

Lessons Learned:
Evolving into a Critical Cultural Consciousness Framework
in Teacher Education

by

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Abstract

Background: The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing disparities for students of color. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) has been established as an effective intervention strategy to engage students of color but has not been standardized or interwoven throughout teacher education programs and does not include explicit anti-oppressive constructs. **Purpose:** Grounded in a critical epistemic framework, this study uses an integrated model - Critical Cultural Consciousness, which conjoins CRP with Cultural Consciousness and Reformatory Justice Education. The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' experiences with CRP in their pre-service and in-service teaching practice, as well as to investigate teachers' perspectives about incorporating aspects from the proposed conceptual framework into teacher education programs. **Methods:** Six recent graduates of a teacher education program were recruited using purposeful and snowball sampling. This small exploratory case study integrated individual interviews and focus groups for data collection. Data produced from one-on-one interviews informed question protocols for the focus group. Data from the focus group was used to compare thematic analysis deduced from individual responses. A within-case analysis of one-on-one interviews was generated first to provide important details. Individual and group interviews transcripts were read several times and transcribed verbatim. The analytic process involved a constant comparative method and open-coding process in order to separate and categorize data into meaningful expressions. **Results:** Participants of this study reported some limited exposure to CRP in their teacher education program. Participants relied primarily on their own personal backgrounds to inform their practice. Participants expressed having minimal exposure to Cultural Consciousness and Reformatory Justice domains in their program.

Though it was not a focus of the teacher education program, building relationships with students was repeatedly emphasized as the most effective strategy for student engagement and underscored each aspect of participants' pedagogical practice. The context of the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted participants' capacity to engage their students. **Conclusion:** Teachers need extensive training to adapt pedagogical strategies to an online environment. Results of this study indicate that while teachers are graduating from the teacher education program feeling generally prepared to teach in multicultural settings, their pedagogical confidence is a result of their own personal experiences and interactions with diverse populations. This study also reveals that teacher education programs remain situated in outdated CRP typologies. This study suggests that CRP is not enough to address underlying issues faced by a diverse body of students. A critical and compassionate framework such as Critical Cultural Consciousness should be implemented into teacher education programs to help bridge the gap between theory and practice and re-engage students.

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Chapter One

Lessons Learned:

Evolving into a Critical Cultural Consciousness Framework in Teacher Education

We all carry worlds in our heads, and those worlds are decidedly different.

We educators set out to teach, but how can we reach the worlds of others when we don't even know they exist?

– Lisa Delpit, *Other People's Children*

Background

CRP Origins. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP), along with its prior and subsequent iterations, has been consistently identified in teacher education programs and by preminent scholars as being the cornerstone for fostering the widespread engagement of students of color (Gay & Howard, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1990; Paris, 2012). Gloria Ladson-Billings first introduced the term Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in 1990 in a landmark study entitled: “Like lightning in a bottle: Attempting to capture the pedagogical excellence of successful teachers of Black students” after observing highly effective teachers and their African American students.

Geneva Gay's book, *Culturally Relevant Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice* (2001), called upon the need to encourage students to think critically, and question established inequitable norms, and to reach this level of understanding by listening to others' experiences. Django Paris' work: *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: A needed Change in Stance, Terminology, and Practice* (2012), infused the fluid nature of culture

and identity, as well as the notion of cultural pluralism, with a strong linguistic component, to counter current meritocratic policies. Culturally sustaining pedagogy considers the variety of cultures present in the classroom and how these identities evolve over time.

Ladson-Billings' initial work laid the foundation for subsequent scholars to progress ideas grounded in a more holistic approach to educating children. Perhaps the most significant of the common elements between the three scholars is in their position on accessing students' cultures as a learning tool. Ladson-Billings, Gay, and Django framed teaching and learning within a historical and sociopolitical context. Their work advocates for an alternative way to view variances among students. Students learn differently because students are individuals who arrive at school not as blank slates but with their own rich cultural backgrounds. Their work argues that standardized instruction strips away differences in an attempt to homogenize students for the convenience of comparative testing. These scholars promoted a strength-based approach to educating, where students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds are viewed as assets rather than barriers to learning. This perspective was an important deviation from previous mainstream modes of thinking equating difference with deficient.

How teachers perform in multicultural settings has been shown to be a significant indicator of teacher training program efficacy (Stites et al., 2018). Research suggests that by thoughtfully preparing teachers to engage with a diverse body of students, teacher education has the capacity to improve academic outcomes for students of color (Sleeter, 2001). However, without intentional efforts to connect the dots of inequity and critically review deeper infrastructural causes for disparities in student achievement and multicultural teacher training, disparities in academic outcomes will undoubtedly persist.

Why Teachers Matter

Poverty has a devastating and far-reaching impact on communities of color (Byrd & Clayton, 2012; Department of Health, 1996; Fajana, 2007; Jaynes & Williams, 1989; McCrea et al., 2019; United Church of Christ, Commission for Racial Justice, 1987; U.S. Department of Commerce, 2016). Considering the robust research demonstrating a solid link between socioeconomic status and quality of education (Falk et al., 1978; Attewell, 2016; Hofmarcher, 2019; Mihai et al., 2015; Neuman, 2016), as well as educational attainment with annual earnings (Awan et al., 2011; Mihai et al., 2015; Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2004; Van der Berg, 2008), it is evident how critically important quality education is for children of color, especially when these children are living below the Federal Poverty Threshold (FPT).

The impact teachers have on the lives of their students is well-documented (Anderson et al., 1988; Danielsen et al., 2010; Fowler et al., 2008; Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Sakiz et al., 2012). The correlation between quality of teacher and student achievement is quantifiable; increases of teacher quality have been statistically linked to increases in students' test scores (Aaronson et al., 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Rockoff, 2004). But the real skill behind a teacher's ability to lead students to academic success is reflected outside of test scores and statistics. Students respond to teachers when teachers demonstrate they care about their students and can customize pedagogical styles to match students' needs; the teacher-student relationship is inseparably connected to the learning process (Frymier & Houser, 2000; Hughes et al., 2001; Tursunboyeva & Ashirova, 2021).

A well-trained teacher possesses the personal and professional development to engage with students no matter students' or teachers' cultural background (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Ladson-Billings' work suggests graduates of effective teacher training programs possess the real-world experience and instructional strategy skillset to adapt to their environment, no matter where the school is located and what obstacles are present. However, evidence suggests the kind of student who would benefit most from highly effective teachers do not have the same access as their more affluent peers:

Unfortunately, most students in poor urban schools, especially students of color from low-income families, are much less likely to encounter the kind of confident, well-prepared teacher than they are to meet a string of underprepared teachers who suffer from their lack of training and often leave before they learn how to help students succeed (Darling-Hammond, 2012).

Why Teacher Education Matters

When an individual enters a preservice teacher education program, she brings with her individual life experiences, cultural identities, personal biases, and her own reasons for wanting to become a teacher. Preservice teachers pay for tuition and books by taking out loans and/or by working part-time or full-time jobs, spend hours reading and completing assignments, create portfolios which demonstrate their academic progress, and practice and observe what they are learning in their teacher education classroom by going out into the field. In return preservice teachers expect to be professionally prepared by effective instructors who produce engaging lesson plans and model holistic and academically successful classroom experiences.

By the time a preservice teacher graduates she should be fully prepared to address the needs of a diverse range of students. The comprehensive set of skills required to achieve the daunting task of facing a classroom full of students with a widespread range of needs and backgrounds can best be achieved by intentional training. The research connecting teacher certification with teacher ability is strong (Darling-Hammond, 2012; Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000; HillJackson & Stafford, 2017); Kanstoroom & Finn, 1999; Paige, 2002; Walsh & Tracy, 2004). However, because teacher licensing standards differ by state, there is great variance between the programs and the teachers these programs graduate (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Despite the differences, there is consensus that it is the responsibility of teacher education programs to prepare a diverse group of teachers to engage with a group of students from different racial, ethnic, social class, and language backgrounds (Nieto, 2000).

Rethinking teacher training has the potential of inverting the slope of the income-to-poverty line (Nieto, 2000). Efficiently trained teachers with a broader, more humanistic, and more advanced notion of culture, who have gained experience teaching in public schools, can help improve the quality of education in those areas, and therefore, the lives of students and their communities (Hofmarcher, 2019). Teachers need to didactic instruction on how to think critically about disparity and what poverty represents.

Research Questions

Exploratory research questions have been identified as appropriate for qualitative inquiry when: (a) There is little known in a particular research area; (b) Existing research is confusing, contradictory, or not moving forward; or (c) The topic is highly complex (Barker et al., 2002). The research questions for this study are exploratory in that they seek

to explore rather than confirm a phenomenon and do not seek a single set of outcomes (Yin, 2003). The research questions were developed based on what Stake (1995) refers to as “issues”, interlaced with political, social, historical, and personal contexts. The issues shaped the research questions and the study’s Critical Cultural Consciousness (CCC) conceptual framework.

Research Question 1: In what ways do teachers feel prepared to teach in multicultural settings?

Intent: This question informed the research by identifying areas of strengths and weaknesses in teacher education programs in preparing student teachers to engage with students from a multiplicity of cultures. Identified areas of weaknesses more precisely reveal if and to what degree the proposed conceptual framework may be relevant and effective.

Research Question 2: What are teachers’ experiences and perspectives about the implementation of Critical Cultural Consciousness?

Intent: This question helped determine the degree to which the participants have personally experienced these framework’s pedagogical areas of interest. The nature of teachers’ experiences informed their perception and depth of knowledge on topics explored in this study. Participants’ experiences and knowledge of Critical Cultural Consciousness is directly related to their feelings on being prepared to teach in multicultural settings. Once participants identified areas of strengths and weaknesses in their preparedness, they spoke to how they feel teacher education programs may improve, using the conceptual framework as an empirical and theoretical touchstone.

Context of the Study

The COVID-19 Pandemic. On March 11, 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak a global pandemic (Srinivas & Fowler, 2020). While the pandemic has impacted everyone, everyone has been affected differently. Communities of color have experienced disproportionately high job loss and mortality rates (CDC, 2020). The experiences of communities of color during the COVID-19 pandemic have brought to light racial hierarchies (Pak, 2021; Prescott, 2021). Many youths have had to become caregivers for ailing family members and enter the workforce in order to financially contribute to their household (Courtney et al., 2020), which has significantly impacted their educational experiences (Garcia et al., 2021; Gazmararian et al., 2021). Compounding the crises situation for students are the effects of long-term periods of social isolation, a problem which has been previously evaluated in research (Cherng, 2015; Farmer-Hinton, 2008; Hazler & Denham, 2002; Nino et al., 2017).

Critical Race Theory Legislation. This study took place following the academic school year 2020-2021. Legislation referred to in the media as Critical Race Theory has been proposed in many states. The legislation outlines and prohibits teachers from discussing specified topics. Subsections of the Texas House Bill 4093 specify that “No teacher shall be compelled...to discuss current events or widely debated or currently controversial issues” or give “deference to any one perspective”. Other subsections contend that no school or teacher give extra credit to students who engage in civic discourse outside of school or make “efforts to persuade member of the legislative or executive branch to take specific actions.” Under this bill schools are not permitted to require teachers to attend “training, orientation, or therapy which presents any form of race or sex stereotyping or blame on the basis of race or sex.” Coursework may not include anything which causes

“guilt, anguish, or any other psychological distress on account of his or her race”, or that a “meritocracy” was “...created by members of a particular race to oppress members of another race” (Legiscan, 2021).

Law Enforcement Discrimination. The efforts of politicians to shape knowledge in the classroom has created confusion around Critical Race Theory and the legislation itself. Increased political involvement in schools is occurring during a time of widespread national unrest and social movements. The Black Lives Matter protest movement began in response to a series of high-profile police incidents and disturbing footage of police violence against African Americans. The movement came to a peak in May of 2020 with the murder of an African American man suspected of passing a \$20 counterfeit bill named George Floyd by a white police officer in Minneapolis.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) announced racism as a public health crisis in 2020:

A growing body of research shows that centuries of racism in this country has had a profound and negative impact on communities of color. The impact is pervasive and deeply embedded in our society—affecting where one lives, learns, works, worships and plays and creating inequities in access to a range of social and economic benefits—such as housing, education, wealth, and employment (CDC, 2020).

Problem Statement

To be truly visionary we have to root our imagination in our concrete reality while simultaneously imagining possibilities beyond that reality.

-Bell Hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody*

There are indications to suggest that since its inception, academic disparities for under-resourced populations of students have been fueled by an educational system rooted in racism and enforced by outdated typologies (Freire, 2000). The reality for African American students motivating Ladson-Billings' study of effective teachers such as academic disparities between African American students and their white counterparts, the underrepresentation of African American students in schools' Gifted and Talented Programs, the overrepresentation of African American students in Special Education programs, and the inordinate amount of students of color in out-of-school suspension, remain problematic more than 20 years later (Kohli & Pizarro, 2016). Current teacher education programs claim to be culturally relevant but lack substantive social equity domains. Underneath the surface of these problems is the overwhelming presence of majority Euro-centric ideals (Cochran-Smith et al., 2016; Matias & Mackey, 2016; Schiele, 1994), the devaluing of the perspectives of a diverse group of teachers (Sleeter, 2017) and inability to capture the systemic causes for continued academic disparities for students of color (Kohli & Pizarro, 2016).

Academic outcomes at the end of the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrate the ongoing and worsening presence of educational disparities, and validated that a critical and compassionate approach is urgently needed for students of color (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Standardized test results for Spring 2021 highlight the devastating impact COVID-19 had on student learning, as well as pre-existing inequities the pandemic amplified for children from low-income backgrounds. Students of color and low-income students experienced greater declines in test scores compared to other demographics.

Latinx and African American students in remote-learning districts experienced the most profound drop in scores from 2019, particularly in math. While the scores of students of color are concerning, there was a significant decline in the number of students meeting grade level expectations across almost all subject levels (TEA, 2021).

School enrollment is down across all grade levels (Dworak, 2020). College enrollment has significantly declined from the 2019-2020 school year (Cervone, 2020). The drop-out rate for low-income college students is significant; students cite lack of reliable high-speed Internet as a reason for not being able to complete their course online (Long & Douglas-Gabriel, 2020). The participation rates and general shift in attitude toward in-person school has the potential of having long-term and far-reaching social – as well as economic – repercussions (Nicola et al., 2020).

Social movement research is replete with outcomes suggesting a critical need for intervention measures to reduce inequality in youth outcomes for students of color. Students of color are disproportionately targeted by schools' policies and practices (U.S. Department of Education's Civil Rights Office, 2014; Delpit, 2006). African American students are suspended and expelled from school three times more often than their white peers (Nelson & Lind, 2015). Inequitable school policies are manifested in the disproportionate representation of African American students in out-of-classroom suspensions and already serving time in the juvenile justice system – the well-documented school-to-prison pipeline (Kim et al., 2010; Skiba et al., 2014; Wald & Losen; 2003; Wilson, 2014; Winn, 2019). Excessively punitive school practices like the Zero Tolerance policy are associated with lower standardized test scores, decreased instructional time,

isolation from the greater school community, as well as increased likelihood of entering the criminal justice system (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2014).

Additionally, teacher education continues to fail to recruit and retain teachers of color. Population trends reveal a growing disparity between the racial demographic of the majority of teachers compared to that of students. The 2021 U.S. Census report revealed that the white population has decreased for the first time in census history. This statistic is juxtaposed against the category of multiracial individuals whose numbers have increased by a staggering 276% since 2010. The Hispanic population continues to steadily rise, yet in education, white women remain the dominant demographic population of teachers at 79% (NCES, 2018).

Research underscores the value teachers of color bring to the classroom whose high expectations for students and commitment to multiculturalist pedagogy is reflected in the academic success of their students (Ladson-Billings, 1991; Rios & Montecinos, 1999), yet much of the teacher education research focuses on the perspectives of white teachers (Sleeter, 2001). When Ladson-Billings studied highly effective teachers, her focus was on what strategies teachers use to engage their students, not the teacher's race. While improving recruitment and retainment practices for teachers of color is an important area of reform, research on engaging students of color indicates that more critical is developing well-designed teacher education programs which will produce excellence in teachers who value and are adept at culturally relevant pedagogies (Goodwin, 1997; Montecinos, 1994).

The problem with CRP – when it *is* incorporated into teacher education programs is that there is no strategic plan for how one defines, acquires, applies, and evaluates it. The

lethargic pace with which teacher education programs have adapted CRP is evident in the data. Nationwide research comparing the application of CRP across all 50 states found that most states lack clearly defined teaching standards for the CRP instruction, or even a basic definition for CRP (New America, 2020). Without substantive training, new teachers may lack the skills and the confidence to be effective in the classroom (Siwatu, 2011) resulting in confusion and overly simplistic interpretations (George, 2018). *Intellectual incoherence* (Freire, 2000) is exemplified as an insidious tool to mask and thereby perpetuate injustice. This study was based on the premise that the lack of clear articulation around CRP has resulted in its ineffectual and even counterproductive implementation. This study offers a conceptual framework which borrows from Cultural Consciousness and Restorative Justice Education, to bring CRP practice to fruition, coalescing multiculturalism with anti-racist education.

Purpose Statement

There is an urgent need for a more critical and compassionate framework in teacher education programs (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Nieto 2004). This study aims to help demystify CRP by exploring teachers' perception of the quality and usefulness of their teacher training regarding topics of social and restorative justice, culturally relevant pedagogies, and equity in education. Additionally, this study explores how teachers' cultural and personal life experiences influence their experiences and subsequent application of CRP in multicultural school settings. The goal of this study is to provide insights for future researchers, policymakers, and teacher program administrators in considering adopting the proposed conceptual framework to standardize and strengthen CRP. This exploratory nature of this study sought to gain insights from teachers'

perspectives about the impact of culture on their lives, their perception of CRP, and their opinions about including constructs from Cultural Consciousness such as critical reflexivity, and from Restorative Justice Education such as antiracist education into teacher education programs.

Despite the push for a progressive cultural awareness with a focus on social equity in education, there is little research on the implementation of CRP in teacher education programs from the perspectives of teachers. The research in the following literature review demonstrates that CRP is needed in schools, yet there is a lack of consensus around what CRP is or how to implement it. There is also evidence to suggest that CRP alone is not enough to effectually achieve desired outcomes. This exploratory case study proposes a conceptual framework which builds upon constructs from CRP and two other theoretical foundations empirically demonstrated as effective in the classroom. The rationale for using constructs from three overlapping but also unique theories is that each brings with it a strategy or philosophical underpinning which when integrated, are strengthened and more likely to achieve the ultimate goal of educational equity and improved academic experiences.

Through a Critical Cultural Consciousness lens, the goal of this study is to offer an empirical pivot around which to shift the conversation about the role of sociological constructs such as race and culture in teacher education programs. Teaching critical pedagogy helps preservice teachers identify their own social positions in terms of oppression and privilege as well as analyze the structural power dynamics among their students' multiple identities that result in less access to quality education (Yamada et al., 2015; Simon et al., 2021). Teachers may then support development of the same critical

reflective practice in their own students, and thereby ending the cycle of centuries-long of educational injustice. A critical framework demands greater recognition of students' rights, and in so doing, a more democratic form of governing behavior and relationships within educational institutions.

