultural humility.

From a practice perspective, it contributed to addressing the gap related to educational outcomes by equipping educators with concrete skills that cater to diverse students' needs, such

as assigning students activities relevant to their lives by explicitly and respectfully requesting their responses through their participation in check-in questions aimed at getting to know their interests. Additionally, assigning students tasks that are noninvasive is helpful to educators in understanding what students need and how best to support them.

As future researchers look to implement culturally-responsive teaching practices in public schools, this study could serve as a resource in understanding the role of a school psychologist in fostering an inclusive learning environment for students by facilitating the implementation process through organizational consultation focused on supporting teachers through intentional training on cultural humility. As mentioned earlier in the implications of research, in addition to training educators, providing opportunities for ongoing professional learning communities and teaming would be helpful to sustain implementation with fidelity.

Professional learning communities involve educators working collaboratively to examine student data and address practices to promote better outcomes (DuFour et al., 2005). Research indicates that the efficacy in PLC is sustained when results are focused on, students' learning is collaboratively addressed, the team jointly works on common goals, best practices are implemented, system-level improvements are promoted, and a cycle of inquiry is implemented (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). In public schools, school psychologists can serve as consultants who work with PLCs to address shared goals and resolve issues that could impact outcomes (Prest & Burns, 2019). For instance, cultural humility discussions should be included in PLC consultation meetings, where teachers can share challenges or barriers they encounter when implementing cultural humility. Participants of this study shared reflective activities, where they could reflect on their practices to keep track of how much they had grown. Participants also revealed how they benefited from explicit feedback from other professionals on aspects of cultural humility they

could improve in their teaching practices. 360 observations were recommended, where teachers took turns to observe cultural humility practices implemented and gave explicit feedback to one another.

This study also assisted in our understanding of the not-so-convert link between teacher-student racial mismatch and diverse students' educational outcomes by gaining insights into the root cause of the issue. From a practice perspective, this study contributed to our understanding of implementing cultural humility in education, particularly structural, systemic barriers. The current gap resulting in racial mismatch needs to be addressed through increased efforts to train more diverse educators during preservice training. Also, representation within the workforce needs to address recruitment and retention efforts of institutions and organizations of employment while ensuring that such efforts are well-researched and address the needs of future employees. For example, funding needs, flexible part-time training opportunities, ongoing resources, and professional network support through affinity groups.

## APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT

Emails to Upwards Bound Staff

Dear XXXX,

I trust you are well.

I thought to offer some more context about the cultural humility dissertation project and how the work connects to the feedback/interview I have invited you to participate in virtually.

The interview would be a dialogue between you and I; it will focus on your perspective of the current teaching practices and ways to promote the development of concrete skills through cultural humility training within the Upward Bound program to support diverse students. Your insights will help expand on and improve cultural humility practices in the classroom.

I am passionate about integrating culturally informed practices in the classroom, as research shows that it creates an inclusive learning environment for students. It also helps build and maintain student-teacher relationships, which positively impacts their trajectory.

Here are some helpful reminders:

If you are interested in participating, please click this [link](#) to schedule the interview date and time that work best for you. I am happy to speak to you further about this if you would like to meet with

me via zoom before you sign up? Please let me know by today, 7/23, and I can make that happen.

Thank you.

2. Also, please complete the informed consent form attached to this email and send it back to me via email by the end of the day (today) Friday, 7/23.

Please, let me know if you have any questions. Thank you for your time in advance.

Kind Regards,

Onasheho Toweh

Doctoral Candidate, School Psychology

University of Massachusetts, Amherst

## **APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM**

**Researchers (s): Onasheho V. Toweh; Sara Whitcomb, PhD**

**Study Title: CULTURAL HUMILITY IN EDUCATION: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONCRETE SKILLS WITHIN THE UPWARD BOUND PROGRAM**

The consent form will give you the information you will need to understand why this study is being done and why you are being invited to participate. It will also describe what you will need to do to participate and any known risks, inconveniences or discomforts that you may have while participating. We encourage you to take some time to think this over and ask questions now and at any other time. Anyone who expresses interest in participating will be given instructions to contact the researchers, who will then schedule the interview at a convenient time with the Teaching Staff.

### **WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE?**

The subjects of this study are Teaching Staff in the Upward Bound program in the Northern eastern region of the United States. The researchers will not be including subjects based on their race, gender, age or ethnic background, but rather their willingness to participate and share their experience voluntarily.

The subjects of the study will be pre-selected by the Upward Bound Program Director. Next, the Protocol Director will contact potential participants through email. Those who are interested in participating will be referred to the researchers who will explain the study as well as their rights through consent form.

### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?**

The purpose of this study is to examine current teaching practices and promote the development of concrete skills through cultural humility training within the Upward Bound program to support diverse



students. The interview data will be analyzed to expand on and improve cultural humility practices in the classroom.

