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Teaching the New Majority : Addressing Race and Racism through Culturally Responsive Teaching

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Teaching the New Majority:

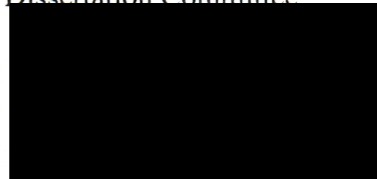**Addressing Race and Racism through Culturally Responsive Teaching**

of

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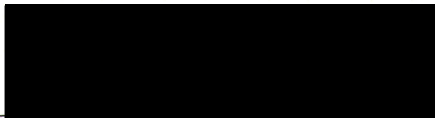
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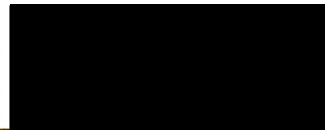Teacher Development

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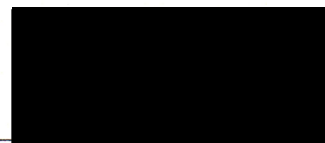
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Abstract

Studies have shown that culturally responsive teaching and its praxis appear very differently in various K-8 classrooms, while addressing race and racism are often absent from the classroom. However, these studies also support that pedagogical theories and practice such as these address the needs of students of color. Therefore, through a critical race theory lens, I explored teachers' life history, how this influenced their classroom practice, and how they addressed race and racism in their professional lives. Narrative inquiry methods were used to uncover answers to addressing race and racism in the classroom through three teachers' culturally responsive instruction. The results indicated that even if a teacher is culturally responsive, they may not be addressing race and racism, and teachers have different comfort levels with addressing race and racism in the classroom. I then provide ways for teacher educators to create and support pedagogy and experiences to enhance this kind of learning for preservice and inservice teachers.

Keywords: culturally responsive teaching, race and racism, narrative inquiry, critical race theory, narrative inquiry

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Thank you to my mother-in-love, who motivated me to keep going because she is almost a PhD herself, and my parents, whose example of hard work from being immigrants to this country, proved to me that hard work CAN result in the accomplishment of many dreams and goals. My husband, Johnathan, without whom this document could not exist. He played the many roles of managing a household and family so I could write, while being the epitome of the definition of a partner, motivating me and challenging me to see this degree to its completion. Finally, I thank my children Jayla, Johnathan J., and Noah, to whom this document is dedicated, because it is for them that I intend to use education to add my contribution to changing the world. Most importantly, none of this endeavor would have been possible without my relationship with Jesus Christ.

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

-Nelson Mandela

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Chapter One

Introduction

Narrative Beginnings

Vignette 1: Experiences of Students of Color

"I want to be a 'cheacher' when I grow up," said Grace, an excited second-grader, her long pigtail braids masking her dark corkscrew curls. A symphony of laughs erupted around her. Like many of the children who came to the United States at a young age and began their education in ESL (English as a Second Language) classes, she mispronounced English words. Her teacher reprimanded the students, calming little Grace's embarrassment temporarily. Looking back at this defining moment, however, she would always remember that she wanted to teach so that all of her students would feel that they are important and that they matter.

Fast-forward to her senior year of high school, when Grace was eighteen and co-valedictorian of her class in a low-income urban district in the Northeast. While she was excited to graduate, she was unsure she would even be able to attend college because of her undocumented status. This scholar-athlete was distraught in the hallway outside her homeroom when asked by one of her teachers about the matter. Fortunately, an administrator contacted his colleagues at a nearby state college to help the young lady with in-state tuition, but she would not be entitled to any of the many scholarships that she was offered.

Between these defining bookend school experiences is the experience of her younger sister, Tiffany, who was easily and commonly mistaken for Italian with her olive-toned skin and loose, light brown curls. One day in second grade, Tiffany was confused by teachers' and administrators' actions after getting in trouble for punching a classmate in the nose. This boy

asked Tiffany, "Who was that that picked you up from school yesterday?" Tiffany responded,

"Oh! My big sis!" This young boy was dismayed at the response, and her young mind

couldn't understand his reaction. She asked him if there was a problem, and he responded,

"That can't be your sister. She's a nigger!" The seven-year old's confusion lay in the fact that

the boy was not reprimanded. Instead, she suffered the consequences. (Extracted from

Memoir, 2017)

Grace's story coincides with many experiences of students of color. Her story is my

story –I am Grace. I experienced all of these things as a racially mixed student in the United

States. My sister and I experienced incidents at school that could have resulted differently or

even been prevented had the teacher and/or administrators enacted culturally responsive

practice. Whether experiencing individual or systemic discrimination practices, as a then-

labeled "minority" student, Grace's school experience informed who she became as a teacher.

This narrative inquiry included similar life experiences of the teacher participants and how

their life histories informed their teaching. As Jeong-hee Kim (2015) states, life histories

serve as a portal to the unique experiences of one person, such as my example. However, at

the same time, life histories are also universal, in that it can be relatable to many.

Vignette 2: Thoughts of a White Teacher

"You wouldn't make a good slave," said the blonde, blue-eyed teacher who was newly

employed at an inner-city charter school. The colleague to whom she was speaking, with long

salt and pepper dreadlocks, was so outraged that she told the principal. When the victim of the

racist comment retold the story to me and several others before a faculty meeting, she exhibited

the same anger. We were soothed by the fact that it had all been resolved and that the faculty

meeting was called to relay the news that the racist teacher was no longer employed at the

school.

The teacher's racist thoughts and microaggression posed a dangerous threat to the students at the school, who were 100% of color. We realized this, and were relieved at the principal's actions. Some might argue, "But she didn't say it to a student," or "Firing her was overboard," or "It could've been handled differently among the adults," or "She misspoke but it doesn't make her racist." The urgency of the needs of students of color, however, leaves no room for any of these proposed justifications and a teacher's skewed mindset can have detrimental effects.

As a student of color, most of my teachers were White. As a teacher of color, most of my students have been of color, but most of my colleagues have been White. In a thirty-year span from student to teacher, the demographics of teachers has remained stagnant, where most teachers are White and middle class (Fasching-Varner & Seriki, 2012). Collectively, as the students of color begin to comprise the majority of students in the U.S. (NCES, 2017), teachers' knowledge and training need to include an adequate reflection of the students they teach. In other words, if most of the students are of color and most of their teachers are White, there needs to be a teacher education response to this cultural incongruence. This study highlighted examples of culturally responsive teaching and how the teachers' life histories influenced these practices. This may serve as one answer to the question, "What can we do we do about these kids?"

A different, more scholarly and informed version of this question, in the form of three research questions, were the guideposts for this study:

- How is the cultural identity of K-8 teachers constructed from their life history?

- How do their life histories influence how they construct culturally responsive

  instructional practices and curriculum?

- How do they navigate race and racism in their professional lives?

More specifically, this precise, identified need for culturally responsive teaching was the basis

for this study. My intention was to uncover habits, characteristics, and descriptions that define

culturally responsive teachers through examining their life histories in order to address the

educational needs of the new majority: students of color.

In this study, I first describe, in detail, the statement of my problem, followed by my

positionality. I then provide a literature review of research studies that have documented how

race and racism have been addressed by culturally responsive teachers over the past thirty years.

To do this, I first define the key terms of race, racism, and culturally responsive teaching. Then, I

explain Critical Race Theory (CRT) through an analytical lens. Next, I describe the themes that

emerged during my examination of studies on culturally responsive teaching through a CRT lens.

I then describe the narrative inquiry methodology and the rationale for its use. Next, my data

collection and data analysis methods are discussed. Finally, I conclude this study with a

summary and implications for further study.

Statement and Context of the Problem

This research study focuses on the ways in which race and racism are addressed by

culturally responsive teachers. Historically, public K-8 schools in the U.S. have inequitably

served the needs of students of color. How can we increase educational equity for students of

color in the U.S.? We have to consider the following three factors to understand the context of

this problem. In the following paragraphs, I examine the cultural incongruence caused by the

contrast of stagnant teacher demographics to changing racial demographics of students and the

ongoing inequitable conditions and practices in the U.S. school system.

Before introducing the shift from minority to majority, I must explicitly define these racial categories. For the purposes of this study, the labels used by the U.S. Census Bureau will be the same throughout, but with some extensive theoretical discussion to follow later in this study. The U.S. Census Bureau which adheres to the 1997 Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for standards on race and ethnicity, has allowed for citizens to self-identify race, as well as the option to choose more than one race, and defines each racial category as follows:

White – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa; *Black or African American* – A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa; *American Indian or Alaska Native* – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment; *Asian* – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam; *Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander* – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands; People who identify their origin as *Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish* may be of any race. (U.S. Census, 2018)

Over the past 20 years, the U.S. demographics have drastically increased the number of people of color. The U.S. Census Bureau (2012) estimates that by 2043 the majority of residents will be non-White and projects that the Latin American population will represent 1 in 3 people by 2060, an increase from 1 in 6 in 2012. The African American population will increase by

1.6% over the same period of time, and the Asian American population is expected to more than double. With this shift, racial groups labeled as "minority" combined would shift to the majority. It will prove eye-opening to view actual statistics from the upcoming 2020 census, but as the student demographic population mirrors society, U.S. schools have already changed as students of color are already in the majority in many districts (NCES, 2017; Turner, 2014; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). These percentages of a newly emerging majority invite a deep examination of what the literature shows regarding how the new majority of students, students of color, are being taught in American public K-8 schools.

At the same time, teacher demographics remain status quo – White, middle-class women. Fasching-Varner and Seriki (2012) share that the National Center for Education Information "estimates that, over the last 20 years, 85% to 92% of the teaching force has been both White and female" (p. 2). This cultural incongruence, or lack of cultural synchronicity, has posed questions regarding teaching practices in classrooms (Hayes & Juarez, 2012; Wright, Gottfried, & Lee, 2017). Beyond the changing demographics, educational and historical research provide evidence that the U.S. educational system is inequitable for students of color (Burkholder, 2011; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings 1994, Lareau & Jo, 2017; 2013; Nieto, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

This teacher-student cultural disparity contributes to the educational racist inequities that have persisted in schools throughout history. As Nykiel-Herbert (2010) writes, "The traditional curricula and instructional approaches in American public schools are, by default, culturally relevant for middle-class, (predominantly) White, (predominantly) Anglo-American students" (p. 3). Delpit (1996) argues, "to provide schooling for everyone's children that reflects liberal, middle-class values and aspirations is to ensure the maintenance of the status quo, to ensure that power, the culture of power, remains in the hands of those who already have it" (p. 28). The

inequity is perpetuated within the teacher-student relationship when they are culturally

incongruent and there is no goal to teach from the students' perspectives but to maintain teaching

from the perspective of White, middle-class values.

In addition, systemic inequalities exist in the U.S. school system (Gay, 2010; Nieto,

2004; Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Lareau & Jo, 2017; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). I define systemic

inequalities as those that affect what will soon be the former racial "minority" student

populations, where students of color have not had equitable access to educational opportunities.

Equitable access is not to be confused with equal access; equitable access involves everyone

receiving what they need educationally, as opposed to everyone receiving the same educational

opportunities (Nieto, 2004). Research repeatedly demonstrates that mainstream students who are

White and middle class are at an advantage and traditionally benefit most from the curriculum,

school assumptions about knowledge, cultural experiences, and school practices in place in U.S.

schools (Nykiel-Herbert, 2010; West-Olatunji, Behar-Horenstein, Rant, & Cohen-Phillips, 2008).

In contrast, students who are not from the dominant culture and socioeconomic class, namely

students of color, have not traditionally benefited from U.S. schools as a whole. Lipka, Hogan,

Webster, Yanez, Adams, Clark, and Lacy (2005) explain this inequitable experience from an

anthropological perspective. They write, "culturally based curriculum is a redundant phrase. All

curricula and pedagogy are culturally based. The real question is, whose cultural knowledge and

practices are they based on?" (p. 369). In other words, the curricula in U.S. schools are already

culturally based, favoring mainstream culture, which is predominantly White and middle class

(Burkholder, 2011; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 2004; Nykiel-Herbert, 2010;

Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Wright et al., 2017). The problem of cultural incongruence of students

and teachers is therefore intertwined with the longstanding inequitable school conditions of U.S.

students of color.

Students of color have historically been omitted from access to schooling since public school systems began in the early 1800s. Although it has been over 200 years of inequitable schooling, *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka 347 U.S. 483* was an impetus to beginning research that focuses on best teaching practices for non-dominant students, in particular African American students (Vavrus, 2008). After the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed, public awareness of school inequities impacting African American students and other students of color increased (Vavrus, 2008). Much of the debate regarding access to schools through racial integration was first priority in terms of educational policy. With the national spotlight on racial integration, occurring for the first time in various U.S. cities during this period, a larger audience was learning about how funding and resources for schools in all African American neighborhoods were lacking compared to schools in more affluent, all-White schools (Kozol, 1990; 2005). In addition, since 1964, more attention has been placed on culturally responsive teaching because of the attention on African American students. Various racial groups began to increase in population due to immigration (Vavrus, 2008), thus beginning the rising number of students of color. This discrepancy in schools continued over time, and into the early 1990s when these data were included in various publications (Delpit, 1996; Kozol, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1995b) citing the need for equality in school, not only for financial and material resources, but pedagogically as well. Because these large groups of students of color were now attending previously all-White schools in rural, suburban, and urban American schools, and because of the documented inequities concerning their school experiences and access to school success (Kozol, 1990; 2005), researchers have established a need for practicing pedagogies that can maximize these students' educational success instead. The urgency to address this

educational inequity has been needed for 200 years; the shift of students of color to the new

majority just highlights the urgency that has been overdue. One area of research and pedagogy

that speaks to this need is culturally responsive teaching (Bondy, Ross, Gallingane, &

Hambacher, 2007; Bui & Fagan, 2013; Culp, 2011; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1995a;

Legaspi & Rickard, 2011; West-Olatunji et al., 2008), which can be described as teaching *to* and

through the student's culture (Bui & Fagan, 2013).

Why Me and Why This Study? Putting It All Together

As an Afro-Latina immigrant, there are multiple layers of racism, classism, sexism,

and xenophobia that have impacted my identity. Whether I experienced it firsthand, or

through the eyes of a loved one, my personal lens of marginalization at different levels

informs this research study. As a researcher, it is essential that I reveal my positionality to this

topic, or emphasize that I have a personal connection to this issue, because they are both the

impetus for my research and also the subjectivity of which I am conscious as I examine this

research. I was once one of the students of color who I am now researching. I am a product of

the U.S. school system, and have experienced firsthand the effect it has on young students of

color.

As a narrative inquiry study, examining my participants' life story interviews will shine

light on their teaching and how it has been influenced by who they are and who they teach. By

nature, life history narratives "develop simultaneously at different levels: the historical, the

societal, and the personal" (Kim, 2015, p. 131). The essence of narrative inquiry and how it

organically mixes the personal with the societal is the reason for choosing this precise

methodology. Furthermore, I share some of my own life history because through narrative

inquiry, the researcher and the subjects form a relationship where although personally separate,

allows them to coexist in the realm of the research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kim, 2015). As mentioned earlier, I self-identify as Afro-Latina which means that although I was born in the South American country of Brazil, my ancestry stems from enslaved Brazilians, similar to the ancestry of Black Americans, who descended from slaves of mainland North America. The captivity and dissemination of black bodies from Africa into North and South America, also referred to as the African diaspora, accounts for the majority population of this region to be descendants of African slaves. Even though both my native country of Brazil and my current country of residence, the U.S., have a history deeply rooted in slavery and racism, the individual and institutionalized racism in both countries are very different. Only well into adulthood did I choose to identify as African. Looking at me, my brown skin clearly demonstrates my African ancestry, however, in the U.S. there is a deeper, more wounded significance behind being African (Du Bois, 1903). In Brazil, even though institutionalized racism exists, colorism also exists (Telles, 2004). Discrimination increases according to skin darkness. Because I am not on the darker spectrum, my experiences with racism as a Brazilian have been few and far between. However, in the U.S., having been socially constructed and divided by Black and White, racism is realized for anyone with any shade of brown skin, individually, and institutionally.

In tandem with addressing the needs of students of color in K-8 schools, culturally responsive teaching, an approach used in various educational settings to address the culture and complexities of students of color who were formerly labeled "minority students," is the other major focus of this research. Ladson-Billings (2017) shared the following in an interview at her current university, when she was asked about coining the term, culturally relevant pedagogy. Her three-pronged approach is the precise highlight of this study:

Culturally relevant pedagogy is premised on three things. One, a laser-like focus on

student learning. Two, an attempt to develop, in all students, cultural competence. What I

mean by that is you help kids understand assets that are part of their own culture, while

simultaneously helping them become fluent in at least one more culture. And the third

piece is what I call sociopolitical consciousness. (University of Wisconsin, 2017, para.

10)

The short vignettes from my personal school experiences serve not only to expose my

subjectivity as the researcher but also to highlight some of the authentic experiences of

students of color in the United States. Ladson-Billings' foundational research in culturally

responsive teaching will also serve as the main focus of this study. These lenses are pertinent

to dissect the problems in K-12 school settings that have led me to examine culturally

responsive teachers currently in the field.

As a teacher for eighteen years who has taught in both urban and suburban K-12 settings,

much of what I witness reflects the motive for this paper: (a) historically in the U.S., school

inequity has existed and not all students have been able to receive equitable school access and

privileges; and (b) there is a clash between the changing demographics of students and the

stagnant demographics of teachers.

Definitions and Key Concepts

Race and Racism

Before delving deeply into defining culturally responsive teaching, it is important that I

deconstruct race and racism, terms that I use to self-identify for this research. Race can be

defined as "the physical, morphological features of humans" (Kim, 2015, pp. 42-43), while

"racial categorization is known to be a social and historical process" (Kim, 2015, p. 43).