Significance

The role of teacher education programs in promoting democratic ideals through the application of critical thinking and the development of effective pedagogical strategies for student engagement has never been more salient. There are limited studies examining teachers' perspectives of CRP and student engagement after the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. There are also limited studies asking teachers about how Critical Race Theory legislation will impact their pedagogical practices.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy has been identified as one of the most effective means of connecting student engagement with improved academic outcomes. Yet there is little research on CRP's standardization across programs or its implementation in teacher education programs from the perspectives of teachers. This study contributes to the literature by analyzing teacher experiences with CRP through the conceptual framework of Critical Cultural Consciousness with a focus on Restorative Justice Education (RJE). Previous teacher education epistemic frameworks have operated from places of privilege and oppression. In order to interrupt continued, persistent, and increasing educational inequities, this study proposes a novel pedagogical framework which takes CRP to its next iteration - Critical Cultural Consciousness - with implications for teacher education programs, practitioners, and policymakers. Using CCC conceptual framework as a guide, the proposed study explores the presence of transformative antiracist pedagogies in teacher

education (Bubar et al., 2016). CCC is grounded in a critical intersectional framework which recognizes the need for teacher education students to understand their own placement in systems of oppression before they can analyze and address how multiple intersections of oppression affect their students, and their students' communities.

The idea of promoting strengths-based practice with strong antiracist components has yet to be established in the field of education. This study sought to add to the foundational knowledge on critical professional teaching principles for CRP. Such knowledge may assist state leaders in developing an encompassing set of standards which may be applied across teacher education programs with a critical outlook on educational disparities polluting the educational system. Thus far CRP has been treated as a single entity – an extraneous, add-on course - as opposed to a formalized process, a central component of the program, with clearly articulated expectations (Darling-Hammond, 2020; Delpit, 2006).

While there is much research connecting teacher preparation and student achievement (Boyd et al., 2008; Burroughs et al., 2019; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017) and teacher certification standards (Bowling & Ball, 2018; Flower et al., 2017; Greenblatt, 2018), there exists a notable gap in the research on the quality assurance indicators of teacher preparation programs, despite growing public concern (Darling-Hammond, 2020; Feuer et al., 2013; Partelow et al., 2017).

This study sought to add to the scholarship which examines teacher training programs which have successfully identified culturally conscious teacher candidates, individuals who value the teacher-student relationship and self-reflection (Freire, 2018; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994). An analysis of the perceptions of traditional (as

opposed to alternative) trained teachers about the extent to which they felt prepared to teach in diverse settings has been shown to be an important indicator of teacher training program efficacy (Stites et al., 2018). The methodology driving teacher training programs is especially worth analyzing when considering its profound relationship with communities of color. The education of teachers equates to the education of children, and therefore the future of society with the potential of diminishing of social disparities. The relationship between teachers and students matters; classroom teacher-student dynamics can mean the difference between a child who achieves and one who languishes (Fowler et al., 2008).

An epistemological approach focusing on culture – be it Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1990), culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010), culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012), or some other iteration of anti-racist multiculturalism, it is imperative teacher education programs straighten the uneven edges of a discursive criticality by transitioning into a transformative social justice approach.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Conceptual Framework

There is evidence to suggest that CRP without explicit antiracist constructs is not enough to produce long-term positive outcomes for students of color. This exploratory case study proposes a conceptual framework which builds upon constructs from CRP and Cultural Consciousness and Restorative Justice Education. The combination of these three theories is offered as an innovative way to establish a pedagogical nexus between multiculturalism and antiracist education. The rationale for using constructs from three overlapping but also unique theories is that each brings with it a strategy or philosophical underpinning which when integrated are strengthened and more likely to achieve the ultimate goal of educational equity and improved academic experiences for all students.

This study sought to gain insights from teachers' perspectives about the impact of culture on their lives, their perception of CRP, and their opinions about including anti-oppressive constructs. The exploratory nature of this study required a free-flowing discussion in which participants created their own meanings and associations. An exploratory analysis enables situational meaning to be critiqued and recreated (Yin, 2003), which lends itself to individual and group conversation revolving around input about an innovative pedagogical design.

As a guide to explore constructs within and outside of CRP which have empirically demonstrated valuable epistemic contexts for progressing critical pedagogy, this qualitative study utilizes a Critical Culturally Conscious conceptual framework to guide

study sections. Through a Critical Cultural Consciousness lens, the goal of this study is to highlight the role of transformative antiracist pedagogies in education constructs such as race and culture in teacher education programs.

CCC is grounded in a critical intersectional framework which recognizes the need for teacher education students to understand their own placement in systems of oppression before they can analyze and address how multiple intersections of oppression affect their students, and their students' communities. The essence of CCC is distilled into core concepts from three pedagogical and philosophical theories based critical theory and ultimately suggests: 1) Why CRP must be standardized in teacher education programs; 2) Why CRP alone is not enough to address education's most pernicious equity issues; 3) How a transformative, critical conceptual framework benefits students and teachers.

The CRP section of the conceptual framework illustrates core components of this mainstream but inconsistently applied pedagogy, such as cultural competence, real-world observations and field experience, and well-articulated standards. The inclusion of Cultural Consciousness adds critical reflection and theory to the framework. Restorative Justice Education expands upon CRP by including historical contexts and compassionate aspects of antiracist education.

This study offers an alternative teacher education framework by responding to power differentials, advocating for moving beyond single layers of superficial cultural knowledge toward mastering acknowledgement of the Other, along with a call to action. This conceptual framework was developed to illustrate why CCC strategies such as critical reflexivity is necessary to combat a biased system. Teachers must learn that there is a

difference between racism and systemic racism, and the difference helps one to understand why students of color continue to lag behind their white counterparts.

Teacher education programs which use all or some parts of a CCC framework provide opportunities for preservice teachers to translate critical reflection into transformative action (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Each of the constructs were extracted from Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, Cultural Consciousness, and Restorative Justice Education theories. Each section of the literature review is a synthesis of the scholarship around the constructs this conceptual framework promotes. The following table lists key elements from each theory. Constructs reviewed in the literature of this study were chosen because of their presence across all three theories, for their emphasis on social action and explicit descriptions of oppressive forces in education, and because they have been empirically shown to advance cultural pedagogy. The constructs informed question protocols and data collection.

Conceptual Framework: Critical Cultural Consciousness

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy	Cultural Consciousness	Restorative Justice Education
<p>Uses a strengths-based approach which views students' unique cultural heritage as valuable.</p> <p>Provides field experiences in diverse settings.</p> <p>Develops a rich understanding of different cultural and ethnic groups, incorporating knowledge contributions made by the home cultures of students into subject-specific curriculum.</p>	<p>Includes elements of critical pedagogy, such as honest dialogue about structural inequalities.</p> <p>Values critical/individual thinking over monolithic and didactic instruction.</p> <p>Frames the educational experience as a partnership of mutual learning between teacher and student.</p> <p>Questions assumptions about socially constructed</p>	<p>Promotes antiracist pedagogy by explicitly acknowledging endemic racism in its institutional and systemic forms.</p> <p>Promotes empathy and takes a compassionate rather than punitive approach to discipline.</p> <p>Develops a mutually beneficial power structure.</p>

<p>Employs culturally appropriate communication strategies, including ESL strategies.</p> <p>Matches instructional strategies with diverse learning styles.</p>	<p>identities and promotes lifelong commitment to self-reflection and critique.</p> <p>Borrows concepts and strategies from other fields and practices, such as social action mentorships.</p>	<p>Provides students with support while modeling accountability.</p> <p>Works to improve the layers of interconnectivity within the school community.</p> <p>Focuses on collaboration over competition.</p>
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Critical Cultural Consciousness Conceptual Model

ORIGINAL THEORY	CRITICAL CULTURAL CONSCIOUSNESS
<p><u>CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY</u></p> <p>(Ladson-Billings, 1994)</p>	<p>Antiracist Pedagogy</p>
<p><u>CULTURAL CONSCIOUSNESS</u></p> <p>(Gay & Kirkland, 2003)</p>	<p>Critical Self-Reflection</p>
<p><u>RESTORATIVE JUSTICE EDUCATION</u></p> <p>(Johnston, 2019)</p>	<p>Acknowledgement of historical and institutional racism.</p>

Introduction

The literature review for this study dissects each component of the conceptual framework through relevant scholarly studies. The literature review first provides context to justify and explain the theoretical and methodological alignment of the study with an examination of teacher education research and critical ontologies. A review of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, Critical Cultural Consciousness, and Restorative Justice Education literature lays the groundwork for the need to reconceptualize preservice teacher education.

Teaching for critical consciousness means recognizing the problematic contexts within which biased curriculum is presented in many teacher education programs. Humanist pedagogical and ideological concerns, such as Paulo Freire's *dialogic pedagogy* which promotes mutual and critical learning between teachers and students is the rationale behind the inclusion of each section and development of the conceptual framework.

CCC and Lessons Learned from the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic validated the merit of a critically and culturally conscious framework in education. Academic outcomes such as the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) test data, released in the Spring of 2021 reinforce the need for an integrated model which didactically connects multiculturalism and social justice. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy is widely accepted in education as an effective practice for engaging students of color since the early 1990s, but pre-pandemic disparities for students of color not only persist, they are now exacerbated.

Research published in 2020 and 2021 discuss CRP within the context of the pandemic. CRP as a means of addressing trauma (Sherwood, 2021); CRP and pre-pandemic systemic racism (Pak, 2021); examining how students learn through CRP during

a pandemic (Hammond, 2021); thinking about digital equity issues and CRP as a lens to challenge existing norms (Prescott, 2021); using technology and CRP innovations in higher education (Rao, 2020); effects of social and emotional learning competencies and CRP on students (Jacob, 2021).

In the 2020 Institute for Urban Education Conference, “Education in a Post-Pandemic World”, Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings argued that the pandemic has altered not only how teachers should provide instruction, but what topics teachers should cover. She suggested that without the usual distractions, and because of the indiscriminate nature of the virus, there has been an “energized civic spirit”. Ladson-Billings framed her suggestions as an opportunity for reformation by developing a “Pandemic Pedagogy”.

For reading and literacy curriculum Ladson-Billings suggested offering materials on race, racism, economic disparities, civil rights, and police and justice reform. For the subject of math, she suggested statistically tracking cases with large amounts of data such as mortality rates and financial topics such as mortgage rates, school budgets, debt, household spending and wealth disparities between African American and white populations. For science, Ladson-Billings made the point that studying the COVID-19 virus itself could be a compelling subject – the nature of viruses and vaccines, as well as disputes over vaccines. And finally for social studies she extracted from current events topics such as the history of policing, the history of pandemics, the history of civil rights, and the 2020 presidential election.

Ladson-Billing’s perspective is necessary to review in this or any study about CRP since she is the one credited with its originations. It is notable that the content of her talk in a symposium about how best to move forward through a pandemic for students of color

goes in direct contrast to legislation being proposed across many states. At this pivotal crossroads, it is imperative to question student engagement strategies and challenge epistemic frameworks so these lessons are sustained beyond the pandemic.

Why a Critical Cultural Consciousness Framework is Needed

When Ladson-Billings began studying the strategies effectively engaging African American students, she recognized that achievement disparities for under-resourced students of color must be understood within long-standing patterns of inequity flourishing throughout American history. As a microcosmic reflection of a capitalist society shaped by paternalistic hegemonies, the American educational system targets African American students and other students of color, a contentious reality with far-reaching consequences (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). The concept of education debt was developed by Ladson-Billings (2006) as a way of critically and ethically processing why so many students of color languish in academic settings, pointing to the intersection of race and socioeconomic status. Education debt theory argues that because of the deeply-rooted history of institutional racism in the American knowledge-based economy which upholds high-stakes, standardized testing, students of color need – and deserve – more resources and attention (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

The disproportionate representation of students of color living in high poverty neighborhoods has meant that a disproportionate amount of these students attend failing and state-sanctioned schools (Orfield, 2005). One of the problems of education is in its complacency. Despite the fact that for the first time in American history, the majority of students enrolled in public schools are students of color (Hussar & Bailey, 2020), inequities

persist for these populations, more than 60 years after the landmark *Brown v. Board* decision established racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional.

Teacher Education Weaknesses

Evidence suggesting that the K-12 American educational system is failing students also suggests American university teacher training programs are failing teachers (Arsal, 2019; Lee & Dallman, 2008). Despite major demographic and ideological shifts in American society, many teacher education programs are preparing teachers for classrooms which no longer exist. In so doing, teacher education is guilty of perpetuating historical educational inequalities (Nieto, 2000).

Most programs unsuccessfully adjust their instruction to attract and retain a diverse group of potential teachers (Kohli, 2019) and neglect the needs of such teachers in delivering instruction within a multicultural classroom (Brown, 2014; Gist, 2017). Many schools prioritize standardize test preparation (Sleeter, 2007). When teachers are professionally obligated to train their students to pass standardized tests for the benefit of school standing – often with their jobs on the line – there is little time or energy left to spend on getting to know one’s students, let alone develop and apply efficacious CRP strategies (Freire, 2018; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Studies consistently produce outcomes, and researchers consistently recommend teacher education programs prioritize multiculturalism, but such an emphasis often receives minimal attention (Kea et al., 2002).

Research suggests that effective preparation of teachers to engage with a diverse body of students has the capacity to improve academic outcomes for under-resourced students of color (Sleeter, 2001). However, without intentional efforts to connect the dots of inequity and critically review deeper infrastructural causes for disparities in student

achievement and how teachers are being trained to teach students from other cultures, the education debt for students of color will undoubtedly deepen. A critical review of infrastructural disparities begins with asking difficult and uncomfortable questions.

When teachers are asked to explore their own racial and cultural backgrounds, biases are exposed, and conversations about race are elevated. These conversations can result in changes in how teachers view their students. A teacher's deficit thinking translates to decreased student expectations and the mentality that when a student struggles, the struggle is the fault of the student (Washington & Henfield, 2019). The solution to the problem of teacher bias begins when individuals are asked to explore their own identities and ways of thinking, and the potential outcome of such metacognition is improvements in teacher-student relationships and a reduction in student alienation (Valencia, 2012).

Multiculturalism: The Foundation of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Since the 1960s, multiculturalism – the political accommodation of minorities - (Modood, 2007) has been touted in educational research as the solution to academic disparities and cultural disharmony in the classroom (May, 1999). Multiculturalism is positioned in the literature as a predominant multidisciplinary ideology from which culturally relevant pedagogies have evolved (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Multiculturalism has long been established in education as an overarching discipline and is often the main source of theory in comprehensive school reform (Nieto, 2000). Multiculturalism is founded on democratic values and the notion of cultural pluralism, and is grounded in ideals of social justice, educational equity, and critical pedagogy (Gutmann, 1994; Modood, 2007; Werbner, 2013). Scholars of multiculturalism (Banks, 1997; Gay, 1983; Kahn, 2008; Sleeter & Grant, 1987) emphasize equity in multicultural tenets, such as the

reduction of discrimination against oppressed groups, and working toward balancing the power distribution between cultures. Multicultural education may be broken down to identified five dimensions of multicultural education: (a) content integration, (b) knowledge construction, (c) equity pedagogy, (d) prejudice reduction, and (e) empowering school culture (Banks, 1997).

Multicultural education is a key influence on CRP. Nieto et al. (1996) defines multicultural education as focusing on five main components: 1) Antiracism; 2) Viewed as fundamental to education; 3) Inclusive; 4) Pervasive; and 5) Emphasizes social justice. Multicultural education literature (Banks, 2008; Bennett 1986; Nieto, 1993) highlights the importance of students' home cultures, and the need for schools to build relationships with families and communities. These relationships enhance learning for students because teachers will have a greater appreciation for their students' cultures and will be more likely to include cultural considerations into their curriculum design and instructional strategies. Multiculturalism in education is intended to empower teachers and students by upholding cultural identities and valuing social equity.

Multiculturalism Weaknesses

Multiculturalism is not specific to the field of education but is considered a fundamental ideology influencing nearly all school reform (Nieto, 2000), and is still promoted theoretically as the most effective way to establish equity in preservice teacher education (Banks, 2010). A review of multiculturalism in education scholarship, however, reveals academic debates around the efficacy and appropriateness of multiculturalism, including how multiculturalism is understood and implemented in schools and teacher education programs. Multiculturalism is undervalued in many teacher education programs,

evident in the fact that in many programs the subjects of diversity and multiculturalism are treated as singular courses as opposed to reaching each aspect of the program (Gorski & Parekh, 2020; Macintosh, 2007; Scott & Mumford, 2007).

In classrooms, multiculturalism also suffers from a reductionist application. Teachers rely on their limited knowledge of their students' cultures and use anecdotes and artifacts without probing into questions around social injustices endured by populations of people throughout history (Arsal, 2019). Critics of multiculturalism in education argue that multiculturalism began as part of a comprehensive assimilationist agenda targeting African Americans prior to the Civil Rights movement (George, 2018). A common theme in the literature on multiculturalism in educational theory is that the ideology has remained high-minded theory and nothing more, and its failure to deliver on what it has promised lies in either its unwillingness or inability to include racism and structural inequalities in the discussion (Arsal, 2019; Berkeley, 2000; Cole, 1998; May, 1999; McLennan, 2001; Tanemura & Spencer, 2000).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

When Ladson-Billings developed the concept of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1990) her goal was to help progress teacher education to improve the experiences of African American students. Instead of focusing on the disadvantages of African American students, she emphasized what made these students capable learners, and what in their teachers' approach made them successful in the classroom. She provided a definition with three basic competencies: 1) Students must be academically successful; 2) Students must develop and maintain cultural competence; 3) Students must develop a

critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order.

Gay (2002) built on Ladson's work and situated CRP as an outgrowth of multicultural education in which teachers must learn about the cultural characteristics of their students, use acquired experiences and frames of reference about students' preferred learning styles to increase classroom engagement and student achievement. Gay suggested a culturally rich classroom in which teachers practice: 1) Developing a rich understanding of different cultural and ethnic groups; 2) Incorporating knowledge contributions made by the home cultures of students into subject-specific curricula; 3) Developing a caring classroom environment with a "community of learners" approach to cooperative learning; 4) Employing culturally appropriate communication strategies; 5) Matching instructional strategies with diverse learning styles.

CRP has been used within teacher education programs to help ensure future teachers are prepared to engage students from other cultures in positive ways. Research continues to highlight culture as being the most powerful construct through which to facilitate teacher-student connection (Moseley et al., 2014; Sleeter, 2012). When teachers use their knowledge of their students' personal histories, a culture of caring naturally begins to unfold in the classroom, and the academic experience improves for everyone (Gay & Kirkland, 2003).