### **WHERE WILL THE STUDY TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?**

The study will take place remotely via zoom. Each interview will take up to 60 minutes. After the interview, there is a possibility that you may be contact for a follow up interview to clarify their responses, which may take up to 30 minutes.

### **WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?**

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked a series of questions related to your overall experience of training obtained, how you ended up in a teaching role and the racial/ethnic heritage that is representative of your cultural identity. Further questions will target your experience implementing culturally sensitive practice like cultural humility with your students in the Upward Bound program. You will be audio-recorded during the interview. The audio aspect of the recording will be transcribed by the researcher later. Interviews will take place at a convenient time for you as a participant. You are deeply appreciated and valued for your time and participation. Please let the researcher know if there is any question you feel uncomfortable answering, as such question will be skipped.

While there is a possibility of a data breach, the researcher has made every reasonable effort to maintain the confidentiality of the data. Your name will be protected. You will be assigned an ID number, with identifying information being kept in a secure location accessible only by the researcher of the study.

You may not directly benefit from this research; however, we hope that your participating in the study may provide valuable information to an educational learning community by understanding how cultural humility practices are applied in the classroom.

**WHAT ARE MY RISKS OF BEING IN THIS STUDY?**

We believe there is no risk associated with participation in this study; a possible feeling of inconvenience may be the time it takes to complete the study and answer the questions. If you feel any inconvenience you may skip a question, decline or reschedule the interview. The researchers will keep the information you shared confidential to avoid data breach. While transcribing the data, all identifying information will be removed. Audio recordings will be deleted right after the transcription.

The following procedures will be used to protect the confidentiality of your study records. Data collected during the interview will be audio recorded, transcribed verbatim and kept confidential. To protect the transcribed data, they will be kept in the Secure Online Storage at UMASS AMHERST (Microsoft One System) and shared only with the researchers. The files with transcribed data will not have any identified information (i.e., name of Teaching Staff) and will only be available to researchers who know the password to shared folder. Any identifying information about the Teaching Staff will be removed from the written reports of this research. Only the principal researchers will have access to the data (i.e. audio recordings, written transcriptions, data analysis, results). After the analysis of the transcribed data, the audio recordings with interviews will be deleted.

At the conclusion of this study, the researcher does hope to present the findings to the dissertation committee at the defense of the research in February 2022. The researchers may also publish their findings in peer-reviewed journals. The information derived from the study will not be provided to agencies or institutions. Also, information will be presented in summary format and you will not be identified in any presentation or publications.

**WHAT IF I HAVE A QUESTION?**

Take as long as you would like before you decide. We will be happy any questions you may have about the study. If you have further questions about this project or if you have a research-related problem, you may

contact the researcher (s), (Dr. Sara Whitcomb, whitcomb@educ.umass.edu, Onasheho Toweh, 413-885-0083 or otoweh@umass.edu). If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may contact the University of Massachusetts Amherst Human Research Protection Office (HRPO) AT 413-545-3428 OR humansubjects@ora.umass.edu.

### **CAN I STOP BEING IN THE STUDY?**

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. If you agree to be in the study, but later change your mind, you may drop out at any time. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide you do not want to participate.

### **WHAT IF I AM INJURED?**

The University of Massachusetts does not have a program for compensating subjects for injury or complications related to human subjects research, but the study personnel will assist you in getting treatment.

### **WILL I BE COMPENSATED?**

There will be compensations or direct benefits given to any participants in this study.

### **SUBJECT STATEMENT OF VOLUNTARY CONSENT**

When electronically signing this form, I am agreeing to voluntarily enter this study. I have had a change to read the consent form, and it was explained to me in a language which I use and understand. I have the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. A copy of this signed informed consent form has been given to me.

I agree to participate in this study, and give the researcher permission to audio record and transcribe the interview (*Please type yes if you agree*):

I do not agree to participate in this study (*Please type yes if you do not agree*):

Participant signature and Date (*Please type your First name and Last name here*):

## **APPENDIX C: TEACHING STAFF INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

Problem: There is an increase in racial/ethnic diversity in the U.S public schools' student population; however, teachers and other adults who support diverse students lack training and are often unprepared. There is also a gap in clarity of what an interdisciplinary, culturally sensitive concept like cultural humility could look like when practiced in education, particularly in the classroom setting. Also, there are hardly any concrete lessons that explicitly outline how teachers and other adults can implement cultural humility practices in their work with diverse students.

Disruptions: Teachers and adults have limited understanding and skills on how to support diverse students.

Consequence: As a result, students of similar racial or ethnic backgrounds as the Tutor Mentors have developed strong bonds and have often isolated themselves from integrating with other students different from them. In addition, this gap in the integration of the students has often resulted in conflicts during the Summer Institute Program.