However, as a biological definition, race is arbitrary and should be able to stand on its own if

strictly defining it as physical. This poses a problem because of the existence of racism. Simply

because of this, race also becomes a social construct (Burkholder, 2011; Nieto, 2004) because

the categorization of races informs racism. As Priest et al. (2018) wrote: "Racism is an organized

system of oppression built on the social categorization and stratification of social groups into

'races' that devalues and disempowers those groups regarded as inferior and differentially

allocates to them valued societal opportunities and resources" (para 1). Racism is oppression and

exclusion by White people who are dominant and in power of those who are non-dominant and

non-White, historically African Americans, but all people of color in general. Racism exists on

an individual level as well as institutionally. Therefore, the categorization of "races" in itself

creates the basis for racism. This means that without the physical, race categories, racism could

not exist. Moreover, in education, "Race is not simply a benign demographic fact that describes

our students; it is a social force that influences everything that happens in school" (Michael,

2015, p. 16). For these reasons, using a critical race lens by which to analyze culturally

responsive teaching is appropriate for preparing teachers for students of color. Next, I highlight

the ways in which I define culturally responsive teaching for this study.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culture is "multidimensional and continually changing" (Gay, 2002, p. 10) and

necessitates culturally responsive teaching that is non-static. In other words, how we define

culturally responsive teaching needs to continually change because cultures in the U.S. are also

changing. The term "culture" in this paper will be defined from a social-anthropological

viewpoint to mean a person's place in society that encompasses the traditions, customs,

languages, and upbringing (Baldwin, Faulkner, & Hecht, 2006), including "every aspect of

human endeavor . . . thought, perceptions, feelings, and attitudes" (Ladson-Billings, 2017, p.

143). This definition does not include the notion of "culture" as words that are generally used to negatively stereotype people of color (Ladson-Billings, 2006). In addition, culture is "dynamic, complex, interactive, and changing, yet a stabilizing force in human life" and is influenced by "a wide variety of factors, including times, setting, age, economics, and social circumstances" (Gay, 2002, p. 10). For the purpose of this study, I am focusing on the culturally responsive teaching of students in terms of their races and cultures. Specifically, I am examining the teaching of students of color who are African American, Latinx American, Native American, and Asian American and other mixed races typically included as "people of color" (Nieto, 2004, p. 28). From the literature review included in this study, I recognize that the U.S. school culture in general favors White, middle-class values (Nykiel-Herbert, 2010; West-Olatunji et al., 2008). Because of this, many researchers cite the need for culturally responsive teaching to address the needs of non-mainstream students, or students of color (e.g., Bondy, Ross, Gallingane, & Hambacher, 2007; Bui & Fagan, 2013; Culp, 2011; Gay, 2010; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1995b, 2017; Legaspi & Rickard, 2011; Nieto, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; West-Olatunji et al., 2008).

Culturally responsive teaching, in a general sense, is often understood to mean responding to the students' culture as a means of addressing knowledge, learning, and teaching in the classroom. However, also available are more specific definitions that vary in terms of focus and detail (Bondy et al., 2007; Bui & Fagan, 2013; Culp, 2011; Gay, 2010; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Legaspi et al., 2011; Nieto, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; West-Olatunji et al., 2008). Culturally responsive teaching has often shared characteristics with multicultural teaching, equity pedagogy, sociocultural teaching, and social justice teaching (Aceves & Orosco, 2014; Sleeter, 2012). The common thread across all of these frameworks is

the importance of affirming the students' cultural lives to enhance learning while creating a more

equitable school experience. Additionally, these various paradigms encourage high quality

teaching practices and address larger school equity issues. These descriptions seem to serve as a

basis for an appropriate conceptualization through which to define culturally responsive

teaching, but it would be irresponsible not to probe more deeply to examine the principles

described by the most prominent culturally responsive researchers. In other words, despite

reiterations of culturally responsive teaching, such as "culturally sustaining pedagogy" (Ladson-

Billings, 2014, 2017), I am attempting to define culturally responsive teaching in a way that is

not superficial or diluted, and is used in the original way that it was intended (Gay, 2010;

Ladson-Billings, 1995b, 2017; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Culturally responsive teaching is typically viewed as teachers creating classrooms by

making meaning of the students' cultural lives. However, because teachers are predominantly

White and middle class, there is often a mismatch between the teachers' cultures and that of the

students. This theory of teaching and learning was articulated explicitly approximately 20 – 25

years ago when researchers and commentators began calling for equity in schools among

students of color, including students who are Latinx, of African descent, Asian, and Native

American. Two keystone texts, *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools* (Kozol,

1990) and *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom* (Delpit, 1996) were

published at this time exposing inequities at various levels and helping to define this field. Both

Kozol (1990) and Delpit (1996) examined inequitable schooling situations, outlining the

disparities that children of color face in their schools as compared to mainstream students in

more affluent districts. For example, Kozol (1990) approached the inequities differently,

demonstrating the correlation between low funding and the horrid physical conditions of urban

public school buildings throughout various cities in the U.S., thus disproportionately affecting students of color. Delpit (1996) described how students of color are viewed often by teachers and mainstream society through a deficit view, which is counter to the view of critical race theorists who support anti-essentialism, meaning the "belief that all people perceived to be in a single group think, act, and believe the same things in the same ways" (Ladson-Billings, 2013, p. 40). Essentialist positions often lead to stereotyping, which in conjunction with racism, exists in schools as a result of power imbalances in society. Delpit and Kozol increased the public's attention to economic and pedagogical disparities among schools and students of color.

Around the same time, Ladson-Billings (1994) in her seminal book *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children,* published her core research that established the term culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). She observed and recorded the practices of eight teachers of African American students over three years, from which she subsequently extracted a culminating framework for culturally relevant teaching. This work encouraged an adaptation of her culturally relevant teaching framework and expanded the research on multicultural education.

Because of the pursuit to define culturally responsive teaching by original researchers in the field, I offer an additional means to elaborate on culturally relevant teaching by identifying what it is not. This will provide further clarity since there are a variety of versions of culturally responsive teaching since its inception. Sleeter (2012) claims that culturally responsive teaching does not comprise "cultural celebration, trivialization, essentializing culture, and substituting cultural for political analysis of inequalities" (p. 568). Unfortunately, too often by and large, schools do attempt to be culturally responsive by employing activities like cultural celebration days that are separate from their learning and assessments. For example, once a year, a school

may have a general assembly where classes travel from one country-themed table to another, "learning" facts presented through food and artifacts. Sleeter (2012) would argue that these celebrations would be more culturally responsive if combined with learning in the classroom, rather than enacted in isolation from curriculum. In addition, some schools equate culturally responsive teaching as steps to follow from a checklist. For example, even during professional development that I have experienced myself, culturally responsive teaching was presented as a checklist of what a classroom should look like and what strategies should be used (Georgia Department of Education, 2016). This, again, runs contrary to the conceptions of being truly culturally responsive. Both of these examples are oversimplifications of being truly relevant to the teaching of students vis-a-vis their cultures. Moreover, essentializing culture means attributing your knowledge of a culture or country to all groups within that culture or country, which can quickly turn into stereotyping and homogenizing students and their families by racial groups. Finally, substituting culture for political analysis is ignoring systemic issues affecting students of varied racial backgrounds. Celebrating Black History Month but not addressing racism, in any form, can illustrate this action. In short essentializing culture and substituting culture are opposite to culturally responsive teaching because it ignores critical analysis of social and political properties affecting a particular race or culture (Sleeter, 2012).

Culturally responsive teaching practices. Ladson-Billings' (1995) culturally relevant pedagogy, Gay's (2002) culturally responsive teaching, and Villegas and Lucas' (2002) pedagogy for educating culturally responsive teachers all provide a foundation for the key tenets of culturally responsive teaching. These tenets include: affirming students' cultures, providing high quality teaching practices for all students, and addressing larger societal equity issues.

Affirming students' cultures involves teachers self-examining their cultural lives,

exploring the students' cultures, and situating their cultural selves in relation to their students. Ladson-Billings (1995a) refers to this practice as cultural competence where students' cultures are used as a vehicle for learning. Gay (2002) envisions affirmation as developing a knowledge base about cultural diversity, which deepens the awareness of, or respect for students' cultures and communities. Similarly, Villegas and Lucas (2002) characterize the affirmation of cultures as developing: a) a sociocultural consciousness that recognizes how an individual's culture is influenced by various factors, including race, social class, and gender, and b) an affirming attitude toward students from culturally diverse backgrounds. In practice, affirming students' cultures is a two-way process, where the teacher is culturally self-aware, *while simultaneously* affirming her students' cultures. This approach operates mostly at an interpersonal level because it involves individual interaction among students and teachers.

The second practice of culturally responsive teaching, on a more instructional level, involves high quality instruction that demonstrates care and builds learning communities (Gay, 2002). These practices rely on teachers having high expectations and encouraging their students to think critically (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Ladson-Billings (1995a) calls this teaching that encourages academic success. In addition, Gay (2002) expands these instructional strategies to include using multicultural materials in the delivery of instruction, and enacting different cultural communication means within the classroom setting. She also supports integrating diverse cultural contents in the curriculum at formal, symbolic, and societal levels (Gay, 2002). In other words, teachers should adopt formal curriculum approved by school districts that directly address "controversial issues like racism, historical atrocities, powerlessness, and hegemony" (p. 108). Additionally, teachers need to develop and use symbolic curriculum like "images, symbols, icons, mottoes, awards, celebrations, and other artifacts . . . to teach students knowledge, skills,

morals, and values," such as bulletin boards, images of heroes, and tokens of achievement. Finally, curriculum should be used to critically analyze societal issues like the "knowledge, ideas, and impressions about ethnic groups that are portrayed in the media" (p. 109).

The third culturally responsive teaching practice involves encouraging students to examine society through a critical lens. Ladson-Billings (1995b) describes teachers facilitating students developing a sociopolitical consciousness that invites them "to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities" (p. 162). Gay (2002) also proposes that students should be taught that "knowledge has moral and political elements and consequences, which obligate them to take social action and promote freedom, equality, and justice for everyone" (p. 110). Expanding this practice to the institutional level, Villegas and Lucas (2002) encourage teachers to recognize the social stratification based on wealth and race that exists within the U.S. and is ingrained in the fabric of schooling (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). They contend that teachers can address these issues by developing the commitment and skills to act as agents of change.

Through the examination of a range of conceptions of culturally responsive teaching through the lens of prominent authors in the field, I have compiled a tangible definition by which I have used to select literature for this review, as well as the driving definition for this study. Culturally responsive teaching, for me, adheres to three spheres of criteria: individual, where there is a two-way process of sociocultural consciousness, instructional, where there is a high level of expectations for the students on the part of teachers along with an inclusive curriculum, and institutional, where students are affected by racism and disproportionate actions on a sociopolitical level.

Culturally Responsive Teaching Through a Critical Race Theory Lens

Critical Race Theory (CRT) developed in the 1970s (Tate, 1997) after the civil rights era of the 1960s and is grounded in the claim that racism is endemic in the U.S., the hierarchy of American society is based on structured property rights, and that the intersectionality of systemic racism and property serves as a tool to examine social and educational inequities in order to remedy them (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Sampson, 2011; Tate, 1997). Ladson-Billings (1995a) links racism to property ownership. When land ownership was viewed as synonymous with citizenship in the U.S. in colonial times, an idea inherited from the British by the colonists, African Americans were viewed as property, or three-fifths of a person who were bought and sold as a commodity for working the slave owner's land or in their home. Therefore, this theory deliberately sets out to critique the construction and positioning of race markers and identities of the people this directly affects. CRT has roots in several fields as it borrows from "liberalism, law and society, feminism, Marxism, poststructuralism, CLS [critical legal studies], cultural nationalism, and pragmatism" (Tate, 1997, p. 234). Foundational critical race theorists would agree that CRT emphasizes the concept of intersectionality; that is that race is only one aspect of identity that cannot be examined in isolation of class, gender, sexuality, ability, religion, etc.

Historically, to address race and racism in the U.S., the focus has been, in particular, on documenting and analyzing the African American experience. Throughout postcolonial U.S. history, African Americans have been often viewed by Whites as inferior—from slavery to present day. In fact, cultures other than those that are dominant have been viewed and categorized as deficient and disadvantaged within U.S. society (West-Olatunji et al., 2008). Furthermore, history and research show us that many teachers have employed this deficit view by having low expectations of their students of color, increasing punitive actions for these students, and mislabeling them based on inaccurately perceived ideas of intelligence (West-

Olatunji et al., 2008). These discrimination and deficit lenses are ever present in schools and directly impact the achievement of students of color (Nieto, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Analyzing culturally responsive teaching through the lens of CRT makes sense because of CRT's focus on structured inequalities that exist within the U.S. educational system (Burkholder, 2011; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2013; Nieto, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). As Hayes and Juarez (2012) write:

> Adopting CRT as a framework for educational equity means that our aim is to expose racism in education and propose radical solutions for addressing it. CRT in education makes sense when we consider that the classroom is where knowledge is constructed and distributed; hence, it becomes a central site for the construction of social and racial power. (p. 6)

In the literature review, I use the principal tenets of CRT to analyze empirical studies that use culturally responsive teaching. Two of the tenets of CRT entail the existence of institutional racism and the U.S.'s history of property ownership. Over time, and into the present, the general view of African Americans has transformed from property to citizen, even though some would argue that African Americans have yet to witness full citizenship rights in the eyes of the criminal justice system, as well as other systems that are in place. There continues to exist deep remnants of the structural inequity between more affluent Whites and poorer people of color brought about by historical mindsets encoded into the social fabric regarding the "humanness" of African Americans (Kozol, 1990; 2005). This is evident in various layers of American society (Chetty, Hendren, Jones, & Porter, 2018), including, but not limited to, education. This pattern of thinking is crucial to consider when analyzing education because even today, students of color, particularly Latinx and African American students, experience perceived and actual racism and

exclusion from educational opportunities (Howard, 2001).

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Although CRT can provide a robust analysis of racism in education in general, for the purposes of analyzing empirical articles on culturally responsive teaching, I chose to focus on three key tenets of CRT: (a) racism as normal, (b) voice, or counternarrative; and (c) race as a social construction. These tenets help to shed light on culturally responsive practices that address the needs of students of color.

First, CRT argues that racism is not "some random, isolated act of individuals behaving badly," but instead "the normal order of things in U.S. society" (Ladson-Billings, 2013, p. 37). Most people would argue that racism lies within an individual, whereas CRT scholars believe that racism has continued systemically in various structures and institutions, including education. Next, CRT values the voice or counter-narrative as a powerful tool to contradict the history written by those in power, or those on the "winning" side who have access to social goods and resources. Indeed, it is easy to argue that CRT foregrounds the voices of the marginalized. There are countless research narratives from this point of view that help to generate openness and dialogue across racial barriers, at least within the academic literature. Finally, race as a social construction, has been used to create hierarchy and ideology of white supremacy. Historically, for a very long period of time, even though "biologists, geneticists, anthropologists, and sociologists all agree that race is not a scientific reality," racism is a result of using race to categorize according to physical and "genetic differences like skin color, hair texture, eye shape, and lip size" (Ladson-Billings, 2013, p. 39) to perpetuate marginalization and exclusion based on race. As a result, these three tenets were used as points of analysis to examine the literature.

An initial analysis was conducted on all twenty-one articles using the CRT definition of

the three-part analytic axis of individual, instructional, and institutional foci as a priori categories. This initial analysis strongly suggests that culturally responsive teaching, although a popular term used by many educational researchers, is inconsistently developed among these studies. I then examined which articles only adhered to one, a combination of two, or all three angles of analysis – individual, instructional, and institutional because I was most interested in a complex understanding of culturally responsive teaching and how this played out in classrooms. Only twelve of these studies supported all three axes. The remaining nine articles from the original pool could be classified as adhering to only one angle or a combination of two. At first, I was interested in analyzing only articles containing all three angles, so I only focused on scrutinizing only those twelve articles. However, I quickly realized that this analysis would demonstrate a slim account of the literature, so I decided to include the other nine studies that only partially represented culturally responsive teaching by one or a combination of two angles. This proved a better decision, even though the final analysis only contained nineteen of the twenty-one studies because two (Bui & Fagan, 2013; Chun & Dickson, 2011) were undetermined when analyzing for CRT themes.

This total set of twenty-one articles is as diverse as the participants involved in them as I compared each study for the cultural background of the students, subject matter, and methodological design. Of the twenty-one studies, sixteen focused on African American and/or Latinx students, one on Navajo teenagers, one on Iraqi refugees, and three did not specify race. Subject matter of the studies also varied with preK-12 represented, and a variety of subjects ranging from music and physical education to history and mathematics. There were mostly qualitative studies, with four mixed methods studies also included.

In the initial analysis stage, I used my definition of culturally responsive teaching in a

deductive approach to analysis and examined the articles using the three a priori analytic lenses of: (a) individual, (b) instructional, and (c) institutional. I conducted a second deductive analysis by checking for the elements of three tenets of critical race theory outlined earlier: (a) racism as normal, (b) voice, or counter-narrative, and (c) race as a social construction. Finally, within those categories, I looked for patterns or themes to emerge inductively (Merriam, 2009). Analytic memos and reflexive writing assisted in creating a table from which to draw my conclusions. The themes that emerged are discussed in the next section.