Prior to the ubiquity of CRP in teacher education, teachers were encouraged to help students develop their "voices". CRP argues that students already have voices. It should be the teacher's job not to impose monochromatic standards but rather capitalize on the students' home cultures' traditions, history, and communal behaviors (Delpit, 2003). In

order to facilitate teachers to cultivate such dispositions, CRP advocates for the widespread linguistic and pedagogical use of a strengths-based perspective, rather than operating from the default deficit-thinking (Whipp, 2013).

Deficit thinking is understood to be a pathologizing mode of thinking which devalues the norms of a non-dominant group. The implicit ideology behind deficit thinking is that there is something inherently wrong with people whose habits do not mirror those of the dominant culture (Garcia & Guerra, 2004; Ladson- Billings, 1990; Nieto, 2000; Smit, 2012; Valencia, 2010). Research suggests that education and educators have used deficit-thinking as a kind of self-preservation. Placing the blame on students for their academic failures absolves schools and teacher education programs from doing the hard work of diving into the disconcerting truths about how their own policies and practices have “...colluded to perpetuate academic failure for those students who differ from the majority” (Nieto, 2000, p.188).

Research on the perspectives of white preservice teachers reveals that many teachers come into the classroom with preconceived notions about BIPOC students. Biased beliefs, coupled with assumptions about students’ apparent inability to behave in what teachers have deemed to be non-normative, results in teachers placing blame on students’ cultural histories for their academic struggles (Kidd et al., 2008; Schultz, et al, 1997). Research also suggests that one-off diversity professional development training is not enough to combat individual bias; colorblindness and elements of the White Savior Syndrome mask underlying prejudice, evidence for deeper and less understood complexities within white identity (McIntosh, 2008).

CRP embraces aspects of critical multicultural education. Critical multicultural education can be defined as antiracist, relevant for all students, and organized around social justice and social empowerment (Nieto et al., 1996). Critical multicultural education is upheld in teacher education research as pedagogical approach with transformative potential, but for reform to occur, teacher education programs must: 1) Take a stronger position on issues of social justice and diversity; 2) Let that stance engulf all aspects of the program; 3) Teach preservice teachers to think of their professional growth in the long-term, and one which requires constant honest reflection about their own identities. When teachers accept and acknowledge who they are as individuals within a dynamic and complex culture, they are then more equipped to accept their students' complex identities, and develop authentic relationships with them. A critical perspective is not easy and requires support; teachers are encouraged to build a community of peers around them who are willing to challenge the status quo (Nieto, 2000).

CRP Weaknesses

Despite its contribution as pedagogical buffer against the multisystemic challenges present in public schools, the implementation of CRP in teacher education, as well as its theoretical underpinnings, have been criticized in the research. Ladson-Billings herself challenges her own initial work on culturally relevant pedagogy for not pushing the boundaries enough; simply knowing students' cultures is different than challenging the political economy of racism – the reason CRP is necessary in the first place.

While cultural competency as a framework for acknowledging individuals' beliefs and cultural identities through CRP is an important first step in the process of delivering multicultural instruction, it is anchored down by inconsistent ideologies without

emphasizing social inequities and pushing for radical change in the structure of the system itself (Fisher-Borne et al., 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1992). CRP has also been criticized for its discursive methodology. Research which compared professional teaching standards across all 50 states revealed that there is no single ubiquitous set of standards or continuum of practices delivered similarly across the country. Most states promoted high expectations for all students, though no state connected low expectations within student demographic categories such as race, socioeconomic class, native language, gender and sexual orientation, or disability status with academic status (New America, 2020).

Other criticisms of CRP in the research:

- CRP is reductionist; through CRP culture is abridged to its most general attributes. This version of CRP may ultimately validate, rather than diminish, stereotyping (Ben-Ari & Strier, 2010; Dyche & Zayas, 2001).
- CRP is impractical: Promoting the idea that one can become an expert on another's culture simply by reading or hearing about the culture anecdotally is unrealistic and ethnocentric (Tsang & Bogo, 1997).
- CRP accentuates positives to a fault: Celebrating cultural differences is important, but not if it means obscuring structural socio-political dimensions of experience such as discrimination (Azzopardi & McNeill, 2016).
- Celebrating culture is not the same as critical thinking and runs the risk of distracting conversations away from counter-normative dialogues which are essential to true intellectual emancipation (Freire, 2018).

Critical Theory

Though critical theory has philosophical roots, its applications span across many sectors. Critical theory is an epistemological approach to social reflections wherein inequitable power structures are challenged, and practical, actionable solutions are offered (Bohman et al., 2005). Issues of social justice, as well as the call for radical change distinguish critical theory and its derivations, as is evident in such frameworks as the critical race theory and critical multicultural education theory. Applying critical theory to education draws explicit connections between discriminatory power structures and the insidious ways in which inequity manifests, such as pedagogical approaches to culture in teacher training programs (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2010).

Paulo Freire remains a key figure in critical pedagogy. Freire was the first academic scholar to turn the spotlight on education for its complicit participation in perpetuating oppression throughout American history. Freire compared schools to banks in which, “education becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories, and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits that the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat” (Freire, 1970, p. 72). The banking model of education preserves the continuity of subjugation. In his critical approach, Freire proposed a revolutionary and humanistic framework in which teachers and students work in collaboration, education allow for open-ended questions and meaningful dialogues. Freire suggested that teachers yield some of their power to their students in order to advocate for students to become future agents of social change (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008).

Critical theories such as Critical Race Theory and Critical Multicultural Education Theory counter neoliberal multiculturalism. Scholars have noted that the neoliberal response to racism is to acknowledge all cultures, but the acknowledgement is deflective and lacking a constructive delineation. Without an expressly purposed outline, multiculturalism becomes a "...watered-down version of the truth whose close proximity to the thesis will nullify the power balance" (Biko, 1978, p.15). Theoretical evolutions of the multicultural paradigm should continue to argue for social justice for the oppressed while concomitantly challenging the hegemonic rule of the oppressor (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006).

Critical Pedagogy

While Critical Race Theory has played a central role in the research identifying systemic and covert issues faced by people of color across a variety of business and legal sectors, there is a gap in the research on the application of CRP to educational leadership contexts (Lopez, 2003). Critical pedagogy posits multicultural education as a conduit through which to improve the human condition (Hopkins-Gillispie, 2011) and theorizes on what *is* happening, rather than what should happen. Critical pedagogy suggests that inequality exists within each thread of the complicated, multi-layered fabric of the educational system, and that successful reform must begin with an assertive look at how these inequitable power structures are supported and maintained (May & Sleeter, 2010). Culminating at the endpoint of a critical examination of education is the notion that a sweeping overhaul of the educational system is in order, because as it stands, one dominant group dictates its hegemonical norms to the detriment of all other groups (Grant, 1997). A critical bent to CRP means that simply incorporating diversity into the curriculum is not

enough; there must also be an exploration of why diversity is a problem for so many organizations (Ciftci & Gurol, n.d.).

A critical lens in education requires first recognizing that centuries-long exploitation and oppression defining broad swaths of American history remains inexplicably absent from American curriculum (Freire, 2018; Lund, 2006; Nieto, 2004). The underlying message of critical pedagogy is that until systemic inequities are openly challenged across all levels of the education system, and oppressive curricula more directly addressed, racial divisions will persist (Berchini, 2017; Carter et al., 2019). A critical framework also demands greater recognition of students' rights, and in so doing, a more democratic form of governing behavior and relationships within educational institutions.

Critical Multiculturalism and Cultural Consciousness

In critical multiculturalist literature, the need to question assumptions and socially constructed identities, challenge one's worldview, and recognize the inextricably linked mechanism of privilege and oppression are resonating themes (Bennett et al., 2019; DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2010; Finney & Orr, 1995). A critical spin on multiculturalism in education promotes a lifelong commitment to ongoing self-reflection and critique beyond what is required to be considered culturally competent (Tervalon & Murray-García, 1998). Self-accountability is a vital component; inward reflection is thought of as an essential predecessor to the dismantling of external structural inequities (Fisher-Borne et al., 2015).

Seminal authors supporting Critical Cultural Consciousness in teacher education (Gay & Kirkland, 2003) argue that CCC should be valued as an epistemic guideline reaching all aspects of a program's pedagogical procedures. This framework's guidelines may be considered as opportunities for personal and professional growth, moving past the

instinct to resist dealing with difficult subjects such as racism and personal bias. Teacher education programs are encouraged to develop empirically based critical learning principles, model critical self-reflection techniques, and provide other actionable opportunities to practice critical metacognition. These authors conclude that when teachers are exposed to authentic examples of social inequities and their individual role in combating systemic racism, transformation is possible.

Other research on the role of Cultural Consciousness training in teacher education programs (Lastrapes & Negishi, 2012) reiterates the need to incorporate Critical Multiculturalism as a series of foundational core courses. In their study, these authors emphasize the role self-efficacy plays in the degree to which preservice teachers develop the capacity to apply Cultural Consciousness in the classroom. This research substantiates the recurring recommendation that preservice teachers be provided with a multiplicity of opportunities to engage in real-world experience teaching diverse populations of students in order to practice what they have learned in the field. Other recommendation include providing preservice teachers with guided simulations within specific contexts. One of the advantages of providing authentic practice is giving future teachers opportunities to work through the emotional and psychological resistance which often accompanies the application of critical reflection to live classroom scenarios (Gay & Kirkland, 2003).

Critical Reflexivity

Critical perspectives may require unsettling and in-depth self-analysis, but may also lead to productive outcomes. Research suggests that when critical reflection and practical experience working with a diverse group of students coincide, teachers are rigorously prepared to work in diverse settings (Alviar-Martin & Ho, 2011; Cushner & Mahon, 2002;

Marx & Moss, 2011; Howard, 2003; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Premier & Miller, 2010). When preservice teachers are taught to think about and talk about the “Other”, teachers are better able to design their own teaching styles and develop attitudes toward students who do not look or think like them (Cochran-Smith, 2015).

Previous studies have indicated a lack of awareness from White preservice teachers about their own culture. This personal cultural detachment translates to a diminished understanding of the cultural differences between themselves and their students (Mahon, 2006; McCalman, 2007). For some teachers, the lack of self-awareness is compounded by lack of exposure and lack of experience teaching and interacting with outside cultures. The resulting effect is not being able to identify sources for difficulties in the classroom (Hutchison et al., 2014). Research suggests teacher education programs provide their students with multiple entry points for critical self-reflection centered around social justice, which may include narrative imagination, cultural collages, autobiographical explorations, critical literacy, social justice issues, and literature circles (Muschell & Roberts, 2011).

The term *epistemic* or *critical reflexivity* refers to the suggestion that when teachers are encouraged to reflect critically on their own personal epistemologies dispositional change is more likely to occur (Durden & Truscott, 2013; Rowan et al., 2021). Research indicates that for some individuals, a multifaceted approach is necessary in order to unlearn certain behaviors and ways of thinking influenced by environmental forces such as one’s family and societal norms (Lunn Brownlee et al., 2017). CCC angles the basic tenets of critical multiculturalism inward; in order to combat the subjugating external forces of systemic racism, individuals must first look within themselves with the intention to discover unsettling truths and cyclical disenfranchisement of their students related to

privilege and oppression (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2010; Hutchison et al., 2014). These revelations may then be conferred to students, who will begin to imagine themselves as agents of change.

Another reverberating theme in the literature highlights the importance of intergroup dialogue between diverse teachers. Preservice teacher education inviting points of view of those who have endured racial injustices has been shown to change outdated beliefs (Kohli, 2012). Informed and unfiltered dialogues about race may help turn the tide in how race is conceptualized in the minds of preservice teachers (Johnson, 2002). A critical multiculturalist teacher education program upholds and empowers every individual's cultural heritage (Haddix, 2017; Kohli, 2009); when the voices of teachers of color are valued, preconceived racist sentiments begin to diminish (Kohli, 2015). The sharing of knowledge and experience is considered essential components to a social justice teacher education program with goals of identifying and reworking problematic curriculum (Tanner & Tanner, 1980). Reflection and sharing can also be applied through exercises such as journaling, critical academic debate, and role-playing (Sleeter, 2001).

Antiracist Education

Though antiracist education has been used in other fields and is a component of multiculturalism and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, the vision of antiracist education as an innovative approach to teaching because of its explicit connection between historical and modern contexts, has been lost within theories focusing on culture (Nieto, 2000). Antiracist education was chosen as a framework through which to explore constructs to propose a new teacher education framework; aspects of antiracist education will be offered as discussion points in participant interviews and an analytic tool.

Antiracist education has been proven to bring awareness to issues in an unequivocal way lacking in current CRP pedagogies. Though antiracist education is not yet a part of the common lexicon in teacher education, a review of its definitions, applications, and theoretical underpinnings is a fundamental aspect to a transformative critical education focused on restorative justice. Antiracist education may be broken down to three main components: 1) White identity constructs such as white privilege; 2) Critical self-reflection; 3) Institutional accountability (Hamilton-Mason & Schneider, 2018). An antiracist teacher education pedagogy utilizes intersectionality as a tool to help students identify their own social positions in terms of oppression and privilege as well as analyze the structural power dynamics among teachers' and students' multiple identities (Das Gupta, 2003; Simon et al., 2021; Yamada et al., 2015).

Education has a long history of promoting social justice legislation, such as Title IX, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and affirmative action, yet racial achievement gaps such as high school and college graduation rates for BIPOC youth persist (Stoll, 2013). The experiences of BIPOC youth as expressed through quantitative and qualitative research reflect a system in desperate need to find alternate pathways. Antiracist education is not a commonly used term in the teacher's, or the teacher educator's classroom as it is in other fields like social work and medical education, and this is itself a problem requiring further investigation.

Antiracist education is viewed as a tool against oppressed people to assimilate into a world dominated by White patriarchal ideals (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Silencing the voices of the oppressed appears often in antiracist education literature (Deer, 2013; Gillborn, 2006; Sloan et al., 2018; Williams, 2012), but the phenomenon is complex.

Internalized oppression appears as the process by which individuals in the minority (the subordinate) judge themselves based on majority (dominant) standards (Williams, 2012). The evolution of Black identity in relation to the White majority has been a subject of scholarly interest for many years (Fanon, 1967; Freire, 1970; Memmi, 1965). One of the commonalities between this research is the suggestion that at some point in their young lives, children of color internalize elements of the White value system with a variety of outcomes, such as seeking acceptance of the White majority and rejecting his or her own culture (Cross, 1978).

Antiracist education advocates for a public recognition of issues of privilege and subjugation, and calls for wholesale relearning and reteaching of American history which unambiguously analyzes the mechanisms of oppression (Sloan et al., 2018), and the correlative miseducation of all students (Kailin, 2002). Antiracist education reframes history to include the complicated realities of racial injustice and unequal power structures by reconfiguring how students and teachers interact. In the antiracist classroom, individualism and competition are replaced by cooperation and collaboration (Troyna, 1987).

Restorative Justice Education

Restorative Justice Education is not an explicit concept of CRP. Nor is RJE covered in most teacher education programs. From RJE descriptions, an awareness of racism in its historical and institutional forms was chosen as a concept to be explored in this study because though recognizing racism is an aspect of an antiracist education, RJE offers actionable strategies with deep historical contexts. RJE is not just a theory, it is a movement. In the literature, critical to growing the movement is encouraging dialogue

about what is not working in education. There is little research which asks a diverse group of teachers for their thoughts on how to move things forward in education with clearly articulated RJE theory (Evans & Vaandering, 2016). RJE will have a notable presence in the exploratory question protocols for this study. Participants will be asked to give their opinions about infusing elements of RJE into a more assertive version of CRP. How participants respond to the RJE questions will inform data analysis.

Restoring Justice: An Introduction to Restorative Justice (Van Ness & Strong, 2015) deliberates on the history of criminal justice rehabilitation models. Restorative Justice is an approach used in criminal justice systems rehabilitation programs with epistemic justifications influencing criminology in the United States. A restorative justice approach to rehabilitation for criminal offenders takes a full evaluation of the alleged crime. Within this school of thought, contextual factors are considered valuable pieces of background information; it is necessary to understand underlying reasons for an accused offender to commit a crime before making legal judgements. Restorative justice is grounded in the idea that in order to decrease recidivism, accused offenders must learn to empathize with the victim and take responsibility for their actions to restore the alleged violation (Zehr, 2015).

Restorative Justice research as an intervention model in education is thin. The lack of attention RJE in scholarship is troubling considering the long history of punitive discipline in American schools and the public's call for reform in education at all levels. *Restorative Justice in Education* (Johnston, 2019) postulates that the American educational system uses punitive discipline as a means of suppressing misbehaviors and assimilating the student population, while reinforcing orthodox, mainstream norms. RJE is a critical

review of a system designed to perpetuate imbalanced power hierarchies intentionally and unintentionally isolating students. This study on RJE suggests that in order restore the severed connection with disenfranchised students, schools develop intervention models which 1) Create equitable learning communities; 2) Repair harm and transform conflict; 3) Nurture healthy relationships.

School-to-prison pipeline. Social movement research demonstrates the critical need for intervention measures to reduce inequality in academic outcomes for BIPOC youth, often the target of schools' policies and practices, and the punitive degree to which schools exhibit social control over their students, like police involvement targeting African American boys (Johnston, 2019). African American students are suspended and expelled from school three times more often than their White peers (Nelson & Lind, 2015). Biased school policies are manifested in the disproportionate representation of African American students in out-of-classroom suspensions and already serving time in the juvenile justice system – the well-documented school-to-prison pipeline (Kim et al., 2010; Skiba et al., 2014; Wald & Losen, 2003; Wilson, 2014; Winn, 2019). Excessively punitive school practices like the Zero Tolerance policy are associated with lower standardized test scores, decreased instructional time, isolation from the greater school community, as well as increased likelihood of entering the criminal justice system (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2014).

Unlike the mono-dimensional perspective defining zero tolerance policies, RJE seeks to reduce school violence by altering existing conditions. RJE acknowledges students as individuals with backgrounds and personal challenges shaping their worldviews and beliefs about authority. A review of RJE literature (Anfara et al., 2013) suggests seven principles for RJE implementation: 1) Meeting students' needs by taking a compassionate

rather than punitive approach to discipline; 2) Providing students with support while modeling accountability; 3) Modeling empathy; 4) Using violations as teachable moments in which open and honest dialogue is encouraged; 5) Working to improve the layers of interconnectivity within the school community; 6) Restoring relationships through collaboration such as peace-making circles; 7) Addressing power imbalances in the school by asking difficult questions and having meaningful conversations.