Research Question 1: What teaching practices promote student engagement within the Upward Bound program and its diverse student body?

Research Question 2: What challenges do Teaching Staff encounter in implementing these practices in the Upward Bound program?

### Interview Protocol

#### Background/Demographic questions

GT: Tell me about yourself.

Q: What's your teaching background?

Q: How did you end up in this role?

Q: Given this interview's focus on cultural humility, knowing a bit about your cultural identity is important. Therefore, what is representative of your cultural identity?

Probe: Are there any other important aspects of your cultural identity that you would like

to share?

### Knowledge Questions

GT: Tell me about what does good teaching practices look like?

Q: Give examples of what culturally sensitive practices look like in your work with diverse students in the Upward Bound program?

Q: Have you received any training on culturally sensitive practices?

Q: If yes, given the training you have received, describe how confident did you feel about applying the knowledge gained in your work with diverse students?

GT: Tell me about your perception of student engagement when culturally sensitive practices are implemented within the Upward Bound program and its diverse student body?

Q: What do you notice about student's ability to pay attention in class?

Q: What do you notice about how students prepare for class?

Q: What do you notice about student's perception of the importance of school to them?

Q: What did you notice about student's effort in their schoolwork?

Q: What did you notice about student's effort exerted on their behavior?

GT: Tell me about barriers you may experience in implementing culturally sensitive practices with your students?

Q: Did you find any aspect of implementing the culturally sensitive practices with your students' challenge? If so, describe the experience?

Q: Were you able to address the challenge? If yes, describe what you did? If not, describe why you did not?

GT: Tell me about what does cultural humility mean to you?

Q: How do you define cultural humility?

Q: Give examples of what cultural humility looks like in your work with diverse students in the Upward Bound program?

My Notes\*

Thank you so much for that definition and for examples of cultural humility in your work. They align really nicely with the literature on the topic. I would like to share with you a definition from that example to see if there's anything you'd add from your own experience. [Definition]

Q: Does that bring to mind any additional things that you would like me to know about?

Q: Going back to that definition, what do you think about it?

Probe: Is there anything you would add, change, or subtract based on your experiences?

Experience/behavior questions

GT: Tell me about the kinds of cultural humility practices you have engaged in with your students?

Q: If I had been with you when you engaged in cultural humility practices, what would I have seen you doing?

Q: How do you foster openness in your interactions with diverse students?

Q: What do you do to promote your self-awareness of diverse students?

Q: What does being egoless look like in your interactions with diverse students?

Q: Describe how you engage in supportive interactions with the Upward Bound students?

Q: When you first started engaging in cultural humility practices, what challenges did you encounter?

## **APPENDIX D: TUTOR MENTOR & CLINICIAN INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

Problem: Although the Teaching Staff within the Upward Bound Program have continued to implement culturally sensitive practices, there is a gap in the systematic wraparound approach that includes both peer mentors and students.

Disruptions: The Tutor Mentors are not currently trained or implementing culturally sensitive practices like cultural humility with their students.

Consequence: As a result, teachers and other adults who support diverse students may misrepresent students' behavior. It could also limit student's academic achievement, hinder teacher-student relationships, impede social-emotional wellness and limit college-readiness.

Research question 1: Following the cultural humility training, how do Tutor Mentors understand the relationship between cultural humility teaching practices and student engagement?

Research question 2: What challenges do Tutor Mentors encounter in implementing cultural humility practices in the Upward Bound program?

### Interview Protocol

#### Background/Demographic questions

GT: Tell me about yourself.

Q: What's your educational background?

Q: How did you end up in this role?

Q: Given this interview's focus on cultural humility, knowing a bit about your cultural identity is important. Therefore, what cultural is representative of your cultural identity?

Probe: Are there any other important aspects of your cultural identity that you would like to share?

#### Knowledge Questions

GT: Tell me about what cultural humility means to you?

Q: How do you define cultural humility?

Q: Have you received any training on cultural humility practices?



Q: If yes, given the training you have received, describe how confident you feel about applying the knowledge gained in your work with diverse students?

Probe: Are there any other important aspects of your cultural humility practices that you would like to share?

My Notes\*

Thank you so much for that definition and for examples of cultural humility in your work. They align really nicely with the literature on the topic. I would like to share with you a definition from that example to see if there's anything you'd add from your own experience. [Definition]

Q: Does that bring to mind any additional things that you would like me to know about?

Q: Going back to that definition, what do you think about it?

Probe: Is there anything you would add, change, or subtract based on your experiences?

#### Experience/behavior questions

GT: Tell me about the kinds of cultural humility practices you have engaged in with your students?

Q: If I had been with you when you engaged in cultural humility practices, what would I have seen you doing?