Addressing Racism as Normal in the Classroom

"I just figure that's [racism is] the way it's going to be because they're [White people are] going to take care of each other regardless. They have the good old boys. They don't care what you know, who you know or whatever" (Roberts, 2010, p. 459). This statement, by one of the participants in the Roberts' study (2010), exemplifies the first tenet of CRT which describes racism as normal, endemic, or a fabric of U.S. society, legally, culturally, and psychologically (Tate, 1997). Institutional racism affects all people of color because racism is present in the fabric of entities like our justice system and education. Accepted forms of racism plague schools through lack of funding, lower quality education, less qualified teachers, and policy that perpetuates these and other institutionalized practices. However, some Americans, including educators, do not accept the existence of institutionalized racism. Critical race theorists suggest that to improve educational quality for all students, this tenet needs to be addressed explicitly, as well as be the first step toward eradicating racism systemically. This tenet is present in sixteen of the twenty-one studies but in different ways.

Twelve different studies (Boyd et al., 2011; Camangian, 2010; Clarkson & Johnstone, 2011; Copenhaver, 2001; Epstein et al., 2011; Gordon et al., 2009; Roberts, 2010; Sampson &

Garrison-Wade, 2011; Sheets, 1995; Wallace & Brand, 2012; Ware, 2006; West-Olatunji et al.,

2008), did, in fact, include a focus on racism as normalized. Themes identified across these

studies included how students were encouraged to recognize racism in society through the

teachers' instructional practice strategies or teachers' practices disrupted racism directly, where

teachers' marginalized selves and racial identities transcended into their lessons, where critical

texts were used to engage in powerful dialogue, and where mentoring was used as a strategy that

beyond the classroom to disrupt racism as normal in our educational institutions.

Instructional practice

In seven studies (Camangian, 2010; Clarkson & Johnstone, 2011; Epstein et al., 2011;

Sampson, & Garrison-Wade, 2011; Sheets, 1995; Wallace & Brand, 2012; West-Olatunji et al.,

2008), the researchers described how teachers' instructional practices addressed racism as

normal in their lessons because schools function from the perspective of White, middle-class

culture, as the aforementioned research indicates. Therefore, acknowledging racism in any way

disrupts the status quo. In the Epstein et al. (2011) study, for example, where the theoretical

framework centers around teaching race and racism to urban low-income African American and

Latinx high school students, the U.S. history teacher reflected, "I don't think you can teach U.S.

history without teaching levels of racism and what role it played not just in the government but

in the social structure of our society" (p. 10). Students were invited to select and explain in

writing, eight of the most important historical events from a selection of twenty-five, which were

inclusive of Native Americans and colonization, migration of Mexican Americans, Asian

Americans in the West, civil rights movement with focus on the Young Lords Party, the Black

Panther movement, women's rights movements of the 19th and 20th centuries, the Underground

Railroad, and police brutality in New York City in the 1990s and today. Through this, students

summarized the experiences of people of color and Whites through U.S. history. These assignments invited students to explain concepts of dehumanization within discussions of race relations, and in one case in particular, slavery. For example, "students described [slavery] as a 'dehumanizing' experience in which Whites justified their power over blacks by portraying and treating them as less than human" (Epstein et al., 2011, p. 10). These students also discussed racism from economic, social, institutional, psychological, political, and legal perspectives. The teacher "presented racism as a complex set of relationships built on systems of racial group advantage and disadvantage" (p. 9). Specifically, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, students' conceptions of the experience of racial groups changed from a focus only on the African American experience with Whites as the dominant racial group to including a diverse set of resilient, racial groups that experienced racism, with continued awareness of Whites as dominant, and finally with some attention to inequity between White men and White women. This culturally responsive example of teaching focused on students establishing a worldly view of racism through history.

From another perspective, Camangian (2010) focused on using autoethnography in the classroom. Students were invited to examine their identities and how they situated themselves as young people of color in society as a critical literacy project for their English/Language Arts class. Two students' autoethnographies were highlighted. The high school student population where this study took place was predominantly African American. The high school teacher's focus on critical literacy and autoethnography, in particular, emerged because of her concern with the tumultuous race relations in the Los Angeles school district where much intra- and inter-racial violence had been occurring because of gang violence. The teacher's choice of autoethnography addressed some of these issues because autoethnographers "(1) examine the

alienating effects of dominant society, (2) explore the connections within and across oppressed

cultures, and (3) theorize strategies for hope and social change" (Camangian, 2010, p. 184). In

her autoethnography, one female student shared her experiences as an African American woman

experiencing misogyny and patriarchy, while the male student expressed contradictions,

pressures, and anxieties that young men of color face. The results indicated that this writing

assignment increased "students' sense of self and positionality in the world, mediated

differences, and fostered compassionate classroom community" (Camangian, 2010, p. 187).

They were able to situate themselves in a racialized environment and negotiate their identity

through their writing.

Sampson and Garrison-Wade (2011) provided another study that focused on instructional

practices that address racism as normal. They examined whether African American students

preferred culturally relevant lessons or non-culturally relevant lessons (Sampson & Garrison-

Wade, 2011). This study, using the conceptual frameworks of CRT and racial identity

development, presented six different lessons, with varied results based on the students' cultures

and the content. The researchers found that African American students preferred the two lessons

that focused on the lives of African Americans, aligning with the two conceptual frameworks

used to analyze the findings. In general, students in this study did, in fact, prefer culturally

relevant lessons and African American students did prefer the lessons that focused on the lives of

African Americans. Because this is not a common practice in U.S. classrooms, whose hegemonic

practice is to teach from the White, middle-class perspective, this culturally responsive lesson

disrupts racism as a normalized practice.

Sheets' (1995) study focused on the academic results of bilingual Spanish speakers in

Washington DC over three years. Through instructional practice, she provided examples of

culturally relevant learning and teaching. In particular, she described instances where students were encouraged to acknowledge racism in society by analyzing Spanish literature and identify themes that "reflected the political and economic unrest in South America, U.S. imperialism, the African American Caribbean influence, and his [the author's] socialistic political orientations" (Sheets, 1995, p. 190). Students were required to identify examples of inequitable power through imperialism, or evidence of racism as normalized, in these communities and contexts. When they discussed inequitable power among cultural groups, and in these cases, racial groups, racism was determined as the main factor for oppression of marginalized groups. In addition, these are topics that are generally not discussed without racism being a part of the conversation.

Wallace and Brand's study (2012) was conducted using the lens of the black inferiority myth that has been passed down through history. Black inferiority myth is based on the false information released by scientists and other philosophers who claimed that Blacks were inferior to Whites. Remnants of this false legacy continue to exist in U.S. society today. The teachers in this study were aware of this myth and therefore to oppose it, they developed culturally responsive instructional practices which focused on race. These middle-school science teachers, teaching in a predominantly White middle-class neighborhood, showed success in the school's science achievement gap through their instructional methods. In fact, the two teachers' life histories, which included experiences with racism, prompted them to teach through a lens of critical awareness (Wallace & Brand, 2012). For example, because she believed that students need to have positive relationships with their teachers, one of the teacher's priorities was ensuring "safe zones" for her students where trust was the foundation of their environment being conducive to learning, while the other teacher also focused on high expectations because she realized the disparity of how her African American students were viewed and treated. All the

teachers in these studies used a teaching philosophy where racism is a normal fabric of society

and they conducted their teaching to disrupt this.

Yet another way that racism as normal was disrupted through instructional practice was

in the study by Clarkson and Johnstone (2011) where an urban elementary charter school,

following an Afrocentric philosophy, through utilizing the principles of Kwanzaa, reflected on

their low standardized math scores and improved them. The researchers found that along with

curricular alignment and examination, the main ingredients that most affected the improvement

of the math scores was the professional development of the teachers, which also centered on the

principles of Kwanzaa, as well as the focus on culturally responsive teaching, and specifically

teaching ethnomathematics – "mathematical techniques used by identifiable cultural groups in

understanding, explaining, and managing problems and activities arising in their own

environment" (Clarkson and Johnstone, 2011, p. 112). These practices disrupted racism as

normal within the school in general, among the staff, and in the mathematics classes. These

choices of instructional practices yielded positive results to improve the standardized math scores

of the students.

In the final study that identified instructional practices that address racism as normal,

West Olatunji et al. (2008) focused on three early childhood educators in different school

settings and their use of culturally responsive teaching in the classroom. This particular study

showed that all three teachers, while being reflective of their instructional practices, were also

culturally aware. For example, one teacher stated, "As African Americans, we have a rich

heritage; therefore, I must present them with a rich curriculum . . . I find it necessary to bring in

lots of literature that contains pictures of faces that look like my children" (West-Olatunji et al.,

2008, p. 33). This teacher was referring to how the faces in the textbooks are unfamiliar, or

predominantly White, so the teacher was challenging this marginalization of children in classrooms whose cultural values and beliefs are not acknowledged. Although this awareness was present in all three teachers' intentions through their research questions to reflect upon their teaching practice, only one of the three teachers showed evidence of this in her lesson. West-Olatunji et al. (2008) concluded that even though there is cultural congruence between teacher and students, teachers were still inclined to teach in ways that are Eurocentric. This finding is essential because while, in theory, the teachers recognized the need for culturally responsive teaching for their students of color, only one third of the participants were able to exhibit this in actual practice. Applying this CRT tenet *in practice*, rather than only in theory or through the teachers' beliefs is the direction that will be most favorable for the new student majority of color.

Marginalized teacher perspective

Another essential facet of this CRT tenet of addressing racism as normal was the recognition of the importance of having teachers of color discuss racism. Three of the studies (Roberts, 2010; Ware, 2006; West-Olatunji et al., 2008) demonstrated that the marginalized experiences of the teachers of color and their own racial identities are important factors for acknowledging how racism is normalized in the classroom. In addition, these teachers drew from their own experiences of discrimination to encourage students to think of ways to disrupt racism as normal in the classroom.

Roberts' study (2010) in particular, stood out because the teachers, while demonstrating their awareness of the prevalence of racism in society and supporting the CRT tenet of racism as normal, felt that African American students "'needed them' to 'tell the truth, be there for them, help them to know, force them to perform'" (Roberts, 2010, p. 458). In fact, all eight African American teachers in this study talked about interrupting racism as normal through

"conversations that may be held between student and teacher or teacher and parent in which a teacher acknowledges that race does make a difference in the realities that are experiences in everyday life and critiques and racialized assumptions based on that difference" (Roberts, 2010, p. 458). Roberts (2010) calls these conversations "political clarity" which addresses an openness to discuss racism. The teachers possessed a critical awareness of racism and made decisions to teach through the framework of teacher care, which adheres to knowing a student's nature, needs, and desires when holding power over them, to best serve their African American students.

Ware (2006), in her study, demonstrated the importance of recognizing racism as normalized as an important part of culturally responsive pedagogy. The two teachers in this study developed curricula that drew from their own strong cultural/racial identities. By doing so, they were disrupting normalized racism as it is not common cultural practice in most American schools. For example, the teachers' strong sense of being African American encouraged them to develop lessons from an African American perspective. One teacher, who sometimes wore African clothing, had students explore and write African American poetry. She also experienced the beginning of desegregation when she began teaching, during which many educators had the commitment to "lifting as they climbed," or reaching back to help those who are in a similar situation that you were once in, which led her to view other members of the African American community as her own regardless of class differences. The other teacher, having experienced desegregation her entire teacher career and gone to a predominantly White college, was keenly aware of her minority status. She encouraged her students to apply to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) by teaching them how to research the schools, and then make charts and brochures. She also possessed a strong sense of African identity by wearing Afrocentric clothing and also chose to "lift as she climbed" by caring for her students as well. Although these

actions, by themselves, may not point to the teachers viewing racism as normal, Ware (2006) contends that communities before and after desegregation "saw education as an important means for collective advancement in a racially biased country" (p. 449). Therefore, presenting racism as normal is evident in the findings of this study based on the experiences of the teachers within segregated schools, communities of which they were a part, and their choice to disrupt the status quo of American schooling by accentuating African American heritage and learning in their classrooms.

West-Olatunji et al.'s study (2008) reappears in this theme of the influence of the marginalized teacher of color perspective because of the lenses of the teachers of color in the study. These teachers were all keenly aware of the marginalization they experienced in their lives and intended to translate this experience to their instructional practice. This awareness was illustrated by one of the participants who shared:

> As W.E.B. Du Bois describes, "the Black person in America has two 'warring souls.' On one hand, Black people are products of their Afro-American heritage and culture. On the other hand, they are shaped by the demands of the Anglo-American culture. . . .Children are marginalized in classrooms that do not acknowledge and affirm their cultural values and beliefs." (West-Olatunji et al., 2008, p. 33)

In other words, because students of color are being taught from the Anglo cultural background, they must adhere to their own upbringing, while juxtaposed into a dominant white American culture. This helps to inform why all three teachers identified the need for culturally responsive teaching through the lens of race because of their own experiences as African American women.

Critical texts

A third identified theme focuses on patterns of the use of multicultural critical texts to

recognize and discuss racism as normal. In two studies, the use of critical texts helps students to

acknowledge that racism is normalized and disrupts the status quo. These studies (Boyd et al.,

2011; Copenhaver, 2001) focus on how teachers use particular texts and videos to open dialogue

with students about how racism is part of society. For example, in the Boyd et al. study (2011),

the teachers used a 1999 video about Dr. King and the civil rights movement, called "*Our*

Friend, Martin" and in the Copenhaver (2001) study students participated in a read-aloud of

Malcolm X: A Fire Burning Brightly by Walter Dean Myers.

After viewing "*Our Friend, Martin,*" students collaboratively created questions to which

they wanted answers about issues of race. Some of the questions were, "If Martin were here,

would he be mad because some of his work has been reversed?," "Why couldn't you have

dreams if you weren't White?," and "Why did White people have to hit us with things if we were

being peaceful?" These questions demonstrate that the students were exploring racial identities

and the existence of racism in the context of the video. Some of the responses were "If Martin

were here, he would not approve of what's going on in the world today," "I didn't like it when

everything was for Whites and coloreds and we couldn't go to the same schools," and "Dr. King

made a lot of changes and some people still do not respect them" (pp. 40-41). These responses

also show how the students explored racism as normalized in society. These questions and

responses, among others, show evidence of the ways the use of these texts help elementary

school students acknowledge that racism is a part of society.

For the primary grade students (Copenhaver, 2001), the Malcolm X read-aloud allowed

them to make connections from their lives to parts of Malcolm's life. For example, Copenhaver

chose a race-related book because she wanted the students to have an open discussion about how

race related to issues in their lives. This was in response to a previous book, where two students

engaged in a conversation asking why one character was sad, and responding, "Because he's Black and wants to be White" and "because White people have money" (p. 345). In this specific study, Copenhaver (2001) intended to expand conversations about race, which resulted in students exploring racial profiling and police violence and comparing these perspectives to the experiences of Malcolm and the civil rights movement.

Beyond the classroom

Beyond the classroom, Gordon et al. (2009) conducted a study that was an outlier to the rest in that it focused on CRT mentoring. This particular program involved helping students to address normalized racism in their daily lives. Focusing on the school community relationships, the mentees were taught by male teachers and had weekly leadership sessions, where the students hosted members of the community who provided instruction in their area of expertise. These methods, in addition to Afrocentric teachings toward a rite-of-passage ceremony where students would be honored at a yearly culminating conference, highlighted the boys' achievements academically as well as the Afrocentric teachings of *Sankofa*, the completion of a community project, and presentations of traditional African dances. These "beyond the classroom" methods were interventions to increase academic success for a group of African American male students by additionally incorporating Afrocentric principles to address the boys' racial identity. This, in turn, altered the norm of racism. This study showed significant results, demonstrating that when students are taught through Afrocentric principles, their identification with their academic success is higher.

Mismatched results

Additionally, there were three studies that did not fall neatly into one of the previous identified themes around racism as normal. The Culp and Chepyator-Thomson (2011) study for

example mentions desegregation, and how the demographics of urban schools have disproportionately higher numbers of students of color, mainly African American students, but only discusses culturally relevant pedagogy, not racism. The Nykiel-Herbert (2010) study explained racially and culturally biased sentiments about Iraqi refugee students but did not label it as racism, nor expand on the sentiment further than as an introduction to the study. Finally, the Abril (2009) study described an example of racism as normalized when a Latinx student criticized a White teacher for handling mariachi music stereotypically rather than being culturally sensitive. Abril (2009) focuses on the discomfort of the White teacher in not knowing how to handle the situation.

Each of these studies displays some common attribute that supports three very essential points of how culturally responsive teaching is viewed by many. First, disproportionate and inequitable situations are discussed as facts but institutional racism is often absent. Next, racism is introduced under a more palpable term but not discussed enough. Lastly, many teachers realize racism needs to be addressed but seem ill-prepared to deal with such topics when organically introduced by students. Through these analyses, we can begin to form instructional strategies to address these issues. Without acknowledging that institutional racism exists, subsequent important lessons in racism in the classroom cannot be addressed.

Voice

The second tenet of CRT is voice, where the counternarrative, or the untold stories are brought to light over that of the mainstream narrative. The African proverb, "Until the story of the hunt is told by the lion, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter," is the most appropriate way to explain this tenet. In U.S. history, most of the stories concerning how things are or have been have been told from the perspective of the oppressors, or those in power. CRT

theorists encourage this view of listening to more stories and voices of the marginalized to

analyze law and society, and in turn influence educators to do the same (Tate, 1997). This tenet

of CRT was the most prevalent, appearing in seventeen empirical studies (Abril, 2009; Adkins,

2012; Boyd et al., 2011; Camangian, 2010; Conrad et al., 2004; Copenhaver, 2001; Culp, &

Chepyator-Thomson, 2011; Epstein et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2010; Nykiel-Herbert, 2010; Roberts,

2010; Sampson, & Garrison-Wade, 2011; Sheets, 1995; Souto-Manning & Mitchell, 2010;

Wallace, & Brand, 2012; Ware, 2006; West-Olatunji, 2008). Ten of these studies focused on the

voices of the students (Adkins, 2012; Boyd et al., 2011; Camangian, 2010; Conrad et al., 2004;

Copenhaver, 2001; Epstein et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2010; Nykiel-Herbert, 2010; Sampson, &

Garrison-Wade, 2011; Sheets, 1995) and six amplified the teachers' voices (Abril, 2009; Culp, &

Chepyator-Thomson, 2011; Roberts, 2010; Wallace, & Brand, 2012; Ware, 2006; West-Olatunji,

2008), while one provided counternarratives of both the student and teacher participants (Souto-

Manning & Mitchell, 2010). It is important to examine studies separately in terms of student

voice and teacher voice because of the differing impact that silenced student voices have versus

silenced teacher voices. Themes from where the students' voices emerged were through critical

texts, instructional practice, and storytelling. Teachers' voices emerged through two themes:

sociocultural awareness of self and/or students and instructional practice.