Summary

Multiculturalism has had an undeniable impact on educational theory, such as inspiring the development of pedagogy prioritizing cultural awareness. Unfortunately, however, neither multiculturalism nor CRP have fulfilled their promise of educational equality (Banks, 1997; Gunn et al., 2013; Gay, 2002; Howard, 2003). This void may be attributed in part to a fundamental lack of understanding of why cultural pedagogy is needed, and how to implement it. In fact, a lack of consensus seems to define CRP; yet researchers continue to recommend that multiculturalism and CRP be laced throughout all pre-service teacher preparation programs (Gunn et al., 2013; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Proponents of more critical iterations of CRP suggest stronger emphasis on the transformative potential of a sociopolitical consciousness (Dover, 2013), beginning with cultivating critical self-awareness and empathy in preservice teachers (Conklin & Hughes, 2016; Herner-Patnode, et al., 2010). Teacher education programs must first establish a clear vision to train their teachers to thrive in a multicultural setting.

The conceptual framework for this study is grounded in the idea that CRP incorporate more unambiguous anti-oppressive principles (Pitner & Sakamoto, 2005). The CCC framework proposed in this study addresses the limitations of multiculturalism and

CRP in teacher pedagogy and integrates domains which have been empirically established as effective in animating compassion and critical cultural awareness in other fields. The three constructs extracted from the conceptual framework and explored in this literature review were chosen because of their ubiquity and decisiveness. They include 1) Antiracist education; 2) Critical reflexivity; 3) Explicit acknowledgement of historic and institutional racism. This study is an exploratory case study; each of these domains will guide the question protocols and data analysis.

Chapter III

Methods of Analysis

Overview

This study investigated the effectiveness of CRP in a teacher education program through the perspectives of former preservice teachers in Southeast Texas. The purpose of this study was to gain insights from teachers' perspectives about the impact of culture on their perception of CRP and their opinions about including constructs from Cultural Consciousness theory such as critical reflexivity, and from Restorative Justice Education such as antiracist education. This study poses the following research questions: 1) In what ways do teachers feel prepared to teach in multicultural settings? 2) What are teachers' experiences and perspectives about the implementation of Critical Cultural Consciousness?

Qualitative Research Design

A qualitative research design was most appropriate for this study because the study was exploratory and aims to establish the perspectives and origins of perspectives of a group of individuals (Hong et al., 2002). The goal of qualitative research is to understand how individuals construct meaning, interpret experience, and connect experience to outcomes (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Compared to the manipulation of data featured in quantitative research, qualitative data offers a contextual and therefore realistic narrative authentically simulating the event under investigation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Qualitative interviews may be further distinguished by their intentional redirection of power to participants who effectually become co-researchers. The moderator in a group interview empowers participants to guide the discussion with the option of spending more time on questions they find pertinent. Qualitative interviews are spontaneous and require a

level of flexibility; should unexpected shifts in the conversation occur, the researcher may encourage participants to expand and elaborate on what they've said (Elliott & Timulak, 2005). As the significance of this study was the inclusion of the perspectives and experiences of teachers, a qualitative design is the most apt to capture the inevitable nuance therein.

As a guide to explore constructs within and outside of CRP which have empirically demonstrated valuable epistemic contexts for progressing critical pedagogy, this qualitative study utilized a Critical Culturally Conscious conceptual framework to guide interview question protocols and analyze findings. A qualitative research design was appropriate for this study because the research questions engender complex responses through exploratory processes (Stake, 1995). A qualitative study allows for more holistic interpretation of the data and probing of otherwise unquantifiable participant singularities (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Study Setting

This study was conducted in Houston, Texas. Houston is one of the most racially and ethnically diverse cities in the United States, impacted by immigration more than any other city in the United States, and at 2.3 million people, the fourth largest city (Strait & Gong, 2010). The study's participants were recruited from a large urban university which enjoys one of the most diverse student populations of undergraduate students in the United States.

The teachers for this study were recruited because they were graduates of the same large urban university teacher education program. It is essential to this study that the participants reflect a wide range of cultural identities. The teacher education program is

unique from other American teacher education programs because a majority of their graduates are identified as individuals of color. A program graduating a diverse group of teachers with a focus on social justice provides a unique opportunity to gain insights about Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. In addition, a preponderance of research on CRP in teacher education programs focuses on educating white preservice students (Sleeter, 2001).

Participants

Qualifications of participant sampling may include: 1) Defining a sample universe, by way of specifying inclusion and exclusion criteria for potential participation; (2) Deciding upon a sample size, by considering epistemological and practical concerns; (3) Selecting a sampling strategy, and (4) Sample sourcing, which includes matters of advertising, incentivizing, avoidance of bias, and ethical concerns pertaining to informed consent. Adhering to these four points has implications for its coherence, transparency, and trustworthiness (Robinson, 2014). This study explored the impact of culture and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy on a group of teachers. The perspectives of teachers of color are considered in this research as essential to attaining feedback on CRP implementation, and concepts from critical pedagogy such as antiracist education and reformative justice. The processes of selection of participants is thusly articulated.

Process of recruitment

This study used purposeful and snowball sampling. Purposeful sampling is often recommended for research synthesizing case studies rich in data tied to a specific phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Palinkas et al., 2015; Patton, 2002). Purposive sampling may take a variety of forms, including typical, unique, convenience, and snowball (Merriam, 2009). The inclusion criteria for this study is that participants are graduates from

the same teacher education program. Race/ethnicity was considered to achieve a diverse universe of participants. Qualitative research design does not prescribe a finite number of participants to reach a predetermined level of data saturation (Aldiabat & Le Navenec, 2018).

The sample size reflects a percentage of annual graduation rates of the teacher education program, as well as practical and logistical concerns dictated by the nature of the focus group. Potential participants were contacted through a personal connection with the teacher education program. Once a participant was recruited and the informed consent letter signed, snowball sampling was applied by asking participants for referrals for additional participants. This study received prior IRB approval and adheres to IRB ethical concerns.

Social Constructivist Paradigm

Paramount to aligning the research processes of this study, i.e., the conceptual framework, research questions, and study procedures, is situating the philosophical assumptions theoretically connecting parts to the whole. This study used a conceptual framework through which to explore the research questions on the intersectionality of race and pedagogy extracting the ontological assumptions under Social Constructivism which understands reality as a perception with multiple interpretations. Within this epistemological assumption, reality is “constructed between researcher and the researched and shaped by individual experiences” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 35) informing question protocols and data interpretation. In Cultural Consciousness literature, the need to question assumptions and socially constructed identities, challenge one’s worldview, and recognize

the inextricably linked mechanism of privilege and oppression are resonating themes (Bennett et al., 2019; DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2010; Finney & Orr, 1995).

Social constructivism assumes experience and identity are fluid and interdependent. This way of thinking is relevant in qualitative research which embraces the nuance of context and truth subjectivity. An exploratory analysis must inherently value the plurality of truth and perspective. Within a social constructivist perspective, a diversity of cultural practices is upheld as equally valid, while also recognizing the vulnerability of intersectionality to discrimination. Social constructivism assumes individual's life experiences lead to habitual cognition and thought patterns which become so embedded within an individual's mindset and worldview that subjective beliefs are understood as objective knowledge (Cleary et al., 2014; Kukla, 2000; Sutton et al., 2015). The social constructivist paradigm is often applied to studies using focus groups because the social interaction between participants is heavily weighted, and a major source of data (Ivanoff & Hultberg, 2006).

Case Study Approach

The design of this study is qualitative because it is an analysis of experiences. A case study design was chosen because the goal was to review multiple perspectives representative of the same case (the teacher education program) to identify possible patterns and consensus. There are different types of case studies. Yin (2003) categorizes case studies as explanatory, exploratory, or descriptive, and distinguishes between single, holistic case studies and multiple-case studies. Stake (1995) identifies case studies as intrinsic, instrumental, or collective.

This case study is exploratory because exploratory case studies have no predetermined set of outcomes (Yin, 2003). This study used individual interviews and focus group interviews to explore various topics. An exploratory analysis enables situational meaning to be critiqued and recreated (Yin, 2003), which lends itself to individual and group conversation revolving around input about an innovative pedagogical design. The design of this case study drew upon Stake (1995), whose constructivist orientation emphasizes inductive exploration, discovery, and holistic analysis allows for practical, fluid, and in-depth understanding of a range of real-world issues. This study used the focus group case study (Stake, 2000) in which the focus group is a single case of participants offering different perspectives of the issue and draws “otherwise inaccessible conclusions” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 99). This method was selected because case study design is especially appropriate for the study of complex phenomena in which the variables being analyzed are inseparable from their context (Yin, 2003).

Exploratory case studies induce original data rather than deductively confirm prescribed hypothesis. Exploratory case studies are especially appropriate when the topic of interest has not received comprehensive empirical attention (Mayer & Greenwood, 1980; Yin, 1994). This study sought to generate new data from the perspectives of a group of teachers on a range of topics. There is little research on the implementation of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in teacher education programs from the perspectives of teachers, the role of culture on the impact of CRP on teachers, and the inclusion of Cultural Consciousness and Restorative Justice Education. An exploratory design is therefore required. An analysis of the perceptions of teachers about the level and extent to which they felt prepared to teach in inclusive, multicultural settings has been shown to be an

important indicator of teacher training program efficacy (Stites et al., 2018). It is from a comparative examination of cases bound by the parameters of teacher education program and city of employment this study sought to identify meaningful commonalities and differences of experience in order to construct new hypothesis to be used in future investigations.

Positionality

In qualitative research, the researcher has direct interaction with the participants. Defining the researcher's relationship with participants is an important aspect to a qualitative study's methodology. There are a number of ways this relationship may be defined. The researcher-participant's dynamic may be defined as reciprocal, asymmetrical, and in some cases, potentially exploitative; the researcher is urged to make conscious decisions about how to address power differentials and diminish bias (Smith, 1988). Positionality is the researcher's acknowledgement of how identity might impact each aspect of the study (Bourke, 2014; Grix, 2018). The qualitative researcher must identify her positionality in three areas: 1) The research context and process; 2) The subject under investigation; 3) The participants. Positionality affects each stage of the research process.

Relation to Subject Under Investigation. I have spent most of my life inside a classroom. I received my secondary English teaching credential from California State University at Northridge in 2003. I do not recall the term Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, nor do I recall any coursework with a notable cultural component. Yet the students I taught in my 12 years of teaching represented a kaleidoscope of color. In fact, never did I teach students similar to me in terms of cultural or socioeconomic background. In my first full-time teaching position my students were primarily El Salvadorian. I was ill-prepared to

engage with these students, and the language barrier disrupted the teaching process to a large degree. This phenomenon – struggling to engage students from another culture and/or whose first language was Spanish - would continue in each of my teaching positions.

A common thread throughout my years of teaching was the emphasis on getting my students to pass state standardized tests. Each school in which I taught was under immense pressure to prove to the state via test scores the quality of the education being delivered to students. If a school failed to reach certain levels, that state could be deemed a failure, and then the state would intervene, which meant many things to many people, but none of it welcome. Teachers are not administrators, school leaders, or school board members. Teachers do not have much power and are subject to the dictation of others. Teaching to the test is a common phrase with real-world meaning. I saw first-hand the consequences of placing so much emphasis on competition, on numbers, on tests. My students may have passed the test, but did they learn anything? I will never really know.

Another common thread throughout my teaching experience was my love of my students. I may not have shared similar cultural histories, but I genuinely cared about them, and that mattered. Students with whom I bonded performed better in my class and on tests. My teaching experience and love of my students provided the foundation upon which this study was constructed. Restorative Justice Education is a framework which emerged in my experience as a mentor for a Houston-based nonprofit working with justice-involved youth. Social justice in educational practice from the perspectives of teachers is the context of research for this study, and the overarching motivation to ensure the study's success.

Relation to Research Context and Process. I am a white middle-aged woman. I am a graduate student within the Higher Education Leadership and Policy Studies (HELPS)

program at the University of Houston. I was raised in a middle-class family. My parents did not have a lot of money, but what they had was funneled into my education. I was told unequivocally from a very early age I was going to college. I grew up in Houston surrounded by a multiplicity of cultures and socioeconomic positions. My friend group has always reflected the diversity of the city. My exposure to different religious beliefs, worldviews, languages, foods, and ways of being influenced shaped my own value system.

The trajectory of my career is an amalgamation of writing prose, studying the habits of people, and acknowledging the ubiquitous presence of culture. The research context of this study is a direct reflection of my program of research. Through this study I aimed to review and convey the personal narratives and opinions of a diverse group of teachers bound to similar life experiences for the purpose of improving the experiences of future preservice teachers who will influence the academic outcomes of their students.

Relation to Participants. That the participants are teachers, former university students, and living and teaching in Houston will help in establishing rapport with them which will enhance the data collection process, and help flatten the inevitable power imbalance typical of researcher-participant relationships. I did not know any of the participants prior to this study, nor did I have much familiarity with the teacher education program, but because I am a graduate student within the College of Education, I have access and connections to key figures in the program, which will also assist in the information-gathering process.

Reflexivity

In qualitative research, the researcher is considered the primary instrument of data collection, and it is therefore imperative to engage in constant critical self-reflexivity

(Merriam, 2015; Stake, 1995). Critical self-reflection is necessary to consider the processes through which insight is gained, and possible mental blocks impeding and influencing interpretive conclusions (Russell & Kelly, 2002). Researcher bias is influenced by the researcher's assumptions and experiences, which makes an explicit description of the researcher's identity vital to ensuring trustworthiness.

I am aware of the unearned privilege bestowed upon me because I am white. This critical awareness is not a natural evolution of thought from a lifetime of exposure to other cultures, but rather a product of intentional work required by my graduate school courses. I am aware of my biases as a former teacher, and as a white woman. I recognize the philosophical and theoretical pitfalls of engaging in a project about culture emphasizing the opinions of a diverse group of teachers about social inequities. I also recognize the unique position my experience and critical reflection places me to relate to the experiences of my participants and suggest critical reflection to be systematically incorporated into teacher education programs. It will be essential to the study's success I ensure the results of this study are trustworthy and reliable by engaging in a series of empirically recommended internal audits throughout the entirety of the research process.

Focus Group Data Collection

Though commonly associated with market research, focus groups have been used in the social sciences for many years (Merton & Kendall, 1946, Merton et al., 1956). As a qualitative data collection technique focus groups became more widespread in the 1980s (Wilkinson, 1998). A distillation of scholarly work on focus groups as a viable component of the research process (Hisrich & Peters, 1984; Kitzinger, 1994; Krueger & Casey 2000; Quine & Cameron, 1995) establishes a working definition of focus groups as a participant-

led group discussion without the customary question-answer format of individual interviews. Distinguishing focus groups from other data collection instruments is the intentional use of the group interaction to gain insights otherwise inaccessible (Litosseliti, 2003). Focus group outcomes are largely dependent on how they are organized; a typical focus group has between 5 and 10 individuals compelled to voice their thoughts and experiences about a specified topic in a structured and safe atmosphere moderated by the researcher (Green & Hart, 1999). Focus groups may last between 1.5-2 hours and it is suggested that no more than 10 questions be asked per focus group (Cyr, 2016).

In qualitative research, there has been a resurgence in the use of focus groups in recent years, particularly when research is investigating complex phenomena such as power dynamics, racism, and personal identities (Cyr, 2016). This study used the focus group as a tool for data collection because through this unique process of open conversation around highly structured questions (Bratton & Liatto-Katundu, 1994), insights on how participants think, how they feel, and how they interact will be revealed simultaneously (Carey & Smith, 1994).

Focus groups are useful techniques for research aiming to replicate the social processes impacting the construction of identities and knowledge (Farnsworth & Boon, 2010). The comparative advantages of the focus group over other data collection techniques are in its social nature which allows the researcher to observe authentic and spontaneous dialogues about sometimes delicate topics (Munday, 2006). The question protocol for this study encouraged participants to have open and honest discussions about their personal and professional experiences with culture and race, and how those experiences influenced their

responses and implementation of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. The focus group most closely simulates the highly social nature of the classroom.

Focus groups are appropriate for gleaning deeper understanding about issues of socially constructed phenomena such as race and identity by empowering individuals bound together by a common denominator (Cyr, 2016). The participants of this study share the experience of having gone through the same teacher education training and teaching in the same city. Participants are likely to feel empowered and comforted because other members of the group can directly relate to at least some aspects of what they experienced, and will be therefore more likely to be uninhibited in their responses (Barbour 2008).

Emic, as opposed to etic, data prioritizes the perspectives of the participants over the researcher (Morris et al., 1999). Through the focus group discussion, conceptual schemes will be identified for further investigation. In order to engender a productive but also free-flowing discussion in which participants create their own meanings and associations, questions must be open (Merton & Kendall, 1946) and led by the participants themselves, with the moderator as active observer (Stewart et al., 2009). The benefit of using the focus group is that even though the nature of purposefully asking certain individuals to speak about a designated topic may be contrived, the natural unveiling of the conversation provides feedback which would be otherwise unobservable, such as the extracted meaning of a shared experience.

Focus groups generate three layers of data: the individual, group, and interactive levels. At the individual level, the moderator observes and then documents the level of participation, emphasized concepts and inconsistencies on certain questions, as well as the identification of conceptual schemes to be further investigated. This information will help

refine the next set of questions. At the group level, consensus (or lack thereof) about how a given phenomenon is interpreted may provide unexpected ideas about sophisticated and little-known topics (Cyr, 2016). In this study, participants were asked to reflect on their life experiences, on their experiences with CRP teacher training, outcomes of those experiences in their day-to-day real-world teaching lives, and also their opinions about the intentional incorporation of components of Critical Cultural Consciousness. The focus group was the most appropriate data collection technique for this study because the pedagogical realities of CRP, Cultural Consciousness, and Restorative Justice Education are highly contextualized with a large amount of variance. Research on each theoretical component of the conceptual framework emphasizes the need for honest and open dialogue between preservice teachers and self-reflexivity in developing a critical awareness which leads to improved teaching experiences and outcomes for students.

In order to capture the complexity and nuance of participant responses, the nature of the focus group in this study was exploratory. Exploratory data produced by focus groups possesses a level of transparency absent from other data collection techniques which may be used to craft hypothesis for future studies (Prabhakar, 2012). Focus groups often are used in conjunction with one-on-one interviews (Morgan, 1996). This study combined focus group sessions with individual interviews to compare how individuals respond when they are outside of the group. Utilizing both focus groups and individual interviews maximizes the strengths of both strategies. Where the focus group provides greater breadth on a given topic, interviews deliver more profound depth (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010).

This study began with individual interviews. Based on participant responses, the question protocol was refined and applied to conjoining focus group sessions. An integrated approach of individual and groups interviews unveiled a convergence of themes which may have been lost if either approach was used in isolation. Where the focus group facilitates observations of the social dynamics within the group, because reflective analyses has been identified to being integral to the professional development of teachers (Sleeter, 2001), individual interviews better extracted the degree to which teachers have internalized this process.

Individual interview questions were semi-structured drawn from Wengraf's (2001) Receptive Interviewing in which the interviewer takes a more passive role and allows respondents a larger measure of control over the open-ended questions they are asked. This study used Wengraf's Lightly and Heavily Structured Depth Interviewing Pyramid Model CRQ-TQ-IQ/II (Research Purpose guides the Central Research Questions which are divided into Theory Question categories which determine the Interview Questions) will inform the structure and organization of the questions. The major constructs of the conceptual framework served as guide in developing the interview protocol.