Q: How do you foster openness in your interactions with diverse students?

Q: What do you do to promote your self-awareness of diverse students?

Q: What does being egoless look like in your interactions with diverse students?

Q: Describe how you engage in supportive interactions with the Upward Bound students?

#### Experience/behavior questions

GT: Tell me about your perception of student engagement when cultural humility practices are implemented within the Upward Bound program and its diverse student body?

Q: What do you notice about a student's ability to pay attention in class?

Q: What do you notice about how students prepare for class?

Q: What do you notice about student's perception of the importance of school to them?

Q: What did you notice about student's effort in their schoolwork?

Q: What did you notice about student's effort exerted on their behavior?

GT: Tell me about barriers you may experience in implementing cultural humility practices with your students?

Q: Did you find any aspect of implementing the cultural humility practices with your students' challenge? If so, describe the experience?

Q: Were you able to address the challenge? If yes, describe what you did? If not, describe why you did not?

Problem: Although the Teaching Staff within the Upward Bound Program have continued to implement culturally sensitive practices, there is a gap in the systematic wraparound approach that includes both peer mentors and students.

Disruptions: The Tutor Mentors are not currently trained or implementing culturally sensitive practices like cultural humility with their students.

Consequence: As a result, teachers and other adults who support diverse students may misrepresent students' behavior. It could also limit student's academic achievement, hinder teacher-student relationships, impede social-emotional wellness and limit college-readiness.

Research question 1: How do Tutor Mentors perceive the cultural humility training to be socially valid?

Research question 2: How does the Program Director perceive the cultural humility training to be socially valid?

Research question 3: How does the Assistant Program Director perceive the cultural humility training to be socially valid?

#### Experience/behavior questions

GT: Tell me about what you perceived from a feasibility, acceptability and usefulness stand point?

Q: Were there any aspects of the cultural humility training were feasible? If so, describe your experience? If not, why do you think that was the case?

Q: Were there any aspects of the cultural humility training that were useful for your practice? If so, which describes your experience? If not, why do you think that was the case?

Q: If you were not satisfied with any part of the cultural humility training, please explain why.

Q: What support would you have like to receive in implementing what you learned?

## **APPENDIX E: PROGRAM DIRECTOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

**Problem:** Although, the Teaching Staff within the Upward Bound Program have continued to implement culturally sensitive practices, there is a gap in the systematic wraparound approach that includes both peer mentors and students.

**Disruptions:** The Tutor Mentors are not currently trained or implementing culturally sensitive practices like cultural humility with their students.

**Consequence:** As a result, teachers and other adults who support diverse students may misrepresent students' behavior. It could also limit student's academic achievement, hinder teacher-student relationships, impede social-emotional wellness and limit college-readiness.

**Research question 1:** How do Tutor Mentors perceive the cultural humility training to be socially valid?

**Research question 2:** How does the Program Director perceive the cultural humility training to be socially valid?

**Research question 3:** How does the Assistant Program Director perceive the cultural humility training to be socially valid?

### Experience/behavior questions

**GT: Tell me about what you perceived from a feasibility, acceptability and usefulness stand point?**

Q: Where there any aspects of the cultural humility training were feasible? If so, describe your experience? If not, why do you think that was the case?

Q: Where there any aspects of the cultural humility training were useful for your practice? If so, which describe your experience? If not, why do you think that was the case?

Q: How did you see or hear about cultural humility practices imbedded through the Tutor Mentors work with the students this summer?

Q: What did you notice in the implementation of cultural humility practices that went well? If yes, please describe by citing specific examples?

Q: Did you notice any challenges or barriers in implementing cultural humility practices? If yes, please describe by citing specific examples?

Q: If you were not satisfied with any part of the cultural humility training, please explain why.

Q: What support would you have like to receive in implementing what you learned?

### Background/Demographic questions

GT: Tell me about yourself.

Q: How did you end up in this role?

Q: Given this interview's focus on cultural humility, knowing a bit about your cultural identity is important. Therefore, what cultural is representative of your cultural identity?

Probe: Are there any other important aspects of your cultural identity that you would like to share?

### Knowledge Questions

GT: Tell me about what cultural humility means to you?

Q: How do you define cultural humility?

Q: Citing specific examples, describe what cultural humility practices look like in the Upward Bound Program?

Probe: Are there any other important aspects of your cultural humility practices that you would like to share?

### **My Notes\***

Thank you so much for that definition and for examples of cultural humility in your work. They align really nicely with the literature on the topic. I would like to share with you a definition from that example to see if there's anything you'd add from your own experience. [Definition]

Q: Does that bring to mind any additional things that you would like me to know about?

Q: Going back to that definition, what do you think about it?

Probe: Is there anything you would add, change, or subtract based on your experiences?

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