Student voice

Because U.S. history has predominantly been told by those in power, the result is the

silencing of voices of people of color. This is why the CRT tenet of voice, or counternarrative, is

included for analysis in this review of the literature. The studies in this review were specifically

chosen because of direct student-teacher interaction, rather than focusing on theory or potential

practice. For this reason, I chose to separate the students' voices so the data could be distinctly

analyzed. Some of the themes that emerged were a focus on student voices through critical texts, instructional practices, and storytelling.

Critical texts. The following three studies *(*Boyd et al., 2011; Conrad et al., 2004; Copenhaver, 2001*)* used critical texts to allow for students' voices to be heard. Three studies at the elementary level allowed for students to discuss their experiences with race after listening to a read-aloud about Malcolm X, watching a video about Dr. King, and listening to Marie Bradby's book *More Than Anything Else,* about Booker T. Washington's quest for education. In each of the studies, the book and video prompted conversation among the students. Copenhaver (2001) was able to elicit students' comparisons to Malcolm X's life and other books and movies. For example, "they were also familiar with other stories in which African American protagonists face racism and drew from these stories as they made meaning of our read-aloud text" (p. 348). Similarly, the video about Dr. King (Boyd et al., 2011) fostered critical dialogue among the students, where they devised questions and answered questions. Students' discussion included dialogue such as, "I think that Martin losing his life for us started to open people's eyes and made them want to change and make a difference" (p. 41) and "I would have fought back when the White people were beating the Blacks, but Martin kept his cool and stuck to his word. Violence is not the answer" (p. 42). Finally, Conrad et al. (2004) elicited students' voices through text talk, which is an approach used in kindergarten and first grade to improve students' oral language. Students, in fact, engaged in conversation which included responding to questions like, "How would you feel if you really wanted to go to school or learn to read and weren't permitted to do so?" (p. 189). Students discussed what life was like for Booker T. Washington during slavery. Across all of these studies, instruction was enriched through encouraging powerful discussion at such an early age through the use of these critical texts.

Instructional practice. Through various instructional methods, teachers in the following five studies (Adkins, 2012; Camangian, 2010; Epstein et al., 2011; Sampson & Garrison-Wade, 2011; Sheets, 1995) allowed for high school students' voices to emerge through their lessons on literature, history, and writing autoethnographies.

Through the historical unit on power and racism (Epstein, 2011), students were able to discuss the importance and resilience of marginalized groups, the power of political movements, how White Americans are the dominant group in U.S. history and society, and the difference in power between White men and women. Students were assigned to choose eight of twenty-five important historical actors and events in U.S. history throughout the school year. They completed written responses at the beginning and end of the year, during which the teacher conducted lessons on these topics. One teacher reflected: "I don't think you can teach U.S. history without teaching levels of racism and what role it played not just in government but in the social structure of our society" (p. 10). This teacher delved deeply into a range of historical topics for analysis with her students, producing rich discussion and written responses.

Sheets (1995) allowed for her lessons to uphold a very high standard for at risk students who were native Spanish speakers, but were failing her Spanish courses. She devoted much time and energy to helping students study for and pass Advanced Placement tests in the Spanish language, as well as exams in Spanish literature. Analyzing this literature was the key to hearing student voices in a different study (Sheets, 1995) because before the students participated in the advanced Spanish literature course, their self-esteem was low, but afterward, the local newspaper published the students' success on the college exams, they joined sports and clubs, and no longer felt marginalized. They reflected: "You know, I used to be afraid to walk down the middle of the hall. I didn't belong. I used to touch the wall with my finger or walk around the building on the

outside, even in the rain. But now everybody knows me. They say, 'Hi.'" (p. 188). Gaining

confidence through the experience of excelling on AP exams allowed for the students to feel

empowered, to be more vocal about the change they experienced through this culturally

responsive practice.

A third study (Adkins, 2012) took place in high school English classes where two African

American teachers used literature, specifically *Native Son* and *Romeo and Juliet* to teach

culturally responsive English instruction. Students were held to high standards, teachers used

varied forms of assessment, and recognized student voice by making connections to their lives

through the curriculum. One of the teachers used a traumatic event of one student being stabbed

by another to compare to the rivalry in *Romeo and Juliet*. She led the discussion by challenging

the students to write a play about the stabbing. Some students even challenged the comparison,

saying that the two did not relate. In either discussion, student voices were addressing an event

directly affecting them, through the literature presented by the teacher. Both teachers allowed for

their students to become valued participants in their classroom community. The teacher "wanted

to hear what they had to say and treated their ideas with the same respect she would want for her

own" (p. 78). The teachers valued their students' voices. Relating it to their everyday lives added

the dimension of counternarrative, where it went beyond a typical literature discussion

surrounding classic literature.

In yet a different high-school English/Language Arts class (Camangian, 2010), the

teacher assigned his students to write autoethnographies, where students wrote about their

cultural selves in relation to the rest of their world. The experience of writing autoethnographies

resulted in the students' increased sense of self and awareness of positionality in the world. The

two students in this study were able to share similar experiences of oppression, which allowed

them to realize what society is like as a whole. For example, the female student explained, "I

realized I am a victim of society. My environment. That I am not the only one put into the

marginalized place," while another student added, "We kept hearing about, uh, the White people

treating the Black people wrong . . . The cops, the hospitals, and like, the teachers . . . Even when

shopping. . . That's how [dominant culture] treats our community. Not only Blacks, but

Hispanics, too" (p. 199).

When students in Sampson and Wade's (2010) study were asked to provide feedback on

their preferences on culturally responsive and non-culturally responsive lessons, they shared that

"challenging topics such as racially demeaning terminology can be enriching and stimulating"

(p. 291), when specifically referring to the lesson on the N-word. In addition to enjoying

experientially-based activities, such as field trips, students also shared that their relationships

with their teachers is also important, "We just want to go to school and believe our teachers like

us" (p. 295). This African American student felt a heightened sense of anxiety about being liked

by the teacher. Students wanted to be thought of as capable and smart.

Storytelling/Narrative. In both of these studies (Lee et al., 2010; Nykiel-Herbert, 2010),

storytelling was used so the students' voices could be heard. Through storytelling, the reader is

privileged to hear the voices of groups of students whose stories are not typically heard,

documented, and analyzed empirically. Nykiel-Herbert's (2010) study focused on Iraqi

elementary-aged English Language Learners (ELLs) whose voices went from being stifled to

being heard. In this particular study, low-performance Iraqi refugee ELL students were placed in

a self-contained classroom, and the results showed much growth in language development

compared to the general ELL pull out programs in which the higher performing ELL students

were. Much of this growth was attributed to the students' motivation to participate in

storytelling. One student, Shukriya, was dismissed by her teacher with the statement, "There's nothing in there," but after being in this cohort of students, storytelling was one of her strengths and her English language acquisition blossomed in the new setting. Lee and Quijada Cerecer (2010) conducted their research from two studies on Native American youth in New Mexico and their reflections on teachers and their schools through a sociocultural lens. One of the methods of data collection was storytelling, where Native American youth were able to reflect on stereotypical and hostile situations where they were treated unjustly (Lee & Quijada Cerecer, 2010). They voiced how "teachers and students disrespected them by belittling them, being rude to them, and treating them unfairly in grading and discipline" (p. 201). These preconceived notions of students of color continue to exist, sparking a necessity for more counternarratives to be shared. The Native American youth were asked to share their experiences and because of their negative experiences similar to the one described, more culturally responsive actions were listed as implications from their voices being documented. This is the direction in which support for the voices of marginalized students can increase.

Teacher voice

        In this section, examples of teacher voice and counternarratives are presented and analyzed. This is an essential aspect of the research because the voices of those who teach marginalized students are important. In addition, the need for the authentic voices of people of color, which includes the teachers, can expose issues affecting the communities in which the students reside and educational issues they face. Within this subtheme of teacher voice, two categories emerged by which the teachers' voices were heard: sociocultural awareness of self and/or the students, and instructional practice. One study encompassed both of these.

        Sociocultural awareness. In the following four studies (Culp & Chepyator-Thomson,

2011; Wallace, & Brand, 2012; Ware, 2006; West-Olatunji, 2008), teachers' voices were heard in different ways. The voices of all teachers provide a way of seeing whether or not they have sociocultural self-awareness. As supported in the literature, a teacher's sociocultural self-awareness is as equally crucial as that of the students. Awareness of one's own culture and how one's culture is positioned within the cultures of the students in the class plays a significant impact in teacher-student relationships. In fact, teachers who lack sociocultural self-awareness impact the success of the students.

The physical education teachers in Culp and Chepyator-Thomson's (2011) study were surveyed about their use of culturally responsive teaching and they demonstrated both positive examples of culturally responsive teaching and examples that show how much more work is required. This may be due to their lack of sociocultural awareness of self. The teachers' responses described their ability and comfort with multicultural teaching. One White female teacher stated, "I had no experience with African American students. I grew up in [deleted] County and went to a very rural school. I had no idea of all the games and traditions of their culture. I am now about to infuse their culture in my PE classes" (pp. 244-255). She exhibits a general grasp and willingness to adapt lessons to students of other backgrounds. However, not all responses aligned to culturally responsive perspectives. A male White teacher said, "My lesson plans are directly impacted by ethnic make-up. They are often simple and have to be of lower expectations because if they are too complicated or hard, lessons result in chaos and major behavior problems in the class, which usually lead to physical altercations" (p. 246). While his statement supports an inferiority paradigm, this teacher's voice also informs future necessary research. His awareness of the students' cultures is limited, thus limiting his ability to best teach his students and reinforcing his understanding of his students as inferior.

Three of the studies (Wallace & Brand, 2012; Ware, 2006; West-Olatunji, 2008) shed light on the sociocultural awareness of teachers of color, thus allowing their voices to be heard from a different perspective. The teachers in these studies shared their own sociocultural awareness as it has been shaped by their own experiences with racism. The teachers' interviews in Ware's (2006) comparative case study provided rich cultural information about them. As African American women, and through the racial identity background knowledge they shared, it was evident that these experiences allowed their voices to play a large role in their culturally responsive teaching through care for their students and high expectations. Wallace and Brand's (2011) interviews illustrated the teachers' personal experiences. These experiences shaped their cultural awareness of self, thus informing their teaching philosophies. In other words, had they not had specific cultural life experiences, their teaching would not be culturally informed in the way that it has. Finally, West-Olatunji et al. (2008) had the teachers in their study write cultural biographies, which also helped illustrate their teaching philosophies to include more elements of culturally responsive teaching. While encompassing various methods of inspecting their cultural awareness, the teachers in these three studies clearly engrossed their own cultural experiences into their teaching. Their sociocultural awareness directly informed their educational philosophies.

Instructional practice. Two studies (Abril, 2009; Roberts, 2010) demonstrated teacher voices being heard through their instructional practice, one out of tension because of her lack of experience with racism, while the other as women of color showing care for their students of color because of their experiences with racism. In the first example, the music teacher in Abril's (2009) study struggled with her sociocultural awareness of self through her culturally responsive mariachi lesson with her predominantly Mexican students. Through the tension that she

experienced when students questioned her intentions of being a White woman teaching about

Mexican music, she was able to reflect on her practice. One pivotal point that forced the teacher

to reflect on her sociocultural awareness of herself in relation to her students was when she asked

"Do you think it might be better if a Mexican person were teaching this group?" Her student

responded, "Maybe," which offended the teacher. She continued, "Well, what do you think about

if only Caucasians were allowed to teach classical music? Would that be fair to everyone else?" I

thought about it the whole week . . . and I had a long discussion with my husband about it. My

thought was, 'What am I doing wrong here?'" (p. 86). This tension was a result of the music

teacher intentionally wanting to be culturally responsive by incorporating the music from the

students' culture, but instead made students *more* aware of her as an "outsider". Furthermore, she

"attributed the tension to a lack of expertise in mariachi music rather than her ethnicity" (p. 86).

Her instructional practice allowed for a tension that was unanticipated, but still supporting a

culturally responsive paradigm, just in a different way.

The teachers in Roberts' (2010) study explored African American teachers' ideas of care

for African American students through political clarity, which are explicit conversations about

race and care for the students' futures. These two major themes were extracted from teacher

interviews of their philosophies and details of their experiences, followed by more interviews

that tapped into a deeper understanding of their connections between their work and their life, as

well as personal narratives. These teachers' voices were important to be heard in this study

because they reflected how their own dialogue with students of color is crucial to showing they

care for their students by sharing their own experiences with racism.

Student and teacher voices

The only study where both the students' and the teachers' voices were heard was in the

culturally responsive practices of a preschool classroom (Souto-Manning & Mitchell, 2010) that focused on the storytelling/narrative of teachers and the students. Teachers' voices were heard through narratives to document classroom events, as well as journaling. The data shared in the study paid particular attention to the teachers examining the traditions and holidays of the students and their families. Moreover, the students' voices were heard through dialogues documented by the researchers. Souto-Manning and Mitchell (2010) write: "These dialogues were encounters, conversations, mediated by the world in which its participants (teachers and students) lived, including their classroom, homes, and communities, their cultural traditions and values" (p. 274). The students engaging in this verbal interaction, or type of storytelling about their home lives, allowed for the researchers to incorporate what did not occur in the other studies, which were the voices of the teachers as well as the students.

As a result of examining the tenet of CRT *voice* through the teachers' and the students' perspectives, it seems that creating open spaces for this type of dialogue to continue is valuable for the new majority. Listening to the students, as well as the teachers' racial identity stories allowed for continued conversations on race and educational inequity. In addition, the voices of the teachers who lacked sociocultural awareness, or who continued to need culturally responsive teaching experiences were equally valuable because it demonstrated how much work needs to be done in this area. Voices of the marginalized show us how this is an attribute whose prevalence is vital in classrooms and future studies.

Race as a Social Construction

The third, and final CRT tenet is racism as a social construction, paving the way for various methods of inequity of power in multiple institutions such as law and education. Race here has been conceptualized to categorize, label, and oppress people, thus creating inequities in

power. Concepts such as colorblindness and meritocracy fall under the category of perpetuation

of this status quo benefitting the privileged group, which in American society, is the dominant

race and social class of Whites. Colorblindness (Burkholder, 2011) describes when people don't

see color, or "downplay the significance of race in order to diffuse the impact of racism" (p.13),

but this, in fact, is detrimental. To ignore racism means to dehumanize groups of people.

Meritocracy supports that anyone of any background has equal opportunity to attain power, when

in fact, this also ignores the systemic inequities that exist based on race. White privilege can be

seen in education in more than one way. Some of the earliest educational research focused on the

inferiority of African Americans (Tate, 1997). This inferiority paradigm is the belief that people

of color are biologically and genetically inferior to Whites. There are still remnants of this

pervasive idea in the American educational system today, as will be shown in the empirical

studies below.

　　　Race as a social construction was evident in just four of the twenty-one studies

(Copenhaver, 2001; Epstein et al., 2011; Roberts, 2010; Wallace & Brand, 2012). Although this

is one of the major CRT tenets, appearing in very few educational studies demonstrates that a

commitment to examining race as a social construction is virtually absent in American

classrooms. The issue of racism from the perspective of white privilege is seldom addressed, thus

the power inequity attached to it also remains absent from the curricula. White privilege

functions when the people in power, which in American schooling has traditionally been White

and middle class, are the dominant culture into which all cultures are encouraged to assimilate.

As a result, those that are not of the dominant class are marginalized in a variety of ways.

Because of the shifting demographics and the new majority of students, an increase of research

in this area is needed. This tenet only appears in just 19% of the studies in this review of the

literature which speaks volumes to how it may be virtually nonexistent in American classrooms at present. There is a plethora of reasons why this may be so, one of which may be discomfort with the topic. However, more research would assist in discovering reasons why white privilege and power inequity are not more prevalent in American educational curricula.

One of the reasons Copenhaver (2001) was prompted to conduct her study on elementary students' discussion of racism through the Malcolm X read-aloud was because she found herself in a situation with a colleague who stated, "Aren't you just stirring up trouble? Children don't see color until *we* tell them to." However, her study found quite the contrary because many of the children shared plenty of personal experiences relating to those of Malcolm X. In fact, discussing the read-aloud allowed for a safe space for them to discuss their experiences with racism and inequity of power they had already experienced at an early age. In response to Malcolm's life, the second-graders discussed issues they were already knowledgeable about such as interracial relationships and their tensions, being discriminated against for being Black, memories of distinct differences between African American and White interactions among different families, and unjust criminal justice system because "White people put him [Malcolm] in jail for no reason" (p. 352), gang membership, and domestic disharmony. The White children in the class had difficulty participating in this discussion. As a result of this, Copenhaver (2001) suggested that more research needs to be conducted to include the lack of texts addressing "Whiteness as a race-related issue and examine the role of culture in the responses of White children" (p. 357). This way, various perspectives can be addressed to be inclusive of white privilege.