The focus group question protocol was an amended version of the individual interview question protocol. The focus group design dictates that no more than 10 questions be asked per focus group (Cyr, 2016). The organization of the exploratory focus group protocol is critical to producing wide-ranging but also precise responses. The focus group began with an introduction of myself. The purpose of beginning with an introduction is to put the participants at ease, diminish power imbalances inherent to the researcher-participant relationship (Wellings et al., 2000). I informed participants I was also a teacher

and am familiar with many of the challenges they face. Next, a set of ground rules was explained. Beginning with an explanation of the structure of the focus group is another strategy to instill trust in the participants that they are taking part in a process worthy of their time. It is also critical to the success of the focus group that each aspect is methodically implemented. Next, a neutral question was asked to give participants the opportunity to acclimate to the environment and practice giving answers aloud. After the neutral question, the central question protocol began. Near the close of the focus group, a final overarching question will be asked. Lastly, a reflection question concluded the focus group. Participants were asked to share final thoughts and/or ask clarifying questions to other participants.

Data Analysis

A within-case analysis of one-on-one interviews was generated first to provide important details, followed by a thematic analysis across all individual and group interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Individual and group interviews transcripts were transcribed verbatim. The analytic process involved a constant comparative method of analysis (Glaser, 1978) of interview transcripts using an open-coding process (Strauss, 1987) in order to separate and categorize data into meaningful expressions. Transcripts were read verbatim (Oliver et al., 2005) several times using thematic analyses which calls for the identification of both explicit and implicit themes based on code frequencies (Guest et al., 2011).

The open-coding process was applied in the first round of reading transcripts, and labels designated for each repeated incident of interest using researcher-generated lexicon. In the second round of reading transcripts, axial coding will merge codes into broader categories. Selective coding was applied in the third round of reading transcripts to refine

categories. Outlying codes were eliminated, and alike codes combined. Throughout the process of analyzing data, emerging themes were contextualized within the research questions by questioning the quality and repetition of findings (Sandelowski, 1995). A cross-case synthesis between individual and group interview data evolved from theme comparisons.

The Critical Cultural Consciousness conceptual framework, aligned with social constructivist theory, determined how significant elements of the interview text influence theme development across interview and document analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Qualitative research necessitates flexibility during the analysis phase as well, with subsequent procedures evolving organically in response to ongoing analysis. Maintaining a flexible approach within prescribed confines requires the researcher to engage in increasingly critical reflection as themes begin to emerge (Elliott & Timulak, 2005). The researcher inductively coded responses using an iterative content analysis procedure (Patton, 2002). Inductive coding processes included deconstructing and reconstructing of data for interpretation and obtaining conclusions (Yin, 2011).

Credibility

In contrast to quantitative research, in qualitative research there is a greater presence of subtlety because study conclusions are based on interpretation of experience and not a statistical analysis. Credibility in qualitative research must take thoughtful measures to ensure precision and degrees of objectivity. Concerns for credibility demand: 1) Rigorous techniques and methods for assembling high-quality data that is systematically analyzed, while considering issues of credibility, reliability, and triangulation; 2) Clear and constant presentation of researcher credibility, which is dependent on training, experience,

and presentation of self; and 3) Fundamental appreciation for the philosophical foundation of naturalistic inquiry, qualitative methods, inductive analysis, purposeful sampling, and holistic thinking (Patton, 1999).

Essential in establishing credibility in qualitative research, triangulation compels the researcher to find patterns of convergence in the data to validate interpreted conclusions (Patton, 2005). A cornerstone of data credibility in case study research is the practice of extracting from multiple data sources (Patton, 1990; Yin, 2003). This study integrates two methods of data collection: individual interviews and focus groups (Morgan, 1996). Data produced from one-on-one interviews informed question protocols for the focus group. Data from the focus group was critically compare individual to group responses. Utilizing both focus groups and individual interviews reinforces the strengths of both strategies. Where the focus group provides greater breadth on a given topic, interviews deliver more profound depth (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010). The integrative use of both methods helped ensure more reliable data.

In focus group research, there is concern for social desirability bias, or group think. Group think occurs when the intimate social atmosphere of the focus group pressure participants to self-censor and/or conform to the majority opinion (Carey & Smith, 1994). Suppression of individual opinion may result in the illusion of consensus. There are strategies researchers may take to mitigate the effect of group think this study will employ. First, on some questions, participants will be asked to write down their answers prior to the group discussion (Cyr, 2016). This strategy will naturally be used because participants will be interviewed individually before they take part in a focus group discussion. A second strategy to mitigate social desirability bias is to ask the same question in different ways

(Cyr, 2016). The exploratory nature of the question protocol allows for flexibility in editing and refining question before reaching the whole group. Though the conversation will be participant-led and free-flowing, the researcher will moderate the conversation to ensure the research questions are thoroughly answered by asking questions which yield overlapping answers.

A third strategy to mitigate group think is closely monitor participation levels of the focus group to make sure everyone is speaking with approximate levels of frequency (Cyr, 2016). If one person dominates the conversation, other participants may concur too quickly, and this will become evident. That the focus group is composed of a former peer group should provide a degree of comfort in which they feel more relaxed and thereby more willing to be vulnerable and open with their personal narratives and opinions. The benefit of using the focus group as a data collection technique is that the group dynamic closely mimics the natural process of opinion forming and expression (Check & Schutt, 2011). Participants are given multiple opportunities to respond to merging topics, and will most likely naturally want to qualify their responses which will reveal data-rich contingencies (Stewart et al., 2009).

As the primary investigative instrument, the researcher has complete control over information flow, data analysis, and data interpretation. The role of the researcher in focus groups is therefore essential (Cyr, 2016). The researcher-participant relationship lends itself to establishing credibility. Clear communication and transparency are hallmarks of a healthy researcher-participant dynamic (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). The Social Constructivist epistemic assumptions identifies as a critical element of qualitative research the role of researcher as the key instrument and the use of reflexivity in which the

researcher utilizes her background interpret the findings included in the study (Lee, 2012). In this case study, the researcher has extensive experience as a former public school teacher in a variety of multicultural settings.

Reliability

In qualitative research reliability is considered a measure of study quality and rigor, and may be defined as the capability of a study to be replicated, meaning similar methods produce similar results (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Reliability describes data independence from researcher imposition (Kirk & Miller, 1986). Reliability is important in conveying trustworthiness, though it is also noted that because human behaviors are unpredictable, qualitative studies can not be replicated with absolute accuracy (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). By comparison, a study's generalizability reflects its reliability within a broader scope. Generalizability theory critiques a study's methodology by asking to what extent can participants' behavior be generalized in a prescribed situation with defined parameters (Eason, 1991).

While reliability concerns was a pertinent benchmark around which this study's methods will revolve, qualitative research experts underscore the fact that in contrast to quantitative studies, in qualitative work, no claim is made for the generalizability of case study findings to a wide range of settings (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Similarly, this study makes no claim of generalizability beyond a population with similar participants characteristics. The goal of this study was to provide insights to the teacher education program under investigation and suggestions for future researchers, policymakers, and teacher program administrators in considering adopting the proposed conceptual framework as a way to standardize and amend Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.

This study adhered to the following empirical suggestions for reliability in qualitative research: Data triangulation, peer debriefing, member checking, and thick descriptions. Triangulation entails combining multiple methods of data collection to test theme convergence (Fielding & Fielding, 1986). A second method of reliability in qualitative research is acquiring multiple accounts using different collection tools such as peer review and audit trails (Merriam, 1983). A peer debriefer outside of study will be asked to examine and confirm results (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). The peer debriefer will be asked to confirm or negate continuities and identify discontinuities in the data. An audit trail of transcripts and memos will be repeatedly referenced throughout the entirety of the research project.

A third strategy for ensuring study reliability is in the researcher's methodical observational documentation (Kirk & Miller, 1986). An audit trail was used throughout the entirety of the research process for this study, including memoing of emergent ideas, thick descriptions, reflective thinking, and summarized interview notes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data was categorized as close as possible to the time of collection (Kirk & Miller, 1986). Exploratory qualitative case studies are highly fluid; a variety of factors may result in slight or significant changes during the collection of data which must be recorded at the time of collection (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982).

Member checking was also used as a quality control measure in this study. Member checking occurs in qualitative research when the researcher offers transcripts and the researcher's notes so participants may review their statements and the statements of the researcher for accuracy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This strategy further empowers participants and increases data reliability because the participants are given the chance to

clarify the researcher's interpretations and also contribute additional insights. Participants were read themes derived from individual interviews in the focus group interview for review and discussion.

A fourth strategy to safeguard against unreliability is the alignment of the research questions, conceptual framework, and interview question protocols. Methodological alignment provides an "anchor for consistency" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 220). Qualitative case study analysis is by nature recursive, and the constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) of cyclical revision is a fifth reliability measure used in this study.

Lastly, the presentation of findings reflects a study's reliability factor. Study procedures which have been meticulously recorded ensure reliable study outcomes (Kirk & Miller, 1986). One of skills the researcher must develop is her ability to communicate. The reliability of qualitative inquiry largely depends on the researcher's adherence to deliberate, clear, and meaningful presentation of findings (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973).

One of the advantages of using focus groups over other data collection techniques in qualitative research is the higher degree of replicability the design provides because of its tightly framed structure and participant composition. In focus group research (Cyr, 2016; Liamputtong, 2011; Sim, 1998; Wilkinson, 1998), external validity refers to a study whose results can be generalized beyond the investigated sample. Outcomes of focus group research may be transferable depending on comparability of contexts.

Limitations

The study is limited in size and scope. Only one group of former teachers from one teacher education program was selected to participate. Teacher education programs vary as much as the teachers they train. Within certain defined contexts, results from this study

may be transferable. However, because this is an exploratory study, the goal is to contribute to a burgeoning knowledge base for future hypothesis development and rigorous study rather than produce substantive conclusions across settings (Bryman & Cramer, 1992). The results of this study includes suggestions which may be useful to the teacher education program under investigation as well as other teacher education programs. It is imperative that further longitudinal research be conducted on developmentally a Critical Cultural Consciousness framework across settings to determine long-term outcomes. By clearly articulating what comprises a transformative preservice preparation training with a focus on social equity, teacher education programs can provide the incentive for institutions to develop a systematic and critical pedagogy with cultural inclusion as its epistemic cornerstone.

Chapter IV

Findings

This exploratory nature of this study seeks to gain insights from teachers' perspectives about the impact of culture on their lives, their perception of CRP, and their opinions about including constructs from Cultural Consciousness such as critical reflexivity, and from Restorative Justice Education such as antiracist education into teacher education programs. The following findings are based on data provided by individual and group interviews of study participants – six former teacher education graduates of the same large urban university teacher education program. Participants are recent graduates. The primary reason for this is so that participants have some observational, student teaching, and field experience, but also so that their memories of their teacher education program experiences are fresh. The racial demographics of participants for this study reflect the broader racial demographics of the teacher education program. Participant profiles (fictional names assigned to ensure anonymity) are firstly discussed. Outcomes are organized thematically by the study's three research questions.

Within-case themes from individual interviews were first generated. Through the constant comparative method, common themes between participants were then deduced. In the focus group meeting in which all participants were present, themes were read aloud for participants to confirm or qualify. All participants agreed to the accuracy of the findings from the individual interviews. Additional participant responses within the focus group interview supported the themes which emerged from individual interviews. The repetition of themes throughout both individual and group interviews helped ensure a satisfactory level of data saturation.

Participant Profiles

TEACHER NAME	TEACHER IDENTITY	YEAR GRADUATED FROM PROGRAM	RACE OF STUDENTS	GRADE AND SUBJECT
Joshua	Mexican American male	Early 2020	Racially diverse	9 th grade biology
Richard	African American male	Early 2020	Primarily white	9-12 th computer science
Abigail	Mexican American female	2019	Primarily white	9 th biology

Cassandra	White female	2019	Racially diverse	12 th financial math
Joaquin	Hispanic male	Early 2020	Racially diverse	10 th math
Beatrice	Hispanic female	2019	Primarily Hispanic	7 th grade history

Participant 1: Joshua. Joshua identifies as a Mexican American male. Joshua taught 9th grade biology in a large and racially diverse high school in Houston for the 2020-2021 school year. Joshua was raised in a small city just outside of Houston and spent many of his formative years in Mexico. Joshua began his secondary education at a community college in his hometown, eventually transferring to the University where he majored in biology and minored in education. Joshua graduated from the teacher education program in 2020. Joshua attributes his resourcefulness to his childhood experiences. Throughout his responses, Joshua displayed a high level of care for his students and an open perspective. When asked about how his personal life experiences impacted his relationship with his students, Joshua commented that his experiences, “...gave me more perspective of what someone might be going through by...being able to put myself in the students’ shoes and showing them empathy.”

Participant 2: Richard. Richard identifies as an African American male. For middle and high school Richard attended schools within different districts around Houston. From that experience, Richard was exposed to a variety of socioeconomic and racial demographics. For his school experiences leading up to high school, Richard said the students were primarily Hispanic. For high school, Richard attended a large suburban school with a primarily white student population. Richard excelled both within and outside of school and had “...always been taking advanced level classes and ...always had a lot of things going on” which accounts somewhat for his willingness and capacity to innovate in his classroom. Richard graduated from the teacher education program in early 2020. For the past year, Richard taught 9-12 grade computer science

at a high school in the suburban outskirts of Houston whose student population is predominantly white for the 2020-2021 school year.

Participant 3: Abigail. Abigail identifies as a Mexican American female. Abigail was raised in Southwest Houston in an area called Chinatown populated by many Asian markets and restaurants. Abigail graduated from the teacher education program in 2019. Abigail's formative years were spent at schools dominated by Hispanic students, but in high school entered a magnet school on the other side of Houston with a more diverse student demographic. Abigail taught 9th grade biology in a large suburban high school just outside of Houston to a majority white student population for the 2020-2021 school year. Abigail displayed high levels of enthusiasm and energy throughout both the individual and group interviews. She gave long and thoughtful responses to each question and was unafraid to be the first one to respond in the group interview.

Participant 4: Cassandra. Cassandra identifies as a white female. Cassandra grew up in a low-income part of St. Louis, Missouri. The schools Cassandra attended were populated by predominantly African American students. Cassandra graduated from a university teacher education program in 2019. Cassandra most recently taught 9-12 grade financial math to a demographically diverse student population in a large high school just outside of Houston for the 2020-2021 school year. Cassandra's awareness of cultural tensions specific to African Americans emanates from her childhood experiences. Cassandra recalled the death of Michael Brown, an 18-year-old African American male who was shot and killed by a white police officer only blocks from her house in Missouri. The details of the altercation between Brown and the police officer

are widely disputed but led to riots and solidified the Black Lives Matter movement in St. Louis. “There was a lot of unrest, and we weren’t allowed to talk about it,” Cassandra said. “[The school] told us, if you went outside to protest and you were participating during the school day, you could have been expelled.”

Participant 5: Joaquin. Joaquin identifies as a Hispanic male. Joaquin was raised in a low-income area of Houston dominated by both Hispanic and African Americans. For middle school Joaquin attended a school in central Houston adjacent to River Oaks, one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in Houston. Joaquin attended a large and culturally diverse high school. Joaquin’s parents, who are immigrants, instilled the value of education in him throughout his childhood. Joaquin graduated from the teacher education program in early 2020. Joaquin taught 10th grade math for the 2020-2021 school year in a large high school in Houston with a demographically diverse student population. Throughout his responses, Joaquin repeatedly spoke of the importance of developing relationships with students. Joaquin credited his natural ability to connect with his students with his youth and “easygoing” personality.

Participant 6: Beatrice. Beatrice identifies as a Hispanic female. Beatrice commented about her limited exposure to cultures outside of the Hispanic community prior to entering the university. Beatrice graduated from a university teacher education program in 2019. Beatrice grew up in California and attended a predominantly Hispanic private school before moving to Texas. Once in Texas, Beatrice attended a public school dominated by African American and Hispanic populations. Beatrice taught 7th grade history for the 2020-2021 school year to a majority Hispanic student population. Beatrice spoke at length about the importance of being open to learning about other

cultures, and especially the cultures of her students. "...it just helps make a connection that you are open and aware of different things in the world."

Thematic Analysis

THEME	SUBTHEME
<p><u>THEME 1:</u></p> <p>RELATIONSHIPS ARE KEY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom structure balance • Social interactions during pandemic
<p><u>THEME 2:</u></p> <p>TEACHER POSITIONALITY</p> <p>SIGNIFICANTLY SHAPES PREPAREDNESS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural background • Socioeconomic background • Academic background
<p><u>THEME 3:</u></p> <p>TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM</p> <p>LIMITATIONS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited Culturally Relevant Pedagogy • Limited Critical Cultural Consciousness • Limited technology training
<p><u>THEME 4:</u></p> <p>NEGATIVE IMPACT OF LEGISLATION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservative nature of teaching

- Dismantling of teaching profession

Theme 1: Relationships are Key. Joshua's strategy for building relationships with his students required he be open to their perspective and personal situation. "...just being able to put myself in the students' shoes and showing them empathy definitely benefited them academically." Being honest with them and being myself around them helped them engage with me. It is hard for them to learn from someone they feel doesn't care about them," remarked Beatrice. Richard applied the skills he learned about content building in the teacher education program to building relationships with his students.

I really like to get to know my students. And they like to talk about themselves as well. So it's one of those things that just kind of happens natural for me to just figure out a student's background, because they're so willing to share once they feel comfortable around me.

Abigail developed relationships with her students by being open about her own life experiences. Abigail said her students recognized she was not asking anything of them she was not also asking of herself. Abigail's lead by example approach emerged throughout her responses.

I think understanding your kids and their home lives is one of the basis for interacting with them or having them understand you. They're more willing to listen to you if they think you can understand them - you're not just someone with more authority standing there lecturing at them, you're trying to actually understand them and who they are.

Joaquin's emphasis on the importance of building relationships with students caused him to reflect on his own experiences in the teacher education program.

There is too much of that focus on the content. And there should be more of a focus on building student relationships. If I come in and I build these relationships, it will help with getting them more comfortable in the classroom, which will in turn help their learning.

Beatrice underscored the necessity of building a strong rapport with students. Her classroom experiences are centered around being intentional about developing relationships with her students so they may be academically successful.

If you don't have a relationship with your kids, it's kind of hard for them to care and learn from someone they feel doesn't care about them or their personal experiences. I feel like it all starts with the relationships you build.

Cassandra's ability to connect with her students was an integral part of her personality.

I would put a bigger emphasis on building relationships. I personally got lucky, I didn't struggle with that. But I feel we didn't learn too much about how to build those relationships. You need those people skills to be able to be sympathetic and empathetic towards these kids because you may not be in the same situation that they're in, you may not see the world the way they do.

Classroom Structure. Relationships between students is also key elements for student engagement. Having established a classroom of both rules and respect, Abigail discussed conducting an interactive dissection in which students worked in groups and interacted with one another as a particularly engaging event: "...that was probably the most excited I had seen my kids."

Richard viewed establishing structure and classroom rules as a prerequisite to managing group work. Richard saw great value in classroom activities in which students could collaborate, and so developing a tightly organized classroom environment was worth the effort. “I felt like [team activities] worked most when I could get a couple of students working toward the same goal.”

Joaquin developed a mutually beneficial power structure with his students from the beginning. In turn, his students responded favorably. “If I just build a good rapport and a good community and good relationship with my students we can talk about things maybe they can't talk about with other teachers.”

Cassandra worked hard to find balance between openness to differing opinions and respect during a most difficult time.

It's very important. Students aren't going to be extremely successful unless they feel safe, unless they feel comfortable and welcome in your room...it came from the beginning of the year when I set some ground rules. No derogatory terms or slurs are to be used in my room, whether it's about race or sexual orientation. I'm a very open person but if you say something I do not like, that is offensive to somebody else, you will be escorted out of my room.

Beginning the year with structure was as important to sustaining an environment of tolerance for Richard. “Set those ground rules first. I had already created that environment where it's okay to speak your mind. It's okay to disagree with somebody, but you are also going to respectfully address whatever we are talking about.”

Joshua was able to balance speaking to his students in a casual way while also asserting the authority he has as the teacher in charge of the classroom.

And as a teacher you're the authority figure in the classroom do you definitely have that advantage of setting up a respectful environment where they can share their ideas by keeping a respectful tone.

CCC implementation. Participants implemented many aspects of CCC intuitively. Joshua used critical thinking and critical self-reflection as a strategy to encourage students to remain respectful and tolerant. "I like to ask questions and get them to see why something they're saying may be wrong, or just try to get them to see the other side." For Joshua, being intellectually open means not only having an awareness of culture, but also developing an awareness within that culture, the more subtle and prescient complexities. "Just knowing that culture goes beyond what country you came from, it also has to do just with the environment you've been surrounded with your entire life." Joshua's approach reaches beyond CRP into something more compassionate and connecting.

Though he did not refer to it as restorative justice, Joshua considered empathy and his students' personal lives as he reflected on how he connected his personal relationships with students to their academic success.

We end up punishing things that have to do more with behavior, but what happens is we end up punishing their academic standing. I try to make sure their grade isn't affected if they mess up one day because of something outside of their control happening in their house.

Richard instinctively knew how important trust is for students who are accustomed to being overlooked or stereotyped. Having personal experience with being misunderstood helped Joshua know how to teach tolerance.

You must teach the way students learn and get them to trust you to the point where they don't feel you're just teaching things just to teach it. If I cared about it, they cared about it. Trust is just really important to keep them open to feeling like they can speak their mind. One of the things is to figure out different sides of the story, because with every story with every situation, people from different experiences could see the same thing in different ways.

By connecting teacher with student learning, Abigail's experience speaks to an important finding with significant implications for teacher education programs. "I think one of the main things we tried to do was teach our kids how to critically think, and so in thinking about how to get them to critically think we ourselves are doing it." Abigail expressed why critical thinking is a skill students need in an era in which technology and information play such a dominant role.

They're constantly on their phones, constantly getting information, and without the knowledge or the ability to critically think they are likely to take things at face value. Given that we're in the age of information right now, they need to be able to critically think and wonder to themselves, where am I getting this information from? Is it a reliable source? Is it something I should be spreading?

Cassandra knew from her personal experiences the benefits of engaging in critical reflexivity. “I think the one of the first steps as a white person is to acknowledge that you have privilege. Some people don't see it. I do because of things that I've gone through, and things that my friends have gone through who are not white.”

Joaquin conveyed elements from Cultural Consciousness such as questioning assumptions, and the potential damage limited expectations have on students.

There are a lot of teachers who put students in a box, but everyone is different. And if students are constantly being told, ‘You're going to be this type of student’ then they're gonna start acting like that. You just talk to them for a little bit, and you just have a conversation. You start to learn that if someone in class is very bright and bubbly doesn't mean that they came from a place of privilege or a place where they had everything they needed.

Pandemic and social interactions. Student engagement was the most difficult part of teaching during the pandemic. The sudden transition to remote, or partly remote learning, created a host of challenges for students and teachers. From Cassandra: “The [students] are shutting down until things get back to normal.” Participants expressed a multitude of unforeseen issues. When Abigail’s school turned to virtual learning, it became even more important to be find balance between instructing and caring, which required nuance and intrapersonal understanding. “I didn't want to put them in an uncomfortable situation. It was our choice at our school whether we could force them or not to have their camera on, and I opted not to so they would feel safe.”

The consequence of not requiring students to have their videos turned on meant students could be involved in any number of activities. Some students were dealing with

sick parents or had to themselves get jobs to support the family. Richard conveyed that school was not a priority during the 2020-2021 school year. “This year I just didn’t see that drive for a lot of students when it came to their work. They would just rather do other things.”

Despite all the seemingly insurmountable challenges, the participants showed persistence in their efforts to engage students. However, finding the balance of empathy and accountability was most elusive. Accustomed to a high degree of interaction, and being a teacher able to rely on her interpersonal intelligence, Cassandra struggled:

The kids are going through a lot. Their parents are going through a lot. Even when we try to engage them, for some kids it’s just not going to click because they have so much going on in their heads, and nothing will work at this point. They’re kind of shutting down until things go back to normal. If they were at home, I couldn’t engage with them at all. If I did try to contact them, they would ask ‘Who are you?’ So it was a different dynamic.

Without being able to see her students, Abigail was unable to identify problems impeding the processes of learning.

Engagement was one of the biggest issues I faced during the pandemic. I didn’t know what was going on at home, I had no idea what they were going through or what condition they were living in. There was a couple of times where a kid would message me and say ‘I’m sorry I missed your class’. And I would be like ‘what class? Are you even in one of my online classes or is that an adult, because I don’t know for sure.

Beatrice referred to the teacher education program's assumption of in-person learning, and the problem of giving students "grace", a term often expressed by participants when referring to how they were told to handle accountability tasks such as attendance and grades.

When my classes became 100% virtual, there was no way gauge whether my kids were engaged or not. When we were student teaching, everything was hands-on with the expectation that our school was going to be in person. So we had to try all these different things to see if they were engaged...the second hardest thing was getting them to turn things in on time. This past year they would refuse to turn things in on time, and we didn't know if we were giving them too much grace or if there were other things going on at home.

Joshua was thoughtful about the challenges he faced with his students, and emphasized the importance of providing structure, especially when teaching online.

There are a lot of kids that just don't remember how to do school is the thing. So they have to learn how to do school again, because a lot of them right now are just like 'Hey, I'm not feeling this class – I'm just going to close my computer and go about my day.' There's a lot of distractions at home. I personally also struggled to focus when I was at home. Making sure you have procedures in place will help with behavioral issues.

Cassandra recalled an event which seemed to exemplify the emotional toll the events of the 2020-2021 school year.

I had a great relationship with the students I had in person. I was able to engage with them and keep them interested...I just keep thinking about this one time I broke down in the middle of class and started bawling. One of my students took her mask off so she could have a drink of water and I said something which made her laugh and I got to see her smile for the first time. It makes me so emotional. I can't see their smiles. I want to see them to see if they are having a good time because they could be completely sad underneath their mask and I would never know.

Teachers seemed willing to take calculated risks if they felt it would help engage their students. The value of having student interact in group work as a way to engage them and practice critical thinking was a repeated theme in participant responses.

"I don't know whether I should say this, but I still did team activities. I felt like they were most engaged when they were working together...especially for critical thinking in computer science. A lot of times they are given a task, they're given a lab, and it's something they have to solve together," said Richard.

"I try to give them time to think through discussing amongst themselves. I always group my kids...it's also a way for them to see how everyone else is thinking, the different ways their classmates think," said Beatrice.

"I start with a thought-provoking question," said Abigail. "It's interesting to hear their thought processes and they are most excited when they are working together."

For Cassandra, small group instruction was an opportunity for her to get to know her students.

You set everybody up, they're experimenting with whatever it may be. They're trying to figure out whether it's a formula or going through the process of working through problems. I would pull kids aside. I had this little table in the back and I would have kids join me and we would go over some of the stuff they're supposed to be learning. I would fill in any holes and gaps they may have. And then we would just sit and talk.

Theme 2: Teacher Positionality Significantly Shapes Preparedness.

Participants felt prepared to teach in a multicultural setting primarily due to their own personal exposure and experiences. Personal exposure to other cultures enhanced participants' ability to engage students from diverse backgrounds. Each participant was asked about his or her own personal academic background, and each expressed a range of experiences. Each participant's background involved a high level of interaction with a wide array of racial, socioeconomic class, and geographic demographics.

Cultural background. Joaquin credited his youth and the experience of being raised by Mexican immigrant parents who instilled the importance of education in developing his pragmatic and naturalistic approach to engaging a diverse body of students. "My parents were immigrants. They always told me if I wanted to achieve anything it would be through education."

Richard could better empathize with his students because of his own experience as an African American male who was often a minority in the schools he attended and programs in which he participated.

Working with people of all different backgrounds, cultures and experiences is kind of what I'm used to...I was the only person of my color. Now I think okay, well, if that student is the only person of that color, how are they going to feel in this environment you're working in? Bringing in conversations to really show the students that we're teaching them where they are really makes them feel safe.

Beatrice's exposure to other cultures began when she moved to Texas and entered college, an experience which seemed to have a profound impact on her strategy for connecting with her students. "I went to university, and that's when I experienced a lot of other cultures." When asked about feeling prepared to teach in multicultural settings, Beatrice said the program encouraged them to "build on [students'] prior knowledge", by:

...building on their own life experiences, which goes into making sure we know our kids not just in the classroom, but outside, by learning about their experiences, knowing what sports they're into and their family life, and incorporating that into our lessons to show them that we care and help them with learning.

Cassandra's experience with a local school shooting and growing up in a low-income neighborhood seemed to impact her outlook. "With my personal experiences, I felt very prepared. I was walking in knowing kids are not coming from the same household I came from...and no matter what you're going to teach them, and you're going to try and get them engaged."

Socioeconomic background. Abigail's exposure to a variety of both racial and socioeconomic demographics helped prepare her for interacting with a diverse body of

students. "...growing up where I did, and then seeing the change when I was a little bit older, helps me to understand my kids a little bit better. I have a background with both kind of groups."

Joshua's keen observational and empathetic skills, which helped him identify with students no matter their cultural backgrounds, were influenced by his experiences surrounded by struggling families. "Even though I didn't grow up with a lot of commodities, I could always find someone I wouldn't say had it worse than me, but had to go through more troubles than I did."

Similar to other participants, Richard's positionality seemed to stem from exposure to a wide variety of socioeconomic and racial demographics.

I was born in Louisiana. When I moved to Texas I lived in a school district with mostly poor neighborhoods...I felt like I grew up in a mixed environment. When I went to high school the demographics changed a bit. There was a lot of white students.

Cassandra was able to identify with her students through empathy. "I walked in knowing that kids are not coming from the same household as me. They may be better off or they may not, but no matter what you are going to teach them and you are going to try and get them engaged."

Academic experiences. Participants experienced a range of academic experiences, but all of them experienced a diversity of student populations in a range of socioeconomic areas. "I grew up in California in a very Latino community," said Beatrice. "When I moved to Texas I was surrounded by not just Latinos, but African Americans and Asians people

as well. When I started college in Houston that's when I really got to experience a lot of different cultures.”

Joaquin experienced both extremes of schools because his family moved into a different neighborhood when he was in middle school. “I went to elementary schools next to where I grew up, in a low-income neighborhood. Then I went to the exact opposite for middle and high school, though the high school was very diverse.”

No matter what type of school he attended, Richard, a naturally self-motivated person, was engaged. “I've always had a lot of things going on. I started playing the viola in middle school. In high school I got into computer science.”

Abigail's experience reflects the experience of growing up in one of the most diverse cities in the United States. “I grew up in a neighborhood near Chinatown in Houston. But then for middle school I attended a school with mostly Hispanic kids. But for high school I went to a magnet school on the other side of town which was really diverse.”

Theme 3: Teacher Education Program Limitations

Limited CRP. Cassandra remarked positively on her overall experience within the teacher program, with the caveat that there is room for improvement with explicit direction regarding CRP.

The structure was good - we did do a lot of things that incorporated inclusion and getting everyone on the same page. But I wouldn't say it was direct. We didn't talk specifically about Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. There weren't any direct courses that were just about culture.

From Joaquin: “Too much of that focus on the content. And there should be more of a focus on building student relationships. I remember they talked about CRP as a brief

seminar a couple of times toward the end.” Participants did not closely identify with the term Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. Some teachers seemed confused about the definition of CRP and reflected instead on the program’s emphasis on accessing prior knowledge. Richard repeatedly referred to “...mixing up activities” and being aware of students’ “multiple learning styles.” Joaquin discussed the program’s emphasis on prior knowledge: “...everything is focused on the content – teaching content, and the way students will learn content.”

Participants said CRP was introduced at the end of the program as opposed to offered throughout their courses. The program focused on accessing prior knowledge versus Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Participants expressed that they would have benefitted from more CRP throughout the entirety of the program rather than tacked on at the end of the program through 2-3 seminars and activities. Participants said most of their CRP exposure which they found practical and valuable occurred in their observations and student teaching.

When asked about his CRP exposure, Joshua reflected on how the program encouraged student teachers to think beyond stereotypes. For Joshua, CRP is an iterative process, an outcome of intellectualized experience.

CRP occurred toward the end of my time in the program. At first my mind was just set on how to make this culturally relevant to the student. So I thought I have to include this culture and this culture. Toward the end they started to emphasize the misconception we all had by focusing on ethnicity. They started to emphasize that it went beyond just your ethnicity; it's the way that you see the world.

Abigail recalled specific instances of CRP exposure and found great value in her observational experiences, and learning by example. For Abigail, the show-don't-tell strategy was most effective.

I would have liked to see it brought in earlier and in a bigger sense. It was integrated into lessons every day in a smaller capacity. They gave [the director] a dedicated day to talk about Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. In our pre-teaching observations we would get to see other people's lessons, how they were involving Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. We would have liked to see our teachers trying to bring it in to show us as well.

Beatrice learned most of her CRP strategies from student teaching and observation hours, though she lamented not having the opportunity to student teach in other parts of the city. "I feel like we were at a bit of a disadvantage... We remained in HISD a majority of the time, and the schools were heavily in the Latino community. Beatrice discussed the field experiences being limited to neighborhoods immediately surrounding the university and would have liked "...going into different communities. A lot of those places were in the same district and with the same demographic."

Joaquin remembers a culture walk activity he found useful and enlightening. That he can so clearly single-out events around CRP suggest the program's primary focus was elsewhere.

We started talking about CRP, a little bit towards the end of the program. I wish it was more of continuous throughout the whole program, and more emphasis on it. There was a brief seminar and a culture walk. We walked around the area and got to see the area and the environment the students

grew up in, which I thought was really eye-opening. Even though I live adjacent to where I teach, you do get to see where students tend to go, where students hang out.

Limited CCC. Teachers did not experience critical constructs of the CCC framework such as open dialogues about racial bias or engage in critical self-reflection in their teacher education program, but remarked on their importance. As Beatrice said, “I believe that having difficult conversations is an important thing. Self-reflection is the only way we grow.”

Joshua agreed: “As a teacher, I found it useful to self-reflect...It would have helped to engage in this type of conversation.” Cassandra noted how important having self-reflection is for students. “I want to give them time to think deeply because their opinions may change.” Abigail admitted that without training, she was hesitant to engage in difficult conversations around race with her students.

Experiencing it firsthand before doing it in the classroom would definitely have made me more likely to do it...it is nerve-racking to have those conversations, and never having participated in one, I don't think I am likely to do it with my kids.

Abigail recalled one instance in the program of being given a survey asking questions about bias but said they were instructed to only answer questions and share out if they felt comfortable. Encouraging honest dialogues around race, identifying bias, and critical self-reflection were identified as being “One of the most important things you can do,” as Abigail noted, but also missing from program instruction. Joaquin wished there had been more. “Maybe it's a little too controversial so they shied away from it.”

Joaquin expressed how beneficial open conversations about race would have been in the program. One of his recommendations for how to improve not only the teacher education program, but all teacher education programs aiming to further their mission of social equity.

I would have liked more race conversations. It not only puts everyone's backgrounds into perspective, but it also makes you reflect on your personal biases, which is important as a teacher. You learn that just because someone has a certain ethnicity or race, doesn't mean that they necessarily grew up in certain conditions. Everyone has biases. I guess the thing is you have to recognize them, and you have to make sure you go to fix those. It is something that is a little too controversial so sometimes they kind of shied away from it.

Cassandra expressed strong opinions about creating a space for open dialogue within her classroom. "I don't want to stop having those uncomfortable conversations because they need it. I need it. It doesn't make sense to just pretend something's not there."

Abigail suggested teacher education programs create discussion groups with students who are familiar with each other.

It's good to converse with people who are in similar positions to you so I think it would be best probably during student teaching. We see them all the time, they're going through the same thing we are. Even though they're all very different with different perspectives, they are people you're familiar with and comfortable with, is a little bit easier than going out and having those really tough conversations.

Richard discussed having some exposure to critical self-reflection in the program, but wishing it was more frequent.

I don't think they were at every point, but I think they made it a point to have at least one deep conversation where people could speak their own experiences. They had us do a lot of self-reflection and notes in our journal and reflect about a topic around a past experience. I think it helps us grow. There are a lot of times I need to just sit down and reflect about something that happened to me to really be able to move forward.

Need for Technology Training. Because neither teachers nor students were prepared to engage in school online, the social interaction critical to culturally relevant engagement was missing. Participants expressed surprise at how their students struggled with basic computer literacy. Likewise, participants discussed how unprepared they were to teach virtually, and received no preparation – or subsequent training from their schools – in assessing student engagement.

Abigail conveyed her wish to have had more technological preparation in the teacher education program or through professional development offered by her school. The consequence of not having that preparation could have come a great cost in terms of students' attitude toward in person schooling in the future.

We should have had more foresight for an online environment...Next year I think we will see an issue with kids being serious about turning things in because this past year they were given huge amounts of grace so they got away with a lot of things that in a normal year they wouldn't get away with.

Joshua focused on the oversight with regard to lack of computer literacy training. “I think the students need a lot of work with technology. When we were trying to incorporate activities which required technology and the kids were at home, they would struggle trying to figure it out...Students need a lot more work with technology because that’s where the world is headed.”

Cassandra also alluded to the fact that despite the myriad of challenges, some students were still able to thrive.

My school piloted something self-paced. It was really difficult when we were all virtual...they just texted me if they needed help with anything. Most of them failed. A lot of kids did nothing the whole year, and so next year, when my kids come back they aren’t going to want to be there. I already have a lot of kids with behavior issues.

For Richard teaching computer science to students who were remote learning did not lead to ideal outcomes. Moving forward, Richard hopes to learn from his experiences, and ultimately change the way he will teach in the future.