Roberts' (2010) study, where she interviewed eight teachers to examine how they practice "teacher care" for their African American students, found that many of the participants believed it was up to them, as marginalized teachers teaching marginalized students, to "unmask

hidden faces of racism by exposing and unveiling white privilege and its effects in its various permutations" (p. 458). In other words, part of their ethic of care for their students included "color talk," or "political clarity," as a continuation of the work preceding them after post-desegregation, when teachers at that time, also acknowledged that race makes a difference in their everyday life experiences.

Wallace and Brand's (2012) study of the culturally responsive practices of two middle-school science teachers of mostly African American students also showed evidence of race as a social construction. They found that two teachers' background experiences prompted a "critical awareness of societal constructions of race" (p. 354), linking their upbringing in working class families during the civil rights movement to their ability to understand societal inequities with regards to racism. Both teachers were raised during integration, however, they both had different experiences. As a child, one White teacher's parents chose to transfer her to a predominantly African American school, while the African American teacher grew up in a segregated community, not exposed to many Whites until high school. The White teacher's experience was that of being challenged by her African American peers at school and led to her being accepted, while the African American teacher's experience was "smooth . . . [because] we knew more about White people than White people knew about Black people . . . I think it was through magazines" (p. 358). Because of a socially constructed concept of race, on the one hand, the White teacher had to somehow prove she was on the just side of racism, while the African American teacher already had insight into the White community because of mainstream society, like in the magazines and on TV, which was already constructed to favor Whites. Thus, each woman's integration experience played a large role in their teaching philosophies and practices. In their classrooms, they were operating to disrupt systemic racism, rather than perpetuate it.

In Epstein's (2011) study, a teacher practiced culturally responsive history teaching, where in one unit, she wanted students to "understand that White Americans were a diverse group who perpetuated racism as a means to maintain power" (p. 9). However, even though her units went into great depth about discrimination against Native Americans, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, Puerto Ricans, and African Americans at different historical time periods, she also went in depth about the "diverse" White Americans, which included positive, cross-racial alliances during the women's movement, the Underground railroad, the civil rights movement, and anti-war movements. While the students still examined issues of power and oppression as systemic, they were also able to shift perspectives that not all White Americans consciously or subconsciously perpetuate white privilege and oppression of marginalized people.

In each of the four studies where race as a social construction appeared, there was clear evidence that more work in this area is needed in education. Many teachers expressed uneasiness in addressing racism as a societal norm. For instance, "Some teachers I know confess to me that they don't feel 'qualified' to discuss strongly race-related literature with their students. They feel their lack of understanding about race issues will prompt them to make a mistake of some kind during their teaching. Rather than make a horrific error, they avoid the issues" (Copenhaver, 2001, p. 356). Perhaps for this reason, going into a deeper conversation of white privilege could exacerbate this insecurity. However, I am hopeful that shedding some light on this strand of racism can begin to ignite this conversation in future classroom studies.

My analysis supports that culturally responsive teaching and teaching about racism, in any form, did not coincide through most studies. Of the twenty-one studies, the CRT tenets of racism as normal in the classroom appeared in different ways. Six of the studies demonstrated racism through instructional practice, meaning the source of the teaching of racism woven into

the teachers' lessons were initiated by the teachers. Three studies demonstrated how teachers' racial identities and their personal marginalized perspectives made an impact through discussion in the classroom. Moreover, two studies used critical texts to demonstrate racism as normal in society. In addition, the student and teacher voices were also loudly represented in these data, which is why I chose narrative inquiry for my participants in this current study. Finally, of the three CRT tenets, race as a social construction appeared the least.

Throughout several of the studies, disproportionate and inequitable situations are discussed as facts, but institutional racism is often absent as the cause. For example, in dissecting the issues of racism as normal, many would agree that inequitable schooling situations exist, but the same people, whether educators or researchers, may not agree that institutional racism is the cause of these inequities. Without this vital first step of recognizing the existence of institutional racism, all subsequent findings in this review operate without a solid foundation on which to build adequate research. This is one of the first issues I hope to address in my research.

In a similar way, applying this idea to the three levels of culturally responsive teaching, on an individual level, a teacher examining her culture and how it exists in relation to her students' cultures requires recognition of the institutional system in which her students of color are living. In addition, the school itself is operating under the Eurocentric model, which also requires shifting systemic racist practices with materials, curriculum, testing, and personnel. The recognition that institutional racism is a key issue across a variety of influences on our students of color is the first step.

Too often racism is introduced under a more palpable term but not discussed in depth (i.e., diversity, multiculturalism, cultural, ethnic, etc.). This may be due to the discomfort that teachers feel in addressing race specifically, but the research shows that when it *is* addressed,

discussed, and dissected, students of color feel more understood and affirmed. As a result of these studies, I found that many teachers realize racism needs to be addressed but seem ill-prepared to deal with such topics when organically introduced by students. They feel uncomfortable in these situations but this can only fuel teacher trainers and developers to prioritize to eradicate this discomfort. This was one of the salient findings in my study as well.

As the most prominent theme in this review, inviting the voices of the new majority is a practice that can easily continue and become more frequent. Listening to voices of students of color and teachers of color, as well as non-teachers of color when they talk about their students of color, adds to the mosaic of data we acquire about the students themselves and the teachers that interact with them. Having a well-rounded perspective from both teachers of color and non-teachers of color reveals different dimensions to the data I have analyzed. I was first disappointed to have only three participants, but after methodologically analyzing their data, the findings were exciting.

On the contrary, but equally important, is the result that appeared the least in the studies, which is the topic of white privilege. Addressing this issue in the classroom has great potential to raise awareness of students and teachers alike and yet based on the discomfort of teachers to address racism, it is not surprising that there are even less teachers discussing white privilege. However, this review can shed light on the motivation to prioritize this as well. Empirically examining white privilege in the classroom and how teaching, discussing, and writing about it, affects the new majority and the teachers that work with them is an area of this research that has demonstrated tremendous positive outcomes in the few studies included in this review. This gap in the literature deserves more robust, in depth attention due to its potential in benefitting the new majority.

For these reasons, I examined narratives of three culturally responsive teachers already in practice. The participants were nominated by administrators and the superintendent in a specific northeastern urban/suburban district at any K-8 level. The narratives of these teachers served to highlight characteristics possessed by teachers who adhere to the definition of culturally responsive teaching in this study.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Kim (2015) wrote: "Education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories of teachers and learners" (p. 18). In other words, education is an experience of lived and told stories. Kim's definition of narrative inquiry helps to explain how suitable this methodology was for my study. Narrative inquiry has served three poignant purposes in this study: 1. Assisted me in revealing my lived stories; and 2. Uncovered how I can best tell the stories of my participants; and 3. Provided an avenue for the voices of the participants, their students, and their families to be heard. Since narrative is "a way of organizing human experience" (Kim, 2015, p. 18), my study aimed to accomplish just that: organizing and analyzing the experiences of teacher participants as it relates to being culturally responsive to their students. With a basis in educational philosophy, "narrative inquiry has made a transformative impact in education and contributed to the advancement of education research methods and methodology, curriculum, teaching and learning, and teacher education" (Kim, 2015, p. 19). Furthermore, interviews about teachers' life stories, and how they are retold to narrate life histories, can inform researchers about teachers' personal lives as well as their lives as teachers (Atkinson, 2007). At this juncture, it is important that I delineate the terms "life story" and "life history." Ojermark (2007) explained: "The most common distinction is made between the 'life story' and 'life history', which Roberts (2002) simplified as such: the story is the narrated story by the author/teller, whereas the life history is the later interpretive, presentational work of the researcher" (p. 4). In other words, when I describe "life story," it is the information that has been given to me by my participants, while "life history" is how I have retold their stories for the purposes of this study.

What is Narrative Inquiry?

Narrative inquiry, as a methodology, reflects CRT appropriately in that they both engage in stories of the marginalized to evoke truth and justice. In fact, narrative inquiry, culturally responsive teaching, and CRT are all continually fluid and dynamic. Because of how methodology, pedagogy, and theory intersect, my hope for the study was to create a space for the voices that are missing, while unearthing inequities. With that said, however, some researchers question whether narrative inquiry is used to describe social justice issues or whether it acts as an intervention for social justice (Kim, 2015). According to Rawls (1971), narrative inquiry can serve both purposes. The questions of equality and equity arise when discussing social justice (Rawls, 1971). Equality is having the basic rights as everyone else with equal liberties (Rawls, 1971). Equity is arranging social and economic inequalities so that they are open to all and for everyone's advantage (Rawls, 1971). Even though social justice is not an inherent focus of narrative inquiry, it can and has served the purpose of focusing on social justice (Kim, 2015; Rawls, 1971). Narrative inquiry can uproot stories of inequality and inequity, therefore making it apropos for the context of this particular dissection of race and racism in culturally responsive teaching. Does narrative inquiry result in a description of what is occurring in the field, or serve as an intervention for future practice, or both? As a scholarly documentarian, I have discovered the answer to this question and will address it more in depth at the end of my study because a skilled documentarian allows for the viewer, or in this case, reader, to explore the narrative before meeting its climax, or in this case, coda. For now, I will divulge that this study is more of a description of what I discovered occurring in the field. However, if the results taken from this study are enacted, it becomes an intervention for future practice. Unearthing these narratives sounds like an easy study, but in fact the narrative inquiry process was easy at all. My

methodology, however, served to better understand how complex teaching is in a racist society. I have made several discoveries regarding the promises and limitations of doing this work that I discuss later in this study.

Narrative inquiry is also a way of understanding human experience, or a "collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20). Therefore, the use of narrative inquiry not only enhanced the explanations of the problems in this study, but also served as a research tool and analysis for my participants. For example, Vignette 1, at the beginning of this study, spoke to the possible experiences of students of color through the lens of my own experiences as a student of color. With each of the participants, I conducted two life story interviews, which were completely based on their life and professional experiences. What they chose to tell me was the most important narrative to capture. Through the transcription and analysis, I was able to construct their life histories, with a commitment to maintaining their voices throughout (Atkinson, 2007). I attempted to capture the essence of what has happened to each of them. Through their life histories, I shared an "insider's perspective of . . . a life lived" (Atkinson, 2007, p. 233).

The life story interviews of the teacher participants enhanced how the students of color were truly the central reason for the study, as well as highlighted the symbiotic significance of the lives of the teachers, which has all been informed by my positionality, while at the same time maintaining the perspective of a storyteller who is pinpointing the "living and telling, the reliving and the retelling" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20) of the teachers' stories. In other words, I, as the narrative researcher, not only collected the initial data, i.e., the interview, but revisited the life story of the teacher at different points in the study. Then, I retold their narratives in their final

stages for the purposes of the findings. So, for each participant, I spent quite some time reading

and rereading the transcripts, watching and rewatching the video lessons, checking in and re-

checking in with participants for more and more clarity, listening to and relistening to the audio

of the interviews, focus groups, etc., and typing and revising my texts. This process did not

happen sequentially but in cyclical and spiral forms. It was important to be accurate and

trustworthy with the data because it was not merely information, but the lives of my participants.

However, their lives did not only exist within the constraints of this study; the participants have

lived and told their stories to me, and I have relived and retold the stories in various reiterations

during the study through the collection and analysis. I transferred their life stories into life

history–my interpretation of the data from their stories. My interpretation took on various forms

of interim texts after the coding processes. Finally, and most importantly, the life of the

participant continues well past the end of the research within the pages of the study.

Furthermore, Vignette 2, in the introduction, also accentuates the teachers' roles in the

lives of students of color. The participants were preselected by their principals to fit this study's

definition of culturally responsive teaching. The life stories of how they came to fit this category

were deep and robust and engaged me, as the researcher, having employed various methods of

interviewing, which will be discussed more in depth later in this section. The life history end-

result for the purposes of this study, at this moment in time, demonstrated several eye-opening

findings for the field of education.

Narrative inquiry has a natural foundational connection to teacher education and

development (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). It is organized according to five boundaries, or

tensions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). One must keep in mind that much like culturally

responsive teaching and issues of race and racism, these topics are fluid and changing. Clandinin

and Connelly (2000) wrote: "The purposes, and what one is exploring and finds puzzling, change as the research progresses" (p. 73). Because of the nature of narrative inquiry being based on experience and story, there is no clear, concise definitive definition of narrative inquiry that fits every mold of every study. On the contrary, there are varying characteristics, boundaries, and tensions. The five interconnected tensions are: temporality, people, action, certainty, and context (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Temporality involves how events and things have a past, present, and projected future; "an expression of something happening over time" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 30). With the participants in this study, the life story interviews naturally explored their teaching experiences in the present, what led them there, and their plans for the future, as well as provided a preview of their lives *before* they became teachers. The semi-structured and unstructured interviews assisted in excavating these temporal responses for analysis of patterns across participants. The life story of my participant, Priscilla, is one example of this tension where she repeatedly questioned why her childhood teachers were not making connections across subjects and real-life events, therefore, as a teacher, she strove to provide this for her third graders. In other words, what was lacking in her past, she now worked toward in her present, and planned for in her future, as it related to providing knowledge and experiences for her students.

A second tension involves people, when they, especially in teacher education, are in the process of change, as opposed to their identities being fixed for only the time and space of the study. Again, through the nature of the interview process being open-ended when needed, participants could divulge as much as they felt comfortable with when speaking of their teacher identity. At times, this led to sharing personal characteristics and experiences that inform their teacher identity. My second participant, Anna Mae, is an example of this tension because she

shared that she did not feel comfortable "going off script" until she was approximately six years into her teaching career. This was when she felt like she could be her authentic self and apply her culturally responsive teaching strategies.

A third tension, action, is seen as a narrative sign. For example, a student's performance on an achievement test is a narrative sign because the story only becomes a story when you have the student's narrative background information. Without this, the student's score is merely just a score. It becomes an action when compiled with her life story. The participants' eagerness to be part of this study was the first sign of action. Afterward, all participation, including self-recordings, sharing of journals, willingness to let me into their "world" reflected their action in this study. An example of this would be Priscilla creating a folder in Google Drive, containing everything I requested and then some. This action facilitated my collection of data and it was initiated by her, which I appreciated.

The fourth tension is certainty, which involves the uncertainty that comes along with interpreting circumstances in different ways. What creates certainty is causality. In the example of the student performance on the achievement test, there is an assumed causality that her cognitive level is linked to the performance, thus creating a certain knowledge of the curriculum. Certain links that arose from the interviews and patterns facilitated interpretation on my part, as the researcher. Potentially, this part of the data analysis assuaged concerns regarding the certainty of this study. With the example of Priscilla taking action to provide me with a central shared location for her data, this showed a very important link about who she was as a person and professional. She was a teacher leader in her school, had worked on curriculum and spear-headed ideas for lessons for her grade level. Links such as this helped shape my interpretation of her.

Lastly, context, as a tension, is present all the time, because it is connected to temporality, place, and people. In teacher education and development, this tension allows for objectives to shift focus from teacher to classroom, to student and so forth. In this study, interviews and observations extended beyond the classroom into the school and community. For example, after the focus group session, I stayed approximately an additional thirty minutes talking with two of the participants, discovering even *more* information about them that I would not have unearthed during a more "formal" interview session. Extended time with participants also occurred, although for a more abbreviated length of time of about five to ten minutes, both before and after all "formal" interview sessions with all participants. I wrote "formal" in quotation marks to denote that they were recorded and transcribed interviews, but they were very conversational and laid back.

With narrative inquiry as the methodology, making discoveries related to my research questions has proven to be worthwhile, both for me as the researcher, and I anticipate for those who read this study. As I traveled in and throughout this study, my aim to answer the research questions took on many twists and turns:

- How is the cultural identity of K-8 teachers constructed from their life history?
- How do their life histories influence how they construct culturally responsive instructional practices and curriculum?
- How do they navigate race and racism in their professional lives?

I begin each subsection of this methodology section with a small vignette to illustrate the paths that I negotiated and renegotiated throughout the data collection and analysis process. Each vignette was purposeful and mostly extracted from my reflexivity journal. According to Kim (2015), "one of the reasons for incorporating reflexivity in research is to keep our subjectivity in

check, and make it visible and explicitly in the research process" (p. 250). The vignettes served

to show my transparency as the researcher. I highlight the tensions that exist within narrative

inquiry during these methodological processes. Unearthing these narratives sounds like an easy

study, but in fact the narrative inquiry process was easy at all. My methodology, however, has

served to better understand how complex teaching is in a racist society. I have made several

discoveries regarding the promises and limitations of doing this work that I discuss later in this

study.

Context of the Study

Vignette M1: Journey through Meadowside

> *This study finally began to take shape once I followed my husband's advice and travelled*
>
> *to each school, with paperwork in hand, to redistribute the invitation letters to all the*
>
> *administrators in each building. With the huge responsibility of becoming the narrator*
>
> *for the lives of these potential teacher participants, simply communicating over email did*
>
> *not suffice. I drove to eleven schools and distributed fifteen letters. However, it was not*
>
> *about the quantity of letters that made it into an administrator's hand. Yes, I wanted a*
>
> *good number of participants, which I still did not have two months into the recruitment*
>
> *phase. These "drop-offs" also provided me with the scenic, observational data I would*
>
> *need to incorporate information about the town of Meadowside, the context of where*
>
> *the teachers worked. I discovered several things: (1) Lush front lawns and mansions; (2)*
>
> *Wide, quiet suburban streets with lined with trees; (3) Signs identifying several historic*
>
> *districts throughout the town; (4) A downtown area that would be labeled urban, with*
>
> *varying retail shops and businesses; and (5) Diverse, working class residents.*
>
> *(Reflexivity Journal, May 2, 2019).*

Capturing the context through its own description was imperative because this kind of insight into the location of this study provided more data for telling a story about the context. Narrative inquiry, as a methodology, serves to elicit data through storytelling, where "*telling* is collected through interviews, personal journals, photographs, artifacts, conversations, and so on, and *living* is acquired through living in the research field through observations and/or participant observations" (Kim, 2015, p. 90). In this case, the location was also included. These experiences were retold and relived throughout the analysis of the data as outlined below. The research field, in this study, were the classrooms of the participants within a specific urban/suburban school district in the northeastern U.S., Meadowside. Historically, this town was originally heavily populated by Native Americans, followed by heavy colonization and farmland in the 1700s, with freed 100 African Americans living there by 1850. Around this same time span, Meadowside grew industrially, with many shops, a hospital, followed shortly by schools and a library. Then, a railroad, horses, and by the early 1900s, the first cars. Theaters, sports, country clubs, and other recreational activities, as well as churches were also booming throughout the 1900s. Because Meadowside was a sought after community outside of a large metropolitan northeastern city, several hotels were built in the area for visitors, as well as many mansions for those who settled there permanently or seasonally.

Geographically, this district was made up of many single-family homes with lawns and backyards, with some downtown apartments and multi dwelling homes, many of which were former mansions. There was a high percentage of free/reduced lunch and the district demographics include 40% African American students and 45% Latinx students (NCES, 2019). However, as narrative inquiry dictates that space is temporal, much of the story of the community and the personal lives of the teachers emerged from their life story interviews.

Inevitably, race, class, gender, and power as it related to my participants and myself, did emerge naturally from the research *through* and *because of* narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kim, 2015).

Participants

Vignette M2:

> *So, I have been disillusioned with my study because NO ONE has been getting back to me. But today, I met my first participant–Priscilla (name already changed). It was wonderful. (Reflexivity Journal, April 5, 2019)*

It took three months to finalize my three participants. They were chosen from recommendations through my connection to one specific school district in the U.S. Northeast in K-8 settings. The three-pronged definition of culturally responsive teaching–*individual,* where there is a two-way process of sociocultural consciousness*, instructional,* where there is a high level of expectations for the students on the part of teachers along with an inclusive curriculum*,* and *institutional,* where students are affected by racism and disproportionate actions on a sociopolitical level – was shared in a letter to the superintendent and administrators of that district to uniformly elicit recommendations (see Appendix A). This letter was "casting the net" with the intention of gathering the first larger sample of prospective participants. However, the net brought back three participants in total, after two months of multiple attempts at communicating with administrators in a variety of ways, which included several phone calls to secretaries, an introductory video, a follow up letter dropped off in person, and multiple follow-up emails. The intention of this first level of request to elicit teacher recommendations was clear: the teacher had to fit the three-pronged definition. As stated before, the term culturally responsive teaching has been used in a plethora of ways that I would be remiss to *not* request

teachers based on the definition within this study. After recommendations were made, an

information letter was sent to interested participants to invite them to complete a survey via the

Internet (see Appendix B) to collect more detailed information and permission to contact them to

participate in the study. The final number of three participants in this purposive, nonrandom

sampling (Terrell, 2015) depended on the outcome of recommendations and survey responses.

This sampling was nonrandom and purposive, or intentional, because the participants met the

criteria of being recommended because they have been identified to fit this study's definition of

culturally responsive teaching (Terrell, 2015). They were all female, but from a mix of races,

teaching experiences, ages, and level of teachings within K-8 schools only. In Vignette M1, I

shared that I had to go back and redistribute, by hand, letters to administrators. This was due to

the lack of responses I received from my first method of contact, which was via email.

Participants were selected based on eagerness to participate via online survey.

Positionality

Vignette M3: Who am I?

> *The researcher? The narrator? How much of my voice is important? As I hopped back*
>
> *and forth and swam in and out of my data, the only words that resonated in my brain*
>
> *and in my heart were: "You better do this right because it's your responsibility to show*
>
> *the truth about the identities of these teachers, as well as the truth of your research."*
>
> *Nothing is more important than these two things. (Reflexivity Journal, July 30, 2019)*

As the researcher, I did not consider myself an insider/member with the participants

because there was a gatekeeper to access each potential participant–their principals. In other

words, I entered spaces for the first time and I met participants *because* of this study. There was

no previous established relationship. With that said, narrative inquiry is unique in that there is a

tension in the position of the researcher. I had to become fully involved but also step back to see the participants' stories in the inquiry, as well as place them in the larger context where they all live (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Life story interviews allowed me to fully access the participants, and observations in conjunction with subsequent, peripheral interviews and observations of the school and/or community which provided a vantage point to the larger school and community context. I also worked within a space not only with the participants, but also with myself. My "own unnamed, perhaps secret, stories come to light as much as those of [my] participants. This confronting [myself] in [my] narrative past makes [me] vulnerable as [an inquirer] because it makes secret stories public. In narrative inquiry, it is impossible . . . as a researcher to stay silent or to present a kind of perfect, idealized, inquiring, moralizing self" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 62). This is why unearthing my stories through narrative beginnings was essential through this methodology. I presented vignettes in the Introduction, not only to introduce a narrative style while supporting narrative inquiry, but also to address my own narrative past as a student and teacher of color. Within the context of the study, I used my reflexivity journal as my "sounding board" with my frustrations, insecurities, and worries about what was occurring or not occurring as I conducted the separate steps in the process. At the same time, my positionality required me to reconstruct the presentation of the narratives to be alert to possible tensions between my narratives and those of my participants. Many of these tensions emerged from my third research question about race and racism.

Data Collection

Vignette M4: My YouTube Introduction

> *I'm conducting this short video to give you some more information about my study. It's*
>
> *called Teaching the New Majority: Addressing Race and Racism through Culturally*

Responsive Teaching. I have a letter for principals basically requesting that you recommend any teachers that fit my definition of culturally responsive teaching from my study, which I will include in the comments of this video. (script of video, February 27, 2019)

Data collection was conducted over three months, from initial recruitment to final interview. After IRB approval was granted at the end of February 2019, I contacted eleven principals with a "request to initiate study" email to begin recruiting participants. I then sent a second email with a one-minute video introduction (Vignette M4; see Appendix C) to entice the principals to watch the video, in case they skimmed or overlooked the original email. I met with two principals, who never made teacher recommendations, and two other principals who communicated an appointed date to meet, but those meetings never solidified. After two months and just one participant signed on, as stated in Vignette M1, I printed a similar initial request letter and visited each school personally to distribute these letters in two waves, one directly to principals and vice-principals, and one directly to teachers. So, when I went into each school, I placed teacher letters in their mailboxes and handed administrator letters to the secretaries. After this second in person attempt, I received my final two participants. This process was disappointing at different levels and as noted above, I tried varied methods to try to spark interest from the principals to pay attention to my inquiries.

Data collection consisted of two interviews in person/video call per person; one group focus group interview with two participants in person and one on video call; text messages; email exchanges; lesson plans; lesson reflections, anonymous student work; and video recording by the participant, adhering to IRB permissions to video only the teacher, while not including students' images. Because the participants were local to me, almost all interviews were

conducted in person but because of busy schedules, some video call interviewing through virtual assistance was used. In addition, other methods of data collection were field notes/reflexivity journals; informal conversations before and after recorded interviews; and researcher observation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kim, 2015).

Preliminary forms. Through purposive sampling (Patten, 2012), preliminary form #1, an initial letter of recommendation of teacher participants (see Appendix A), was distributed to principals via email and later in person (see Appendix D), containing a request for any teacher fitting the definition of culturally responsive teaching as explained in this study. However, before disseminating this letter, I went through an introductory process that followed this pattern: email initial request, follow up email with video introducing my study, in person meeting if agreed upon, follow up in person drop off letters to administrators and teachers, and finally follow up emails to anyone who showed any interest from the previous steps in the process.

Those who were recommended and interested, then responded to the letter by completing an online survey, which was preliminary form #2 (see Appendix B). This survey included basic questions where interested participants explained why they would like to participate in the study, as well as demographic information.

A more detailed demographic form (Patten, 2012; Terrel, 2016), preliminary form #3 (see Appendix E), was completed once participants were selected for the study for analysis regarding gender, ethnicity, age, and race, as well as employment information including length of time teaching, grade levels taught, certifications, training, and professional development. I collected this form in person at our initial meeting.

Interviews. There were two phases of interviews per each session with participants: a narration phase and a conversation phase. The narration phase was mostly open-ended and

unstructured (Kim, 2015; Patten, 2012; Terrel, 2016), where I engaged in active listening, did not

interrupt with questions, and simply allowed the interviewee to share based on my initial

questioning (Kim, 2015), which consisted of open-ended, flexible, exploratory questions.

Besides collecting personal data from the interviewee and continuing to establish trust and

rapport, an additional goal for this phase was to formulate questions for future interviews and/or

focus group sessions (Merriam, 2009). The second phase of the interview was semi-structured

(Kim, 2015; Patten, 2012; Terrell, 2016), or more like a conversation, where some questions

were prepared beforehand, but there was room for me to ask follow up questions based on

participants' answers. Specifically, in a semi-structured interview, all questions were used

flexibly, specific data were required from all participants, the largest part of the interview session

was guided by a list of questions to be explored, and there was no specific order to the

questioning (Merriam, 2009). A minimum of two life story interviews per participant were

conducted for each of the three participants. Having multiple interviews increased trust and

rapport between the interviewee and me, which was essential to obtaining the highest quality

data for analysis (Kim, 2015). Please see Appendix F for sample interview questions to support

both structures of interviewing. My life story interviews were embedded with my research

questions in addition to unstructured and semi-structured questions to elicit the entire life story

(Atkinson, 2007). As Atkinson (2007) wrote: "Doing a life story interview is both an art and a

science. Life story interview can be *approached* scientifically, but it is best *carried out* as an art"

(p. 236). He continued: "The life story interview methodology may be more clearly understood

as, and characterized by, the process of one person assisting another in the *telling* of his or her

life story" (p. 238). Another important characteristic of life story is the temporal retelling of how

time–past, present, and future–are being lived by the participant in a recognizable story form. (Atkinson, 2007). Atkinson explained:

> The life story interview is one of the best ways of giving full voice to those who would not normally be heard, to those who might be at the margins of any number of communities, and those whose valuable insights and reflections would not otherwise come to light (p. 239).

In all six one-on-one interviews, I shared with each teacher many moments of agreement, laughter, hopes for the future of education, concerns about current educational challenges, and personal information about our own children. Only through establishing trust and rapport were these conversations able to occur during data collection. These women's voices were a valuable part of education and their work was an important contribution to research.

Focus Groups. After all interviews were conducted, I gathered interviewees for one focus group session (Merriam, 2009; Patten, 2012) in order to elicit more data for triangulation purposes. In other words, I wanted to see if the information shared in the group aligned with what they told me one-on-one. In actuality, the focus group elicited even more data to add to the information I gathered from the one-on-one interviews, as well as substantiated the original data. This focus group met in person, with the exception of one participant, who met through a video call, for approximately one hour and thirty minutes. In this focus group, the participants were invited to discuss opinions and experiences based on my predetermined questions, as well as follow up probing questions (Patten, 2012). In addition to collecting more data, this group meeting served to reveal any changing perceptions within a social setting. In other words, I was in search of attaining the most precise depiction of the participants, looking to see what changed, if anything, when they were asked similar questions in a group setting. Specifically, after the

focus group, I remained in conversation with two of the teachers for at least 30 minutes after the focus group had ended. We discussed everything from restaurants for dinner recommendations to reflecting on the agreements and affirmations that came through during the focus group.

Field data. I collected field notes, emails from participants, and lesson sets, which consisted of a lesson plan, materials, a self-recorded video lesson, examples of student work, and a journal reflection. I requested one lesson set to be submitted. I constructed field notes from observations of the participants' recorded videos lessons. E-mails were initiated by me and responded to in a timely manner by the participants. I was a nonparticipant observer (Patten, 2012), where I observed as an outsider not participating in the transpiring before me or fully interacted with the participants. In addition, I did not have any insider connection to the teachers and/or the school setting because I do not personally know any teacher in the district, nor have I ever worked there.

Data Analysis

Vignette M5: Relistening to hear more

> *Relistening to the tones and inflections in the interviews highlighted the tensions that exist. I relistened to each interview and saw the words in transcripts take on a brand new meaning. It was like listening to the same music album that I've always listened to, but this time, hearing different sounds that I never paid attention to before, thus giving it new meaning. This is what happened when I relistened. (Reflexivity Journal, August 17, 2020)*

There were various sources of tension during this data analysis process. I will start at the beginning, in chronological order. Because "collection and analysis should be a simultaneous process" (Merriam, 2009, p. 169), data analysis began when data collection began, continued

concurrently with the three months of collection from May 2019 to July 2019, and continued

afterward for a couple more months to be flexible for follow-up interview clarification. The full

duration of these processes lasted five months, which included time for composing research texts

for the final stages of this study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), as well as extended time while

these texts were being written to communicate via email for clarification questions. In total, I

began in February, ended in July and continued emailing into the fall of the following year. From

the time transcription ended in the fall, there was much "broadening, burrowing, storying, and

restorying" (Kim, 2015, p. 206) with the research texts. As stated, there was tension and even

insecurity about the honesty and truth that was being conveyed through my participants'

narratives. I toiled over this delicate process and eventually drafted research texts that I would

feel comfortable sharing with my participants for co-collaboration. This was when I began

relying on my reflexivity journal more and more because I needed to reflect on the tensions I was

feeling as a researcher and the tensions that I was experiencing through the relistening of the

interviews and rereading of the transcripts.

All data collected were thematically analyzed as various sources of composed field texts,

which helped me, as the researcher "move back and forth between full involvement with

participants and distance from them" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 80). In other words, while

I was living in the field, I needed spaces from which to separate myself from the participants in

order to analyze. This was done by visiting and revisiting the various field texts. In addition, I

was mindful of the three-dimensional inquiry space that exists in narrative inquiry. This space

pays detailed attention to temporality, space, and social contexts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000;

Kim, 2015). As noted earlier in this study, temporality pays attention to the person as having a

past, present, and future while acknowledging the space, or location of that person, as well as the

social context in which that person exists (Kim, 2015). These spaces need to be considered while

collecting and analyzing all data. In this study, the data being collected included the preliminary

forms, interviews (in person and video calls), emails, video recording by teacher, field notes

from observations, teacher journals, student work, pictures, and videos of lessons. All of these

were composed into field texts, followed by interim texts, which was needed before actually

composing the final research texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Interim texts were used to

smoothly fill in gaps between the field texts and the final research texts (Clandinin & Connelly,

2000). This is where the tensions grew paramount. When I relistened for inflections and tones in

my participants' voices, a few things jumped out at me. One was how passionate Priscilla was

about protecting her students, who have had various experiences because of undocumented

status, or Cleopatra who empathized with her students and got upset when she had advocated for

them, or Anna Mae when she got excited at how amazing she thought her students were. I also

noticed tensions concerning conversations and words that were *not* heard or shared. These are

centered around my third research question about race and racism. When I looked for patterns for

this research question, something interesting happened.

As I read and annotated interview transcripts, as well as analyzed the other data through

thematic narrative analysis (Riessman, 2005), I looked for "patterns, narrative threads, tensions,

and themes either within or across an individual's experience and in the social setting"

(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 132) to then develop a coding scheme (Kim, 2015) to produce

"commonalities that exist across multiple sources of data" (p. 196). Specifically, this use of

paradigmatic mode of analysis (Kim, 2015) classifies general features into general categories.

Then, I coded the data to create larger categories, and finally reported these findings through the

use of chosen research texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I conducted this kind of analysis for

all three research questions, charting quote by quote, and classifying each quote under its representative research question. When I got to the third research question, my coding changed slightly. This is where it got interesting. Instead of coding for words that would directly relate to the research question, I had to look for similar words, or words that stood as "codes." To clarify, when I coded for my third research question about race and racism, the actual words "race" and "racism" were virtually absent from the transcripts. Instead, I looked for "code words" that I knew were representative of the words, "race" and "racism." It was at this juncture that I had to re-live the texts to realize that race and racism were, in fact, present in my findings, just under different words. Khoo (2017) states that people generally do this in order to discuss things implicitly rather than explicitly. In other words, in political discourse, code words are used to share racist undertones implicitly. In the case of this study, code words were not used to hide racist sentiment, but instead not to highlight the presence of racism. It was not that the teachers were using racist talk, but they just did not label certain conversations and interactions as racist. Instead, they used the words I included in my coding: diverse/diversity; Black; White; Hispanic; multicultural; Spanish; bias; colonized; discrimination; and bilingual. Once I used these words to analyze, I was able to find several additional areas worthy of discussion on the topic of race and racism.

Composing Research Texts. Earlier, I referred to myself as a scholarly documentarian, which I define based on the search for a coda (Kim, 2015) or a signature (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) within the research. These are the equivalent of a climax in a film documentary – the most exciting, or noteworthy part of the story. The similarity lies in the data analysis process where I composed the narratives of my participants. The life stories that I have chosen to share to present the life history of my participants cannot be looked at in a sequential, chronological way. I have

constructed, as a result of two interviews from each teacher and a focus group with all of them, their individual experiences in a thematic way, encompassing all the information they shared with me into a meaningful contextual narrative (Rosenthal, 1993). I established a relationship with my participants that allowed for them to understand that I would retell their stories and how I established them into a life history with a thematic topic (Rosenthal, 1993). While collecting my data through two different interviews and focus groups, as well as additional field data, I had no idea what the coda, or signature, or climax of my research was going to be but it revealed itself in the data analysis process, much like when a film documentarian is editing her video footage. She is also unaware of what the climax of the documentary will be as the filming is occurring, but it comes to fruition in the final stages of compiling all the information. This is what happened to me as a scholarly documentarian collecting life stories and composing life histories of my participants. My moment of coda, or signature, happened after I relistened for tensions. Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, and Orr (2009) identified this as reconsidering tensions, or understanding narrative inquiry as a relational methodology. In fact, the tensions that arise are where the problems occur, that are worthy of paying closer attention to. This is how and why I relistened for tensions and they revealed themselves to grow into becoming the coda, or signature, of this study.