The only failures I had were my students who were at home because there are so many ways you can fake being there. You can have your camera on and still have something entirely different going on at the same time, and I would never know. Next year, I’m going to try to make things a little more physical, with the option of having some things remain online.

Beatrice also commented on how the events of the 2020-2021 school year has impacted her pedagogical approach. “There is a bunch of stuff I want to do differently next year...I don’t even remember what it’s like to have 30 kids in a classroom.”

Abigail made the explicit connection between digital literacy and critical thinking. “Without the knowledge or ability to critically think, students are likely to take things they read online at face value, and then contribute to spreading misinformation.”

Theme 4: Negative Impact of Legislation. Effectively implementing CCC is being stifled by outside influences. Addressing current events and having open-ended conversations is a critical part of the learning process. Participants remarked that the current legislation maneuvering to control how teachers in Texas discuss “controversial” topics in the classroom will to some extent impact how they will approach such conversations, primarily out of concern for job security.

Joshua discussed why the nature of teaching in Texas has always impacted his approach to having difficult conversations in the classroom, but also why making subject content relevant by using real-world topics is an invaluable tool for learning.

It'll definitely stop me from bringing those topics up. Since Texas is a pretty conservative state. And just overall, as teachers, it's always seen as a very conservative job. You're expected to just do your job and not really get into these types of topics. When some incidents have happened in the country, I definitely stay away from bringing the topic up out of nowhere in the classroom because I have fear that it will affect my job. Maybe a student tells their parents. It'll definitely be something I'm even more careful with, but it would benefit them.

Richard discussed his school's precarious approach. Such an example exemplifies how the intervening of politics places teachers and school leaders in difficult positions.

The principal of my school wouldn't agree with the legislation. He's a very honest and open guy, and we want people to have those types of conversations. However, the school is actually getting a lot of pushback from wanting to do an implicit bias advisory lesson. Race kept coming up as a topic, and because students had brought it up, we just kept rolling with it.

Abigail expressed how dangerous such legislation is for students' growth mindsets. It is a slap in the face, being censored in that way. It's sad for not only teachers who have to watch what we say even more everyday, and it will negatively impact the kids as well. They should be able to think for themselves, even at their age. They should be able to think in these capacities so when they become adults they have an idea of what's going on. And it's not that we can turn a blind eye and act like it's not affecting them because it is, and they have a right to know what's going on around them. Getting information from their teachers and teachers being able to talk about it is important, because we're adults, they respect us. They should be able to get information from trusted sources, and censoring one of those sources is terrible. If they can't get it from somebody like us, some people like us who know what's reliable, what does that lead them to do?

Beatrice expressed fear of parental involvement. The legislation essentially empowers outsiders to become involved in classroom instruction.

I wouldn't say [this legislation] would deter me from having those conversations, but I would be more careful to whom I'm speaking with as

far as my students. Kids are kids - they'll tell someone about the conversation we were having, and then it could come back to me. Before I wouldn't have had to worry about that.

Cassandra reiterated how necessary it is for students to be able to have open-ended conversations with their peers and with their informed teachers so they may effectively process things which may have a direct impact on their lives.

If it is part of their history they should be able to learn about it whether or not it makes people uncomfortable, because it happened, and is still happening. We're limiting that with this legislation. We're not allowing them to process everything that's been happening. And I'm not one to like to get in trouble but it doesn't make sense to just pretend something's not there. I don't agree with it at all; it will definitely change the way I have to have these conversations in class.

Joaquin was the only participant who admitted the legislation was not going to impact his approach to having discussions in class about supposed controversial topics.

No, I don't think it's going to stop me because it something that's very important. Maybe I'll be a little more weary about the perfect time to actually have these conversations, but I do believe these conversations are still going to happen in the classroom.

Summary

The events of the 2020-2021 school year; namely the COVID-19 pandemic and recent legislation dictating what and how teachers cover content in their classrooms, significantly impacted the educational experiences for both teachers and students. Without

being able to physically or visually interact with students negatively impaired teachers' capacity to engage them. Teachers faced an inordinate number of obstacles during the school year, and perhaps because of their struggles, consistently displayed empathy for their students. Throughout their responses, teachers conveyed a high level of care for their students. Though they did not receive direct or explicit instruction in either CRP or CCC, teachers were still able to identify that building relationships with students is the most important aspect of teaching – more important even than content dissemination. Discovering innovative ways to connect with students despite the ongoing challenges associated with the pandemic and remote learning has become a top-level concern for teachers as a result of trauma and social isolation caused by these two realities.

Teachers in this study did not express receiving satisfactory degrees of critical self-reflection or open and honest conversations around bias, racism, privilege and oppression in their teacher education program. Teachers felt strongly about how their program and their program's student teachers would profit from an anti-racist education which facilitates these discussions. The teachers in this study represent a racially diverse group of people. It will be important moving forward to address how white preservice teachers would benefit from a program with an overt rather than auxiliary mission of social equity. The majority of the participants remarked that the current legislation will impact how they approach conversations around race and history in their classrooms, but also noted that those conversations were much needed.

Chapter V

Conclusion

Findings and Problem Statement: Effective Student Engagement Strategies More Important than Ever

The first research question for this study asks: *In what ways do teachers feel prepared to teach in multicultural settings?* Results of this study indicate that teachers do generally feel prepared to teach in multicultural settings primarily due to their own cultural backgrounds and/or interactions. Teachers expressed wishing they had more exposure to Culturally Relevant Pedagogy throughout the program. Teachers stated that Reformative Justice and anti-racist education were missing from their teacher education program's curriculum. The second research question for this study asks: *What are teachers' experiences and perspectives about implementing Critical Cultural Consciousness in teacher education?* Teachers either explicitly or implicitly affirmed each domain of the CCC framework. Teachers underscored the value of compassion and critical thinking and expressed the need for teacher education programs to incorporate these two practices in their framework to effectively meet the needs of a diverse body of students.

The problem statement of this study points to a critical need for intervention measures to reduce inequality in youth outcomes for students of color, and this need has persisted despite the practical and philosophical presence of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Azzopardi & McNeil, 2016). The realities for African American students motivating Ladson-Billings' study of effective teachers; namely the academic disparities between African American students and their white counterparts, the underrepresentation of

African American students in schools' Gifted and Talented Programs, the overrepresentation of African American students in Special Education programs, and the inordinate amount of students of color in out-of-school suspension, remain problematic more than 20 years later (U.S. Department of Education's Civil Rights Office, 2014).

Current teacher education programs claim to be culturally relevant but lack substantive social equity domains. Underneath the surface of these problems is the overwhelming presence of majority Euro-centric ideals (Cochran-Smith et al., 2016; Matias & Mackey, 2016; Schiele, 1994), and the devaluing of the perspectives of a diverse group of teachers (Sleeter, 2017). While Culturally Relevant Pedagogy has been identified as an effective practice to engage students (Delpit, 2006; Gay & Howard, 2000), it is inconsistently defined, applied, and evaluated in teacher education programs (Tsang & Bogo, 1997) and fails to capture the systemic causes for continued academic disparities for BIPOC students (Kohli & Pizarro, 2016). Additionally, academic outcomes at the end of the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated these pre-existing disparities and validated that a critical and compassionate approach is urgently needed in education (Ladson-Billings, 2021).

This study suggests that when preparing student teachers to be high culturally proficient, teacher preparation programs should address three components of a Critical Cultural Conscious (CCC) framework: 1) Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP), 2) Cultural Consciousness, and 3) Restorative Justice Education (RJE). This study of a small sample of graduates from one college's teacher preparation program indicates program graduates perceived that the instructional experiences were incomplete, superficial, and failed to

augment their own previous personal-life experiences. When asked about their pedagogical practices, and without specifically being asked, participants did not refer to their program much at all.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further complicated the contexts within which teachers must work. CRP practices prior to the onset of the pandemic were already problematic in teacher education programs in three major areas: 1) Lack of standardization, 2) Lack of consistency throughout programs, 3) Lack of anti-racist education. Teachers emphasized that the strategies the teacher education program offered were designed for traditional, in-person contexts. Teacher education programs must consider alternate learning contexts such as remote online learning.

The radical and sweeping interventions needed in classrooms requires more than piecemeal, ancillary events. CCC must be integrated in each syllabus. Teacher graduates may have voiced satisfaction with their teacher program experience, but it is questionable the degree to which they have been challenged. The teachers in this study expressed wanting more opportunities to push past moments of cognitive dissonance and evolve as people and as professionals. This study questions if graduating teachers capable of “accessing students’ prior knowledge” is enough to move the social equity needle and suggests that the teacher education program is mechanically performing the familiar equity walk while unconsciously maintaining the subversive status quo.

The problem may lie in the disconnect between theory and practice and between higher education teacher preparation programs and realities at the K-12 level. If teacher education graduates are proficient in teaching theory, and they have internalized the philosophical groundwork rationale for why certain practices are more effective than

others, they will have an evaluating rubric accessible even in times of crises. The gap between teacher education programs and the profession of teaching may be bridged by first developing an empirically sound theory. A powerfully constructed theory with measurable indicators which is well presented and spiraled throughout each component of a program will be embedded in the hearts and minds of its graduates (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1989; Mecoli, 2013; Toom et al., 2010; Walker & Gleaves, 2016).

This study indicates that even within a teacher education program enjoying a diverse student population, only a few CRP tenets are employed for a limited time. When teachers did mention the CRP activities in their teacher education program, their responses indicated only a limited version of what should have been an expansive experience. Beatrice recalled a “Three-hour seminar once a week for a semester,” but could not remember the name of the course directly on CRP. When asked about the CRP strategies she uses, Beatrice talked about bringing lessons learned about her students such as “...knowing what sports they’re into and their family life.”

Contributions to Theory: The Critical Cultural Consciousness Framework in Teacher Education Programs and Inclusion of Restorative Justice Education

In teacher education research, critical consciousness and cultural consciousness are typically treated as co-existing in different ecological systems. With the exception of Gay and Kirkland’s (2003) work, critical and cultural consciousness research remains more prevalent within the contexts of the health industries such as social work and medicine. The Critical Cultural Consciousness framework, which conjoins multiculturalism with anti-oppressive ideologies, is largely missing in teacher and higher education research. The education sector has been slow to embrace the anti-racist perspective and culturally

conscious practice, though both have been established in social work research as interconnecting in important ways (Ben-Ari & Strier, 2010; Parrott, 2009; Sakamoto, 2007).

Gay & Kirkland (2003) argue that Critical Cultural Consciousness should be offered to preservice teachers by training them to continually practicing critical self-reflection. Their research assumes critical pedagogy informs at least some of teacher education programs' design. Implications from this study counters these assumptions; critical pedagogy was missing from the teacher education program Azziopardi & McNeil (2016) highlight criticisms and debates around cultural competence in the literature. They underscore the notion that measuring behaviors is by its own definition, limiting. Their research replaces competence with consciousness with the understanding that "...one can never achieve competence simply through the acquisition of cultural knowledge and skills" (p.5). Cultural consciousness is a lifelong mindful practice which requires "...active, critical, and purposeful engagement" (p. 7).

Kumagai & Lypson (2009) similarly discuss the problematic nature of cultural competency as being a static "state or quality of being... approached in ways which limit its goals to knowledge of characteristic" (p. 783). In contrast, critical consciousness, as they rename it, is a "...reflective awareness of the differences in power and privilege and the inequities that are embedded in social relationships" (p. 783).

Prior teacher education frameworks focused on social equity have not been applied to contexts of extreme turmoil. This study was analyzed through the lens of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this lens, the CCC framework is conceptualized as a resource for teacher education programs as they prepare teachers for a transmogrifying workforce.

Restorative Justice Education is typically treated separately from critical and cultural consciousness within teacher education frameworks.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Make Learning Personal and Practically Relevant

This study indicates limited Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in the teacher education program. The importance of using empathy and knowledge of a student's cultural background in developing personal relationships was a guiding principle in teachers' pedagogy, and yet when asked about their experiences with developing these social emotional skillsets in the program, teachers were unable to pinpoint these academic activities. Beatrice stated: "I remember something very vaguely...one or two instances."

Out of necessity, the participants of this study relied heavily on their personal life experiences to engage their students. There were little contextualized discussions between how they engaged their students and what they learned in the program. To whatever extent CRP was offered, that exposure failed to become noteworthy in teachers' minds. Literature on CRP in teacher education programs do not wholly explore how teacher positionalities shape pedagogical decisions. The research focuses on multiculturalism in education (Lund, 2006; May, 1999; McLennon, 2001), how teachers are trained (Goodwin, 1997; Gorski, 2020; Kohli, 2019), and teachers' perceptions of students (Kea et al., 2002; Lastrapes & Negishi, 2012). The lack of scholarly efforts to connect CRP teacher preparation and classroom experiences requires incorporating the narratives of active teachers. Literature leans heavily on why CRP is necessary rather than how CRP is implemented.

While not identified as a culturally relevant practice, teachers recounted their field experiences and one culture walk. Joaquin remembered one program activity called a "privilege walk". "It's really eye-opening to see the other teachers' experiences. They grew

up in a lot of different ways surrounded by a lot of different circumstances.” Joaquin lamented these experiences were not more frequent. “If they had been more continuous throughout the program I would have felt more prepared once I got into the actual teaching field.”

Through real-time experiences, teachers were able to learn from other student teachers, and learn by immersive sensory experiences. Walking through their students’ neighborhoods allowed them to physically access the backdrop of their students’ lives. Teachers benefit most when they are exposed to a variety of cultural contexts; teachers from this study responded they felt limited to the neighborhoods and schools in one school district, and would have benefitted from travelling beyond their immediate surroundings.

The participants of this study are racially diverse. Literature suggests that increased exposure to other cultures helps diminish deficit thinking and bias (Garcia & Guerra, 2004; Ladson- Billings, 1990; Nieto, 2000; Smit, 2012; Valencia, 2010). For white teachers whose backgrounds demonstrate limited access to outside cultural groups, field experiences can counter pathologizing modes of thinking. Changing behavioral habits takes practice. Preservice teachers need as many real-world opportunities as possible to cognitively activate their learning with critical self-reflection (Gay & Kirkland, 2003).

Cultural Consciousness: Growth Requires Vulnerability and Critical Thinking

In the research, critical thinking, self-reflection, and honest and open conversations are recognized as being instruments for personal growth for both teachers and students (Feucht et al., 2017; Mpofu & Maphalala, 2017; Muhammadiyeva et al., 2020). While teachers acknowledged some self-reflection activities in the teacher education program, teachers were provided with few opportunities to engage in open dialogues about racism,

bias, privilege, and oppression in their courses - all of which have been shown as necessary prerequisites for anti-racist personal growth (Deliovsky, 2017; Kubota, 2021).

This study also suggests a degree of vulnerability is crucial when teachers are endeavoring to connect with their students. Teachers expressed being able to make progress with their students when they themselves were open about their life stories. For teachers, such an unguarded approach requires the dissolution of the prototypical teacher as rigid and all-powerful authority figure and student as passive receiver dynamic. A mutually beneficial power structure between teacher and student is an aspect of Restorative Justice Education.

Restorative Justice Education (RJE): Empathy and Group Work

Anti-racist education strategies such as acknowledgement of bias and privilege, critical self-reflection, and institutional accountability, have become more controversial topics through the course of composing this study. In this study, teachers expressed with strong conviction 1) there was no explicit anti-racist education in their teacher education program, and 2) they believe future education programs would benefit from incorporating an anti-racist curriculum.

This study suggests that cultivating a balance between empathy and accountability was most challenging during the 2020-2021 school year, and as a result, teachers anticipate a higher degree of behavior management issues when school returns to face-to-face learning. Possessing an empathetic approach will become even more essential because of the trauma both teachers and students have undergone. This study suggests an improved classroom experience when teachers attempt to understand their students rather than react to situations with retaliatory measures. In the upcoming school year, exploring solutions

outside of systematized and unnecessarily punitive policies will be a significant step toward restoring justice for students of color.

Valuing collaboration over competition is a major construct of RJE. This study supports the merit of group work in achieving student engagement. Students who attended school primarily online were unable to see, much less interact with, their peers, and their grades suffered. Findings indicate greatly improved experiences when students are allowed to work together. Creating online equivalents to group work and social interactions are an essential feature of future teacher instruction as digital literacy plays a more dominant role in learning standards. While there was some evidence of application from RJE, these experiences emanated from teachers' non-program related experiences and natural intuition.

Future Research: Systematize CRP and CCC

This study is exploratory. As such, the findings are neither generalizable nor replicable. The small-scale qualitative nature of the study precludes the capacity to make inarguable statements. Additionally, the participants in this study represent a diverse subset of a student population which do not reflect the demographic qualities of the broader community of teachers who remain predominantly white women (NCES, 2018). Additional empirical evidence is needed to test the assumptions herein presented.

Future research should attempt to standardize the CCC framework by conducting longitudinal and action-oriented studies, as well as propose the framework to larger populations of teachers. Future research should investigate the implementation of CRP across programs around the country, and compare the experiences of teachers of color with white teachers. Just as it is the recommendation of this study to systematize CRP, the new

CCC framework will also require much consideration in developing its components for cross-program pollination such as between the colleges of education and social work. Future research should continue to gather perspectives of teachers and other higher and lower education stakeholders to formalize CCC and operationalize its constructs into workable classroom strategies.

This study inquired how legislation restricting teachers to explore race-related topics in the classroom will influence their pedagogical decisions. Future studies should examine the long-term chilling effects of legislation on teachers' and students' experiences, including how teachers address current events and conversations around race in their classroom, as well as involvement of parents and administrators. Teachers in this study commented that the legislation would impact their pedagogical decisions, but these decisions were largely as a job-safety defensive response. How schools administrate around the legislation can significantly alter teacher behaviors.

Future studies should also examine the efficacy and development of CRP within online contexts. There will be a plethora of opportunities for future research to review the long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students, teachers, and on education in general. Social justice research in education should engage in work which analyzes how social isolation, online learning, and trauma shifts academic outcomes for underserved populations, the teaching experience, and teacher preparation.

Other sectors outside of education, such as social work and medicine, are far ahead of education in researching, developing, and implementing anti-racist reformative practices (Das Gupta, 2003; Hamilton-Mason & Schneider, 2018; Simon et al., 2021; Yamada et al., 2015), and this is perhaps itself an item for further inquiry. Education as a sector is unique

in the number and degree of involvement of a multitude of stakeholders, from politicians to school board members to school administrators to parents. It is therefore possible that education as an industry must appeal to a common denominator which is significantly philosophically limiting. Future studies should conduct large-scale inquiry about how teacher education programs have been shaped by political involvement.

Recommendation 1: Collaborate with K-12 Teachers and Higher Education

Faculty

This study supports critical consciousness literature which emphasizes modeling, providing concrete authentic examples, and real-world opportunities for preservice teachers to practice critical thinking and self-reflection (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Teachers most remember instructional strategies and theoretical approaches when they are meaningful and immersive. If a program is truly following an equitable student-centered framework in which collaboration is key, a singular, one-day event should not be the beginning and end of student-community interactions.

CCC curricula may include community service projects to provide preservice teachers semester-long opportunities to engage with children and young adults from around the city. Teacher programs may partner with local youth-serving nonprofit organizations such as YMCA and the Boys and Girls Club to develop programs such as mentorships, tutoring, and general volunteering. Student teachers could record their experiences in journals to be submitted to professors for review and feedback. These partnerships could be in-person or online. These programs would give preservice teachers the chance to practice what they have learned in their courses, and gain exposure to a wide variety of students and parents. As part of a critical and culturally conscious collaborative effort,

community members preservice teachers may also work with parents in workshops around CCC topics. These sessions could be held at community centers or even on the college campus itself. This type of real-world exposure is especially relevant for teachers who have not had broad cultural life experiences, though improving relationships with parents is beneficial for all teachers; students spend most of their time at home and these domestic influences are powerful.

The Holmes Group (1987-1997) was a consortium between research universities and professional education programs. The Holmes Group sought to address problem in colleges of education across the country. The problem they saw was a weakening and in some cases elimination of colleges of education in universities. They questioned teacher education programs' political and academic decisions which contributed to the undermining of teaching at a profession. The Holmes Group's most influential publications *Tomorrow's Teachers* (1986), effectively upgraded teacher education reform as a top-level topic. As a result of the reports, classroom teachers began participating in university research and education conferences which helped bridge the gulf between practicing teachers and higher education research (Fullan et al., 1998).

To achieve their goals of "changing the way teachers are educated", and "constructing a true profession of teaching", the group used the tactic of cooperation, partnering teacher education programs with schools. One of the reports' themes was that educational reform cannot occur without recruiting the active input of teachers. As recent graduates, the comments of the teachers in this study offer compelling empirical evidence which should resonate with program administrators. This study recommends programs use research on prior teacher education reform consortiums to identify effective projects on

which to model their own teacher education renovation committee. Teacher program faculty may use research and scholarship funding to create highly collaborative CRP Coalitions with K-12 teachers.

CRP coalitions may be developed using the Professional Development School model. Professional Development Schools are partnerships between university teacher education programs and K-12 elementary and secondary schools (Foust, 2014). Some universities operate Professional Development Schools on their campuses with designated elementary or secondary schools to develop preservice teachers, experiment in innovation, and conduct research (Rodgers & Kell, 2007). Research indicates that professional learning collaborations can effectively be used to prepare preservice teachers to engage in socially just and antiracist practices (Pace, 2014).

Teacher education preservice teachers would benefit from exposure to experts from fields outside of education. Cross-disciplinary teaching between instructors within the College of Education and the College of Social work would allow students the best of both colleges' epistemic perspectives and coursework. Faculty may choose to team teach in order to maximize these experiences without complicating instructors' schedules or overextending university funding. Collaboration could also take place between graduate and undergraduate programs. As a class project or for research purposes, graduate students could present a series of lectures or interactive activities to teacher education students. The material they present may not otherwise be covered in the teacher program but have a direct pedagogical relevance, such as the history of inequities in education, and theories such as the Critical Race Theory. This multi-tiered tactic will ensure more complete and dimensional coverage.

Recommendation 2: Develop Strategic Trauma Response Support Systems

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to traumatize both teachers and students (Anderson et al., 2020; Schwartzman, 2020). Whether it is Culturally Relevant Pedagogy or Critical Cultural Consciousness, if learning loss is to be regained, students' and teachers' psychological needs must precede content dissemination; what this pragmatically implies is a total overhaul of current teacher education program missions and structures.

The escalation of student needs often equates to increased demands placed on teachers. The responsibility of addressing students' individual, academic, mental and physical health challenges put teachers themselves at risk for potentially toxic levels of stress. Teacher education programs could support pre-service teachers by dedicating a space for individuals to articulate their needs, as well as have access to resources and processes promoting self-care. Teacher education programs may work with teacher unions, mental health professionals, and licensed counselors to create multi-tiered support systems such as remote hotlines and by teaching emotional regulation techniques.

Teachers must also receive ongoing training and professional development in trauma response. Teachers need to know how to identify signs of trauma in their students – atypical behavior indicators - as well as how to arm students with tools and skillsets to thrive during times of crises. Certain schools have received “trauma-informed” designations. Teacher education programs may research the policies and practices implemented in these schools. By learning about the processes through which successful schools managed during the pandemic, programs may become better informed about executing effective trauma preparation.

Trauma research examining how schools and teacher education programs are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic is yet untapped. This study underscores the transformative impact resilience has for teachers and students during crises (Kimhi et al., 2020; Roberto et al., 2020). The Building Resilience Project (BRP) (Baum et al., 2009) was a teacher-based intervention model implemented in schools after Hurricane Katrina. Resilience has been singled out in this and other crisis and trauma projects (Gil-Rivas & Kilmer; Lumbroso et al., 2017; Water, 2016) as being an important quality for empowerment and coping with the psychological stressors. A teacher education program which values resiliency is holistic and understands that teaching is an intellectually, emotionally, and physically demanding job; effective teachers possess pedagogical knowledge, practical experience, and are socially and emotionally healthy.

Resiliency in teacher education research is extensive. Developing reflective skills (Leroux Théorêt, 2014), managing and maintaining healthy relationships (Keogh, 2010), and social and emotional competencies such as emotional regulation and reactive coping (Frijda, 1999). The strategies used to develop social and emotional skills in teachers can then be used by teachers in the classroom to do the same with their students (Davies & Bryer, 2003). As students return to in-person instruction they will need to re-learn how to interact, how to work in teams and how to be a student sitting in a classroom for many consecutive hours of the day.

Recommendation 3: Technology and Software Training

Technology will likely continue to play an expansive role in education, and without the immediacy of face-to-face learning, teachers must rely on remote-learning techniques for which they have been trained. Without social interaction, applying CRP will require

innovative restructuring. With or without the context of a pandemic, teacher education programs should develop plans to train teachers and students in the utilization of educational technology and software.

Applying CRP concepts to an online world and understanding what digital literacy really means and how to apply social and emotional competencies to an online environment will be one of the biggest challenges moving forward. A technology-friendly CRP approach first assesses software programs with which students are familiar and interested, and what knowledge will be useful for them in the future.

Recommendation 4: Teach Strategies for Thriving within a Contentious Climate

Legislation will impact the way teachers approach coursework and classroom discussions in which race is a factor. Fearing the loss of their job, teachers will be forced to reshape their curriculum design around what is and what is not allowed. While not unprecedented, the political agendas of individuals in positions of power are influencing decisions which directly impact the instruction of students. This study suggests that students need to be able to discuss with informed authorities they trust what is going on in their lives and what they see on the news and read on the Internet and social media. For some students, teachers are their only reliable resource, and without being able to have these discussions, students may not know where to turn or what to believe.

This study is among the first to document teachers' reaction to legislative involvement in educational content. Teachers in this study expressed concern over the legislation; each teacher remarked that the legislation would in some way impact their pedagogical decisions. Teachers also remarked that if such conversations emerged

organically from the mouths of students, they would not bypass the opportunity to engage them in this way.

Preservice teachers would benefit from being taught emotional regulation skills, as well as pedagogical strategies to mindfully react to current restrictions, such as legislation. They would also benefit from becoming empowered with knowledge about the laws' applicable meaning. Teacher education programs may consider inviting experts in federal and law and the Critical Race Theory. Having such knowledge will diminish teachers' fears, thereby enhancing their social and emotional health.

Instructors from the College of Education may work with faculty members outside the college to build coalitions around these issues. CRP Coalitions could extend beyond the university campus and directly connect with K-12 students in non-school youth-involved nonprofits. By collaborating with non-profit agencies outside of legislative reach, future teachers would have the opportunity to practice what they have learned about CCC topics. Teacher programs could apply for grant funding and run CRT workshops within the community.

Higher education programs are in a rarified position of enjoying intellectual rights and philosophical freedoms being thwarted within K-12 schools. Both current and future teachers would benefit from developing creative solutions in how to address topics around race and teach historical events to their students without fearing for their jobs. By prioritizing critical thinking and self-reflection in teacher education programs, future teachers should start by addressing and examining their own biases. The political agendas of governmental agencies may have the legal right to infiltrate schools and legislate what teachers are allowed to discuss in the classroom, but what they cannot do

is legislate critical thinking. Critical thinking and self-reflection skills provide students the power to decide for themselves what is and what is not true in American history.

Cassandra discussed her hesitancy about discussing certain topics in class because of the legislation, but also a stronger inclination to find a way to engage her students in this way. “I don’t want to stop having these conversations because they need it. I need it.” Joaquin felt more confident about his future approach because of the structured relationship he has established with his students. “If I just build good rapport and a good community with my students, I don’t think it will be too much of an issue.” Abigail worried that the legislation would negatively impact her relationship with her students. “I would feel like I’m lying to my kids and I definitely don’t want to do that.”

Conclusion: The CCC and the New Normal

Due to realities generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, traditional benchmarks by which educational standards are formed are now irrelevant. “[The pandemic] will be the new reference point for the evolution of public schooling, and changes as a result of COVID-19 will be more rapid and far-reaching than any measures of the past 37 years,” said education reform scholar John M. Mclaughlin. Pre-COVID education is as much a victim of the virus as the millions of lives lost because of it.

Teacher education programs should evolve by addressing longstanding social inequities for students and teachers with new and innovative ideas. The implications of this study are that not only should CRP be applied throughout teacher education programs, but programs must restructure and re-prioritize their mission to align with social action ideals such as the domains put forth in the CCC framework. As political agendas infiltrate

education, teacher education programs are becoming one of the last institutions in which principles of progress and change are upheld.

While everyone has in some way been impacted by the pandemic, the pandemic has impacted everyone differently. Unless and until the question of *why* certain populations are being more adversely affected than others is addressed, the social pandemic of racism will continue to persist. In the 2020 Institute for Urban Education Conference, “Education in a Post-Pandemic World”, Dr. Gloria Ladson Billings quoted author and activist Arundhati Roy:

Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.

Despite being unprepared and despite the myriad of challenges they encountered, none of the teachers in this study expressed hesitations about remaining a classroom instructor. Teachers discussed at length how much they looked forward to the next opportunity to engage with their students in person. Teacher education programs should consider applying a strengths-based perspective and capitalize on the pandemic learning gained versus dwelling on what has been lost as they redesign a vision of a new - more critically and culturally conscious - normal for teachers and students.

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Appendix A

List of Abbreviations

BIPOC – Black, Indigenous and People of Color

CCC – Critical Cultural Consciousness

CRP – Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

FPT – Federal Poverty Threshold

RJE – Restorative Justice Education

Note about Use of Key Terms

This study utilizes terminology reflecting a strengths-based perspective. A strengths-based perspective is an attempt to avoid language further victimizing under-resourced populations of people (Wilding & Griffey, 2015). Biased language is a kind of deficit thinking and victim blaming which implies the population being addressed is inherently problematic (Walker, 2011). The essence of a strengths-based perspective is that biased language such as *marginalized* or *vulnerable* or *oppressed* perpetuate the very inequities these terms aim to dispel. The word *minority* implies inferiority to the white majority. In contrast, the term Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) is inclusive and descriptive. Strengths-based terminology is focused on a population's assets and is affirming rather than denigrating, challenging normalized, institutionalized racism rather than validating stereotypes (American Psychological Association, 2021).

Biased Language	Strengths-based Language
Poor/low income/low socioeconomic status/ Economically vulnerable	Below the Federal Poverty Threshold (FPT)
Marginalized/minority population	Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC)
Achievement gap	Opportunity gap or education debt
Disadvantaged/Underserved	Under-resourced or Untapped
At-risk	Justice-Involved

Appendix B

Definition of Key Terms as Applied in This Study

Antiracist Education includes open discussions about white privilege, critical self-reflection, and accountability (Hamilton-Mason & Schneider, 2018). Intersectionality is considered a critical component of antiracist education because it focuses on oppression as a primary factor of multiple inequities and names privilege as the “natural by-product” of oppression (Simon et al., 2021, p. 3).

College Access Gap describes the historical statistical disparity in college graduation rates between white students and students of color. Students of color labeled as low-income are statistically far less likely to graduate from high school than their majority (white) counterparts (Bedsworth et al., 2006; Calabrese, 1988; Flores et al., 2017).

Critical Race Theory is a theoretical framework developed by legal scholars as a lens through which to theorize why racism has endured in society and is therefore immaterial in discussions about instructional content in K-12 schools (Taylor et al., 2009). Antiracist education, on the other hand, describes courses and content which teaches equity and cultural fluency.

Critical Reflexivity refers to the suggestion that when individuals are encouraged to reflect critically on their own personal epistemologies such as their beliefs and cultural backgrounds, dispositional change is more likely to occur. Internalized metacognition precedes external accountability and transformation (Durdin & Truscott, 2013; Rowan et al., 2021).

Critical Theory questions what has been generally accepted as a best practice and may be applied to various contexts. Paulo Freire was the first academic scholar to turn the spotlight on education for its complicit participation in perpetuating oppression throughout American history. Freire compared schools to banks in which, “education becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories, and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits that the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat” (Freire, 1970, p. 72).

Cultural Competence includes awareness of personal beliefs, cultural knowledge of another's culture, worldview, and behavior expectations. Culturally competent individual responds to others in a way that is culturally sensitive (Sue, 2006).

Cultural Consciousness moves beyond multiculturalism by using critical self-reflection as an analytic tool for understanding social inequity (Tervalon & Murray-García, 1998). Cultural consciousness considers culture as fluid and subjective and asks individuals and institutions to hold themselves accountable (Fisher-Borne et al., 2015).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy is a term grounded in the way a teacher displays cultural competence while educating children. Teachers who use Culturally Relevant Pedagogy enable students to relate course material with their own cultural context (Ladson-Billings, 1992).

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy emphasizes “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (Gay, 2010, p. 29).

Deficit thinking is a way of thinking which redirects blame to individuals rather than recognizing a broader societal context influencing individual circumstances. Deficit

theories pathologizes the values and behaviors of a non-dominant group who must be inherently flawed to not be able to assimilate into the dominant culture (Ladson- Billings, 2009; Nieto, 2000).

Education Debt is an attempt to explain the racial achievement gap for low-income youths who have not received the resources or social investment they need to succeed. This phenomenon results in a variety of social problems, such as crime, low wages, and low labor force participation. Education debt implies ongoing public investment with sociopolitical and moral components (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Multiculturalism has been touted in educational research as the solution to academic disparities and cultural disharmony in the classroom since the 1960s (May, 1999). However, a common theme in critical pedagogy literature is that multiculturalism has remained high-minded theory and nothing more, and its failure to deliver on what it has promised lies in either its unwillingness or inability to include racism and structural inequalities in the discussion (Arsal, 2019; Berkeley, 2000; Cole, 1998; May, 1999; McLennan, 2001; Tanemura & Spencer, 2000).

Restorative Justice Education postulates that the American educational system uses punitive discipline as a means of suppressing misbehaviors and assimilating the student population, while reinforcing traditional, mainstream norms. RJE is a critical review of a system designed to perpetuate imbalanced power hierarchies intentionally and unintentionally isolating students (Johnston, 2019).

Strengths-based learning relates positive aspects of students to academic outcomes. The underlying principles of a strengths-based education are derived from research

outside of education, including psychology, social work, and organizational theory (Lopez & Louis, 2009).

Appendix C
Interview Protocol

Name:

Current position title and location:

Name of teacher education program:

Number of years in program:

Number of years teaching:

Number of years out of program:

1. Can you describe your teaching experience so far?
2. What was your student teaching experience like? What schools were you placed in? what were your observations?
3. How do the teachers' background experiences and dispositions enable them to practice culturally relevant pedagogies in an urban setting?
4. What CRP strategies did your teacher education program teach you?
5. Did you find the CRP strategies effective? Why or why not?
6. Which types of supports and resources offered by the school or university help to sustain the development of urban educators and their students, and how can the school and university improve upon the support of urban educators?
7. Would you make any changes to the way CRP is being taught to preservice teachers? Why would you suggest those changes?

8. Did your teacher education program require that you reflect on your own cultural identity and biases? Did you find this helpful? Why or why not?
9. Within your teacher education program courses, did you engage in difficult conversation around race with your cohorts? If yes, have you found that experience helpful? If no, do you think it would have been helpful?
10. When you were in your teacher education program, did you have a diverse group of cohort and faculty? How did the diversity/lack of diversity influence your experience?
11. Did your teacher education program offer any manner of mentorship opportunities? If yes, did you find these opportunities helpful? If no, do you think a mentorship would have been helpful? Please explain.
12. How has your CRP training impacted your decisions on where and to whom you will teach/next steps in your career? Please explain.

Appendix D

Focus Group Interview Protocol

Clarifying questions and common themes:

1. The common themes I found from the individual one-on-one interviews include:
 - 1) Building relationships with students is the most important aspect of teaching, more important even than disseminating content.
 - 2) You felt prepared to teach in a multicultural setting. At least a part of the reason you felt prepared had to do with your own personal exposure and experiences and cultural backgrounds;
 - 3) Culturally Responsive Pedagogy is a pedagogical approach connecting the teacher-student relationship with improved academic outcomes, and centers on teachers developing a deeper understanding of students' backgrounds.
 - 4) The teacher education program introduced CRP at the end of the program (as opposed to throughout).
 - 5) The program focused heavily on "accessing prior knowledge" as a key pedagogical approach.
 - 6) There were not many conversations around race promoted in the program, nor did the program ask student teachers to self-reflect on their own cultural identity and biases, and both of these things would have been beneficial.
 - 7) Student teachers would have benefitted from more CRP and focus on relationship building, as opposed to content-focused instruction throughout the program.
 - 8) The current legislation attempting to ban teachers in Texas from talking about race in the classroom will, to some extent, impact how you approach such conversations, though if it came up, you would address it, and such conversations around very important.
 - 9) Teaching critical thinking to students is important.

2. How did working as a teacher during the COVID-19 pandemic impact your perspective on how to engage your students and what you learned in your teacher education program, specifically CRP?
3. Did the COVID-19 disruption change the cultural dynamics of your students? Are some of the dynamics and strategies and other student engagement strategies you learned during the pandemic going to continue to be important moving forward?
4. What are some academic and non-academic ways to get to know your students and their cultural backgrounds?
5. Please describe some of the resources and methods that you use to teach critical thinking.
6. What are some strategies teacher education programs may incorporate to develop relationship building skills in future teachers?
7. How do you deal with difficult conversations with regard to racial issues with your students?
8. What types of behavior changes do you foresee in the Fall as students are returning to face-to-face after a year of virtual learning? How do you think their behavior will change? Do you foresee any increased behavior problems, and if so, how will you respond to those?
9. How should antiracism be taught in teacher education programs?
10. If you were someone developing a new syllabus for the preparing teachers, what are 3 recommendations for the course content and activities that teacher preparation students should complete?