Trustworthiness

"Historical truth is not the main issue in narrative. What matters is if the life story is deemed trustworthy, more than 'true'" (Atkinson, 2007, p. 239). My main concern when depicting the life histories of my participants was this very domain. I struggled between focusing on what was "true" versus making it trustworthy. Trustworthiness traditionally encompasses specific ways by which the researcher will establish reliability and validity of the study

(Rudestam & Newton, 2007) to ensure that "others have confidence in the conduct of the investigation and in the results" (Merriam, 2009, p. 210). However, in qualitative research, different terms can be used to establish the same level of rigorous trustworthiness (Kim, 2015): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Merriam, 2009; Terrell, 2015; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). One narrative inquiry method I used to address these factors of trustworthiness was continuing the relational experience between myself and my interviewees to co-construct a collaborative storytelling methodology, where the participant was invited to research, collaborate, narrate, and storytell in tandem with me, as the researcher (Kim, 2015). Each of the teacher's narrative sections were shared with them for feedback and member checking.

Addressing credibility means that the study's results are credible from the point of view of the participants. In other words, the findings should be congruent with reality and reflect how in narrative inquiry the participants are human and their input is being told and lived, then retold, and relived, therefore, multidimensional and ever-changing. I used data triangulation as well as methods triangulation (Patten, 2012) to ensure credibility. By triangulating my data through multiple data collection resources such as lesson sets, field notes, etc., I gained access to corroborating information from my participants' interviews (Merriam, 2009; Patten, 2012; Terrell, 2015). By having my participants engage in a focus group, I triangulated my methods by extracting data from the same group of people using two different methods (Patten, 2012). In addition, my co-collaboration with the participants, a narrative inquiry practice, further strengthened credibility. I also engaged in prolonged and/or persistent observation via video lessons (Rudestam & Newton, 2007; Terrell, 2015) to develop rapport to build trust with my participants. Finally, I conducted an audit trail (Merriam, 2009; Rudestam & Newton, 2007) to

demonstrate "evidence of how the data were reduced, analyzed, and synthesized, as well as process notes that reflect [my] ongoing inner thoughts, hunches, and reactions" (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p.114). My audit trail also consisted of my reflexivity notes (Rudestam & Newton, 2007), which divulged any of my "potential biases or assumptions" (p. 114).

Transferability determines whether one study can be applied to other situations. I have demonstrated transferability by providing thick descriptions of the results, including the participants and settings (Merriam, 2009; Terrell, 2015; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Even though in qualitative research, and more specifically narrative inquiry (Kim, 2015), generalizing from the sample to the general population is not possible (Merriam, 2009), it is possible to transfer from the particular to the universal. For example, my life stories or those of my participants can resonate with the reader and other researchers because of universal themes, evidence, emotions, and experiences. My in-depth descriptions through my collected data opens a way for readers and other researchers to construct meaning.

Dependability addresses how the research findings can be replicated. Even though in qualitative research, replication does not yield the exact same results (Merriam, 2009), "if the findings of a study are consistent with the data presented, the study can be considered dependable" (p. 222). I worked for a dependable study by employing practices used for credibility such as triangulation, audit trail, and co-collaboration with my participants.

Finally, confirmability ensures the researcher's neutrality throughout the study. Triangulation was used through audits, an audit trail, and reflexivity (Terrell, 2015; Rudestam & Newton, 2007), as described above.

In regards to the quality of the narrative writing, Berry and Taylor (2017), as self-study researchers, took up Richardson and St. Pierre's (2005) criteria for trustworthiness in narrative

inquiry. First, "the narrative is credible, lifelike, or believable," which asks if others can identify with the experience. Second, "the narrative is aesthetically pleasing" (Berry & Taylor, 2017, p. 601), or what artistic qualities are being used by the researcher? Whether it is poetry, quotations, or any other form, the writer provides a new insight to the reader by writing in "interesting, complex, and artistic" (Berry & Taylor, 2017, p. 601) ways. Third, "the narrative presents a reflexive self" (Berry & Taylor, 2017, p. 602), which asks: has the researcher critically examined their role as a creator of the information and a product of the narratives as a whole? Lastly, "the narrative speaks to others" (Berry & Taylor, 2017, p. 603), or does the narrative speak to the reader emotionally and intellectually?

I followed these criteria to add to the trustworthiness of my study. Generally, the readers of my participants' narratives will be able to identify with their experiences. Artistically, I used quotations, personal reflections, and vignettes in order to provide an aesthetic experience. My reflexivity journal is quoted throughout the study, in particular this chapter, because it was the part of the process that both frustrated me and taught me the most, which means that I was extremely critical of myself as the scholarly documentarian of these women's lives. I believe that the narratives will speak to the readers emotionally and intellectually. Because of the nature of narrative inquiry, I am looking forward to having dialogue about my study after it is published.

Ethical Considerations

Based on the standard of ethics, as determined by my Institutional Review Board (IRB), the participants were treated ethically, fairly, and respectfully (Kim, 2015; Terrell, 2015). I collected informed consent from participants, which is a written acknowledgement agreeing to participate (Kim, 2015; Terrell, 2015). These consent forms did "include a description of the study, the right of refusal, an explanation of risks and potential discomfort, an opportunity to

withdraw without penalty, and the potential for feedback" (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 103). I also assessed and divulged all risks and benefits of the participants (see Appendix G). Finally, participants were selected based on risk or reward; fair procedures for selection were used (Terrell, 2015). I also kept all data collected and participants' personal information safe and confidential (Kim, 2015).

Conclusion

Narrative inquiry methodology has many variations and methods from which to choose that best fit one's study. My choice to maintain a more qualitative methodology infused with narrative inquiry methods was purposeful to appeal to a larger audience who may not be familiar with narrative inquiry methodology. My study invited three culturally responsive teachers who follow all three–individual, instructional, and institutional–aspects of such practices to share with me as much personal and professional information as they could, which allowed for me to analyze all of it in the most methodological way possible. My intention was to establish a rapport that allowed comfort in vulnerability between my participants and myself. This way, there was honesty and openness, which yielded the most desirable outcomes. As I reflected on my methodological decisions to disseminate preliminary forms, conduct two styles of interviews, join my participants in a focus group, collect field data both in person and virtually, maintain a reflexivity log, and concurrently analyze all of it in reiterations to create life histories and maintain trustworthiness through it all, I realize the enormity of this study, not only in size but in depth. The volume of the final product was measured in page numbers but the depth of where this study could lead may be immeasurable, initially for both my participants and myself, but also in the end, for all those reading the results.

Chapter Four

Findings

In this chapter, I present findings that emerged from analyzing the data I collected from my participants. In each section, I discuss each of the three teachers: Priscilla, Anna Mae, and Cleopatra organized by my research questions:

- How is the cultural identity of K-8 teachers constructed from their life history?

- How do their life histories influence how they construct culturally responsive instructional practices and curriculum?

- How do they navigate race and racism in their professional lives?

In Section One: Life History, I provide a short biography of each teacher and her life history's influence on her culturally responsive teaching. In the second section, I discuss her culturally responsive beliefs, practices, and examples of such, as they fall under specific themes. Within each of the teachers' sections regarding classroom practices, there are two common threads: curriculum and students' families. I explain how each participant used similar strategies for challenging curriculum and prioritizing their relationships with their students' families. Lastly, I analyze their experiences through Critical Race Theory (CRT). Through each life story interview I conducted, I acquired a first-person account of unique, individual life stories, as well as research texts to be analyzed theoretically (Atkinson, 1998). Therefore, as much as each teacher's narrative stands alone, when grouped together and analyzed, all three shed light on my research questions.

Section One: Life History presents the life history of each teacher. Each teacher had a uniquely different life history that informed her teaching practices. For example, two of the teachers, Priscilla and Anna Mae worked in the same elementary school but because they teach

different grade levels, their experiences varied. The third teacher, Cleopatra, worked at a

different elementary school and her experiences too were unique. Each teacher's life was based

on their personal experiences, both in childhood and leading up to the start of their teaching

careers, and these experiences directly informed who she is as a teacher. Priscilla was raised in

New England and realized at a young age, through family and school experiences that she could

change certain practices in education by becoming a teacher. Anna Mae faced obstacles in

attaining educational and professional goals, but this directly affected the kind of uplifting

teacher she has become. Finally, Cleopatra's experience being raised in a country other than the

U.S., then her subsequent experience in higher education in yet a different country, in

conjunction with personal experiences, directly affected the kind of teacher she is today.

Section Two: Culturally Responsive Practice highlights how each teacher's instructional

practices are culturally responsive. From the data, I coded, revisited, and relived the teachers'

interviews and focus groups. From this, I extracted themes for each teacher based on her

culturally responsive practices.

A subsection of culturally responsive practice focuses on how the participants challenge

the curriculum that perpetuates the status quo. Each of the teachers worked against the grain

through the curriculum and the materials they selected and used in their lessons. This act of

challenging the curriculum, a second component of culturally responsive teaching, aimed to

disrupt the status quo by selecting alternate instructional materials that more closely aligned with

students and their cultural backgrounds. In this section, I share specific ways in which each

teacher did not adhere to the curriculum and/or did not use district materials as prescribed.

The second subsection discusses how each teacher prioritizes her relationships with

students' families. This is a practice commonly encouraged and supported in many districts

nation-wide, yet when it comes to incorporating it into culturally responsive instructional strategies, these practices may look and feel different. Each of my participants placed great emphasis on fostering positive relationships with their students' families within their culturally responsive classrooms.

In Section Three: CRT Analysis, I revisit the concepts of race and racism as they apply to each teacher's classroom practice. The teachers in my study talked about racism in different ways. At times they explicitly mentioned the words race and racism, but more often than not they used what I am labeling "code words" for race and racism (Khoo, 2017). According to Khoo (2017), code words are used to engage in discourse implicitly, rather than explicitly. In this particular situation, my participants seemed to use code words because of possible discomfort with the topic (Abril 2009). The words they used that I included for analysis are: diverse/diversity; Black; White; Hispanic; multicultural; Spanish; bias; colonized; discrimination; and bilingual. The terms used most frequently by two of the participants were diverse/diversity. I coded for discussion about race and racism in a roundabout way, identifying code words, and then looking for them throughout the transcripts.

Each of the three participants had unique, yet connected stories based on my three research questions. As the data are analyzed through life history, culturally responsive instructional practice, and race and racism, my intention is that each piece of data emerged as special to represent each teacher, yet salient to contribute to the field as compiled data for future implications. First, I discuss Priscilla.

Priscilla and Her Life History: Seeking Connections and Thinking Critically

Priscilla was my first volunteer. Our conversations, or interviews, consisted of two meetings and then a focus group with all three participants. We also had several conversations

before and after scheduled interviews about her classroom, her students, and several general

topics. For her lesson plan set, she included a video of her reading aloud Beverly Naidoo's

Journey to Jo'burg: A South African Story, a chapter book about a child growing up in apartheid-

era South Africa, and his relationship with his family. Priscilla also shared student work, her

lesson plan, and her reflection on the unit in its entirety. This unit is further discussed when I

share Priscilla's classroom practices.

Priscilla is in her late forties, has short brown hair, brown eyes, and a bright smile that

lights up every time she shares anything related to culture. She has two college-age children and

has been remarried for seven years now. When her children were young, she lived in the town

where she teaches. She currently lives in a neighboring town to her school district.

Priscilla has been teaching for 24 years, and was beginning her 25th year at the time of

this study. She has taught grades second to fifth, and currently teaches third grade. She holds

certifications in elementary K-5, bilingual/bicultural endorsement, and high-school history

grades 9-12 from another state. Her professional development experience with culturally

responsive teaching comes from her bilingual/bicultural endorsement.

She identifies as White and sees herself as a culturally responsive teacher: "I'm White so

. . . you might not know that I'm a bilingual person or that I have a multicultural background or

that I get the kids, you know just by looking at me, obviously" (Int. 2, p.10). She feels it is

difficult for others to perceive her as someone who understands and enacts culturally responsive

practices because she is not a person of color.

Although she sees herself as White, and although her upbringing, as is deeply explained

in her narrative, served as a foundation for her cultural life experiences, she pinpointed that it

was in her twenties when she made a shift in her cultural lens because she married a Colombian,

and made many cultural realizations through raising their two children. Priscilla's early life

consisted of seeking answers to questions that she ultimately felt she *could* and *should* answer

herself. Many times over, she was around people she described as "progressive," or those who

were discussing critical issues affecting other people, so Priscilla also developed this sense to

think critically about injustices occurring in the world. Before discussing these two findings

about Priscilla's identity through her life story, I start with her upbringing. Priscilla grew up on a

hobby farm in a small town in New England. She narrated:

> We had two acres of land with two large gardens. We grew and ate our own produce,
>
> and canned vegetables for the winter. We grew all kinds of things–corn, asparagus,
>
> tomatoes, potatoes, green beans, peas, carrots, strawberries, pumpkins, squash,
>
> lettuce. We had chickens that we used for meat and eggs, pigs for meat, and a cow for
>
> meat. We had bee hives for honey and tapped the maple trees on the property for
>
> maple syrup. We were not self-sufficient; we still went to the grocery store and the
>
> food co-op. We did not sell any products. (Email communication, Nov 20, 2019)

Although Priscilla teaches in a school district considered urban, she uses her farm background to

connect with her students who were also raised in rural areas in their native countries or those

who have worked/work as migrant farm workers. She knows which students grew up on migrant

farms at home, or upon entering the country with their parents, and uses this information in her

lessons across subjects to build background knowledge.

As a gifted student, Priscilla did not have a lot of friends so she spent a lot of time in her

own head because school felt boring. This comprised much of her elementary and middle-school

experience. She shared:

> I remember being in the highest reading group, doing phonics worksheets (boring) half

our handwriting practice sheets (hated it) I didn't have a lot of friends in elementary, a

couple in girl scouts. I had a "best friend" who moved away in 3rd grade . . . we kept

in touch. I had a good friend in 5th-6th grade but then she didn't want to be my friend

anymore. I didn't really have friends in middle school, I remember being really bored

and walking around by myself in middle school. At the end of 8th grade, I moved, and

people signed my yearbook saying they thought I was really nice. At least one girl

apologized for being mean to me. I remember being in some gifted programs. I was in

choir all through school. I read a lot. I would hide in the library in middle school.

Middle school was boring, I had trouble in math, which was boring and I didn't

understand. (Email communication, Nov 20, 2019)

In high school, she moved to a different state, also in the Northeast, and this improved her social

status because she recalled, "When I moved to [northeastern state], my cousin was in my grade

so she was my friend and her friends were my friends" (Email communication, Nov 20, 2019).

She also remembers subscribing to Newsweek and watching CNN before school each day.

She described her community as not "a very diverse community. There was diversity but

not racial diversity and ethnic diversity, some ethnic diversity but not a lot of economic diversity

either–lower middle to middle class" (Int. 1, p. 2). She took a bus to school ten to fifteen miles

away, which she recalled in this way:

When I was little, sometimes the owner of the bus company, Mr. Connell, would be

our sub driver. Everyone called him crazy Connell. There was a boy in my neighborhood

who rode with me and he raised his middle finger and someone said he was going to hell

for that and I probably said there's no such thing as hell. I don't really remember being

bothered on the bus. It was a long and boring ride, high school, too–about 30-40 minutes.

In elementary school I was on "bus 14, second trip" which means I had a p.m. recess until the bus came. In middle school I lived closer, and could bike to school if I wanted, like 3-5 miles. High school [in a different northeastern state], about 10 miles or so. (Email communication, Nov 20, 2019)

When Priscilla thought about the poignant reason she wanted to be a teacher, it was because as a student, she realized her teachers weren't pointing out connections between things. She shared, "There was a lot of sitting in rows, taking notes. I saw a lot of connections between the classes, but the teachers didn't seem to be making them" (Email communication, Nov 20, 2019).

Even though she only realized she wanted to become a teacher in her late high school years, Priscilla often wondered, "Why isn't she doing this? Why isn't she doing that? So, I thought I could do it better" (Int. 1, p. 2). She explained that she had made connections from among several of her teachers throughout her childhood educational experiences. In her later high school years, she also grew interested in political issues, which continued into college as she double majored in history and social studies education. Much of her political interest sparked from her upbringing in Unitarian Universalism, which focuses on the "community, service to the world, equality, justice, justice work, anti-racism work, anti-sexism and homophobia work" (Focus Group, p. 13). As a teenager, she also questioned, "Why are they teaching us this BS history? That's not real, that's not right, that's not what happened" (Int 1, p. 2). Her religion allowed for her to spend "a lot of time around very progressive thinking people." It wasn't a diverse group of people racially, but they were a diverse group of people. Like what the world needs to look like" (Focus Group, pp. 13–14).

Her self-proclaimed social awkwardness from being gifted and her progressive family

upbringing allowed for her to recognize injustices early on. She described her progressive family

upbringing as "rather left wing" (Int. 1, p. 2). Some examples were: "I have early memories of

my parents being 'environmentalists' . . . Reagan was a bad word in our home arguing (at age 8,

mind you) with my conservative biological father about all kinds of things . . . marching with my

parents against nuclear power . . . politics at the dinner table . . . going with my mom to the rape

crisis center where she volunteered . . ." (Email communication, Nov 20, 2019). From

experiencing these non-mainstream views as a child, she was able to recognize discrepancies in

the history education she was receiving. She shared:

> So, there was political talk around the table and newspapers and go to meetings
>
> like beyond war groups or the church. There were groups about talking about
>
> different social issues and I would watch the news on television and argue with
>
> my biological father, who was conservative, and got his perspective on things
>
> and when I went to high school, I went to high school in a different community
>
> but it was similar in background, like it was farming. It was also more diverse.
>
> It was in [northeastern state]. (Int. 1, p. 3)

In this new town, she gained even more ability to question the history she learned in school and

these commitments to pursuing the historical truth led her to want to teach. She explained what

this new environment was like:

> We did more, a deeper understanding of a couple of movements and what was
>
> going on, not social socialist but like more like the perspective of the people
>
> and the perspective of the people who aren't the, you know, like your typical
>
> class is like you know this person became president and that's what he did and

moved on. There wasn't really a talk about people's everyday lives in hell that

affected movements and things. You know, was just memorizing a list and read

a paragraph and answer the question, the end. But this was more . . . deeper. I

was very interested in that and so I became . . . I wanted to go to school to

teach Social Studies to teach kids, high school kids, about like what's *really*

going on. (Int. 1, p. 3)

Now, as a teacher, her goal is to "make those connections for the students and provide connected

materials and point things out" (Int. 2, p. 1).

After graduating from college with her teaching credentials, she decided to go to work

overseas and ended up staying three years. She had always wanted a foreign experience so she

taught social studies to Colombian children in English "at a hoity-toity private school" (Int. 1, p.

6). The two schools where she taught were dual language schools, sparking her interest for

bilingual education, in which she would later seek additional credentials upon her return to the

U.S. But before returning, she had a baby and got married. She credited her bilingual/bicultural

certification training as her foundational learning for being culturally responsive. She also

credited her broadening cultural understandings to her marriage and raising her children together

with her Colombian husband. In describing her beliefs about being culturally responsive, she

stated:

So, a teacher has to understand the culture of each student and do some research and

learn about them and listen to them when they tell you things and, and then use those

things to teach with … make those connections and, and show, show the students that

you see them … and affirm who they are and make sure that … whatever they have is

their home background and knowledge are valuable. (Focus Group, pp. 18-19)

This was her most recent description of a culturally responsive teacher, which also aligns with the recurring theme from her life history of making connections for her students.

Her choice to live in the American Southwest upon returning with her new family from Colombia was purposeful. She chose to move there because a close friend was also moving there with a similar family structure: a new family with a non-American Latino husband. She remembered:

> It'll be great because it's a majority-minority state. Hispanic and Native American and
>
> it is a place that's culturally more in line with our new husbands' culture than
>
> [the Northeast]. (Int. 1, p. 6)

Priscilla and her family stayed for two years but moved to the Northeast to the district where this study was conducted, as a family of four, because the pay in the Southwest was so low. So, she has been in this same, current district in Meadowside for most of her teaching career. She is familiar with many of the issues affecting the community.

Throughout Priscilla's life history, it is evident that making connections and thinking critically are the two major themes that emerged from the data. In terms of connections, she sought these out with friends at school, among subjects that her teachers were not making for her, in her community through her family's affiliations, and figuring out her identity as she developed who she would want to become as a person. Priscilla questioned her teachers throughout her schooling–in particular she wondered how ideas and concepts were connected. She also thought critically about the world and how people were being treated unfairly. All of these experiences effected and informed her teaching. She now creates connections for her students and she seeks information about her students and their families in order to make connections with them. Critical thinking has remained a priority because she works on teaching

her students to use a critical lens of the bigger picture, which I show examples of in Section Two through her culturally responsive teaching where her lessons are centered on equity and social justice.

Culturally Responsive Instructional Practices: Priscilla's Multidimensional Strategies

As stated in the literature review, culturally responsive teaching is not a prescribed list of actions to check off, but as this study indicates, more linked to a variety of life influences including, but not limited to identity, experiences, worldview, and relationships. Priscilla's life history has given us a glimpse of what makes her a culturally responsive teacher. In this section, I highlight some of her culturally responsive instructional practices, which are multidimensional and interrelated. First, Priscilla values funds of knowledge in her teaching as a way to be culturally responsive. The practice of using funds of knowledge invites the students and their families' funds of knowledge from home and community into the classroom (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Moll et al., 1992; Llopart & Esteban-Guitart, 2016). Second, as a bilingual teacher, Priscilla also integrates language and authentic literature that is representative of the students' cultures and is written in their native language into her curriculum. She values bridging the students' identities to school. Third, Priscilla intentionally designs units that address examining social injustices, such as her unit on South Africa, which addresses apartheid-era racism through the eyes of a child. Finally, similar to the other participants, Priscilla described her commitment to challenging the curriculum that perpetuates the status quo as well as forming relationships with students' families in order to bridge the curriculum to the home. In this section, I discuss all of the themes that emerged for Priscilla.

Funds of Knowledge

In her third-grade bilingual classroom, Priscilla gathered information about her students and their families so that she could address as many cultural issues as possible; issues that she could only discover by learning *from* her students and their families. Using these funds of knowledge allowed her to be cognizant of multiple aspects of their identities including race, ethnicity, gender, age, educational background prior to coming to the U.S., and native language. Rather than limiting her focus to just the students' lives, she also attempted to get to know their families holistically, learning about their experiences in their native country and their current situation in the U.S. as far as their economic and documentation status, leading to very open communication from her students' families. For example, Priscilla shared, "Last year, S's father came for spring conferences. 'Sorry I didn't come last time,' he told me. 'I was picked up by the police and put in immigrant detention. Bunch of racists, those cops.' he said" (Email communication, September 6, 2020). Priscilla's relationship with this particular parent exhibits trust and honesty on various levels, which she also had with many of her other families.

In the research, funds of knowledge are gathered through a variety of strategies, two of which were strategies that Priscilla uses. Although she does not do home visits, she has gathered information that families shared voluntarily and she has analyzed the classroom in order to find ways to bridge the classroom to the home (Llopart & Esteban-Guitart, 2016). Often funds of knowledge research is initiated to counter deficit thinking in education by improving the relationship between teachers and students to establish a two-way trust, improve school performance of students included in the new majority, those that are "underrepresented due to low income, racial/ethnic minority status, foreign origin, low fluency in English or being first-generation college students" (Llopart & Esteban-Guitart, 2016, p. 148), and to devise innovative instructional practices. What Priscilla draws most from funds of knowledge are connecting the

families' home life to her classroom, building trust with the families, and improving school performance. Her social justice unit also fell into the category of innovative instructional practice.

Over and over again Priscilla strove to gain a thorough understanding of her students' background knowledge in order to construct lessons that are relevant to the lives of her students and their cultures. She used her students' funds of knowledge because much of what enters the classroom comes from what Priscilla learned from the students and their families. Many of the examples I share highlight this culturally responsive practice.

Priscilla listened to her students' experiences outside of the classroom to think about ways of connecting those experiences to their learning in school. For example, many of her students were from Central America and Mexico and are Roman Catholic, attending first communion classes. Priscilla sought out the knowledge of her students' religious affiliation and the essential contextual information, such as knowing they were in communion class concurrently with third grade, and used it in her classroom practices in both reading and math. She explained:

> They're all wearing the plastic rosary and learning on Sunday that this means something. You're counting and when we had novena, we were doing fractions. So that's like the novena, nine days. OH! Yes, novena. I use a lot of relationships to cultural things that I know. Like, we have this thing, it's called the retell rope. It's on the wall. It's got little knots on it so we compare that to the Rosary. (Int. 2, p. 6)

Priscilla understood that novena in Catholicism is a prayer lasting nine days, with the root word definition being the number nine. By making a connection to novena, the students were able to draw on their own personal knowledge to help them with fractions in the math lesson. In

addition, she created a class manipulative to assist with reading and public speaking, a retell

rope, which resembled a rosary, a string of knots or beads used in Catholic prayer. The retell

rope was used by the students to assist them in recalling story events during reading. These two

teaching practices demonstrated how Priscilla's gathering of background information of her

students, from their cultures, language, and religion, was incorporated into her lesson. By using

these funds of knowledge, Priscilla brought the students' religion, culture, and traditions into the

lesson to spark background knowledge and make connections.

Incorporating Heritage Language

Through her reflections about her teaching and instructional decision making, it was

evident that for Priscilla, being a culturally responsive teacher involved incorporating students'

cultures as well as their native languages into the classroom. She valued the inclusion of native

languages because of her positionality as a bilingual teacher, but also because of the pedagogical

and cultural implications for her students in doing so. Through the use of this poignant fund of

knowledge, the students' native language, Priscilla recognized that having "a lot of culturally

relevant books," "authentic literature," and even "a library in Spanish" benefitted her students.

Besides having texts in Spanish, she was emphatic that these translated texts "be high quality"

(Int. 2, p. 6) and because she herself is bilingual, she appreciated participating in the selection of

Spanish literature for her students (see Pictures S-Z).

PICTURES S-Z

Research supports that engaging in bilingual learning helps students gain knowledge in their

native language which can then be transferred to the mainstream language (Ringbom, 1992). For

example, learning a reading skill, such as finding the main idea while reading a book in Spanish,

because that is the child's dominant language, transfers when the child is reading fluently in English and/or that child's dominant language changes to English.

Priscilla described her role in actively advocating for and curating the Spanish language library for her students. She did this by moving beyond what the district purchased for her class, and adding to the collection herself. Having a rich bilingual collection of literature in her classroom was of utmost priority to Priscilla because they "show different perspectives that are culturally relevant." She shared that she had recently purchased "a new set of books by René Colato Laínez." She continued:

> He writes *René has two last names*. It's a simple story but all the students have two last names so it's related to their culture in particular. It's related to coming here from El Salvador and adapting to a different culture, where they're calling you by another last name. *My Name is María Isabel*. It's the same kind of story, you know on a higher level. We read both. You know but making sure that stories like that are included in what we teach and are the meat of what we teach. (Int. 2, p. 4)

Priscilla understood that when the students share the cultural traditions of an author, they may have a deeper understanding of what they are reading and therefore have a longer lasting effect on them as readers. She also described the importance of the children being represented in literature they read. She believed that when students are connected to the stories, they begin to feel empowered. She made this a priority as part of her culturally responsive teaching.

Priscilla discussed other ways that she tapped into her students' cultures and identities in her culturally responsive teaching. For example, she talked about using their names throughout her math lessons. She remarked:

> I'll use their names in a word problem, their own name . . . whenever I have the

opportunity. Because there's one word problem of the day, I pick a kid from the class and that kid's name is in the word problem instead of whatever name that they give. (Int. 2, pp. 6–7)

This classroom practice exemplified her awareness of the particulars of her students' cultures, including their names which are often not readily used in a pre-packaged curriculum. She explained that incorporating her students' names in the math lessons makes them feel seen.

In order to build an understanding of her students' background knowledge, Priscilla also took her students' experiences outside of school into consideration. She shared, "We draw on their experiences. Some kids came from rural areas where they did farm work or have seen farms so we talk about what they've seen and what they know. So, bring in that background knowledge ALL the time" (Int. 2, pp. 6–7). Priscilla built background knowledge and made connections for her students with every opportunity.

Priscilla also described being aware of the cultural norms of her students. Most of her students were from Central America and Mexico. So, for seating and grouping, Priscilla took her knowledge of their cultures into account. She reflected, "This age in general and certainly in the Hispanic culture, they prefer to meet with friends of their own gender . . . a boys' table and a girls' table because those families would really want that separation (Int. 2, pp. 5–6). She was aware of the cultural norms of her students. This back and forth relational acquisition of data between the teacher and student spoke to Priscilla's life history of repeatedly seeking connections from her teachers. Priscilla was creating connections between the students' cultures, her culture, and the physical configuration of her classroom.

Social Justice Literature Unit

In the culturally responsive literature unit on South Africa that Priscilla chose to highlight, which she conducted during most of my data collection and became her submission as her culturally responsive lesson set, she used several culturally responsive teaching practices. The lesson set included a lesson plan, a video of the lesson, a teacher reflection, and student work. The central text, *Journey to Jo'burg: A South African Story,* is a chapter book about a young Black girl and her brother on a journey to save their family with apartheid-era South Africa as the setting.

In the third grade, students begin to work on reading higher level chapter books. Sometimes this involves the content beginning to get slightly more mature. This was the case with this particular unit, which Priscilla selected deliberately, and without fear to highlight the unit and all the cultural lessons embedded within it. She intentionally hoped to discuss sociopolitical issues with her students, issues occurring in the world that may be affecting their lives.

Within this South Africa unit, Priscilla talked about how her students had made connections to their own lives in terms of being separated from family members in their native countries or having parents who worked odd work hours and having to wait for parents to come home. By having these discussions with her students, Priscilla realized that they could further explore certain concepts and she believed the*y were* cognitively prepared for these higher level concepts. She summarized this perfectly with her statement: "Cause we're always looking for making the cultural connections with the kids so that they understand. [I] you don't build the background information, they're not gonna understand anything you're talking about, [it] makes sense" (Focus Group, p. 4). Even though Priscilla had this realization, she did hold back with certain issues that the unit raised because she felt that they were not ready, as third graders, to be

exposed to certain topics relating to sociopolitical issues. She was very careful to discuss certain issues, but not others. This particular tension will be fully discussed in Section Three: Addressing Race and Racism.

Challenging the Status Quo through Curriculum

Because the U.S. school curriculum is predominantly mainstream, or White and middle class, challenging this curriculum to reflect the needs of students who are majority of color is a culturally responsive practice (Burkholder, 2011; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 2004; Nykiel-Herbert, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Wright et al., 2017). Therefore, this was a common thread among all three of my participants. Each teacher, in her own way, went against the status quo curriculum chosen by the Meadowside district. They did not completely substitute one curriculum for the other, but instead modified, tweaked, and substituted parts as they were pertinent to the students in their current classrooms.

As a third-grade teacher who taught state-tested subjects, Priscilla was very careful to adhere to the standards that coincided with language arts and math. However, her presentation of these standards changed according to what she felt was best for her students because she believed that she could present the standards in a richer, more multicultural way. She also chose to create curriculum projects so she could ensure the outcome for her students through the use of multiple ways to discover what they have learned. These assessments are also more individualized through project-based learning as opposed to traditional question and answer testing. She explained:

> There are a set of standards that I'm supposed to teach in each unit. So, it's like this is
> the historical fiction unit and I chose *Journey to Jo'burg*. There was a suggested thing
> to do, like write postcards from the perspective of the character so that really went

well with this book. I was the one who came up with the project [*Journey to Jo'burg: A South African Story*] and I had done it for a couple of years with my kids before the other teachers came in on it. This year though, we're all doing the same book. Ideally, we want to be doing more of the same activities, not because of the books but more because of to really understand the standards, you have to look at them decide on assessments, give the Common Assessment, see what they did with it, talk about what they did what 'hey didn't do and then as a team that's like the best practices of development. (Int. 2, p. 3)

In other words, Priscilla followed the standards but chooses to use a social justice-themed novel to teach this standard as a means of challenging the curriculum. She also brought her team along with her. If she had followed the prescribed curriculum as is, she could have used the recommended text, which was not social justice-themed. In addition, Priscilla influenced her entire team to teach the given standard through a culturally responsive lens, thus rippling the effect of using multicultural texts to the entire third grade. Using multicultural texts is a priority culturally responsive instructional practice supported across most of the research (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995b, 2017; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

In addition, Priscilla made decisions about the bilingual texts that she includes in her curriculum, another way that she challenges the hegemonic curriculum. Having become fully bilingual because of her family structure and her chosen career as a bilingual teacher, Priscilla understands the value of heritage language in education. She also attempts to be an advocate for her students through the materials she includes. In this case, Priscilla made instructional decisions that went against the status quo because of the decisions for curricular materials made on the level of the Board of Education, parents, administrators, etc. She prioritized the multicultural, multilevel thinking as she discussed the books in her library:

> They are purposely at different levels so the students learn what their level is and what
>
> they should be choosing. They choose books on independent level or easier and when
>
> they do independent reading, their reading what they choose to read. When they're
>
> reading with me, they're reading what I chose for them to read. So, I have these
>
> guided reading sets that are on their reading level, and we're specifically targeting a
>
> skill which is different than the *Journey to Jo'burg* stuff which is really, it's not really
>
> about the skill. I mean it's about the skill retell but my purpose for giving that book is
>
> really to get them thinking and talking about other perspectives of the world and how
>
> that connects to their own minds and how, how people overcome adversity and how
>
> people you know live in different ways. The whole multicultural thing. (Int. 2, p. 4)

In discussing adding multicultural teaching into her units, Priscilla said:

> If all the literature we have has that level of inquiry and discussion, it could be any
>
> book but there are many different books that you can have those conversations about
>
> and teachers always go to those Patricia Polacco, an author that has many books on
>
> culture, on learning differences, even on discrimination that come up. We have a rich
>
> library of books that are good, that don't just, that have a real message, that have that
>
> show different perspectives that are culturally relevant. (Int. 2, p. 4)

She also made sure that the texts are relevant to her students, not just the message. In other

words, she chose texts that her students relate to culturally *in addition to* the lesson, or message

of the book. She cited Polacco as a widely noted author for certain learning differences but she

went beyond these authors to make sure the books in her library were culturally relevant to her

students in particular. Priscilla included two authors from countries shared by her students, René

Colato Laínez (El Salvador) and Alma Flor Ada (Cuba). Her class read both because they were

related to the students' cultures in particular. She further discussed her reasons for making these choices in materials:

> Making sure that stories like that are included in what we teach and are the meat of what we teach. My African American unit is like three months long. And I don't do Dr. Martin Luther King in January and Black History month in February and I drop it. There's only so many times we can read about César Chávez but we have a lot more than that. It is not reading a biography of who is Hispanic and saying that's studying Hispanic history. We are studying Hispanic Heritage which is heritage itself, there's a lot of when we do that, it's like what do you celebrate, how do you make a connection to somebody else? And put those pieces together. It's not just I'm gonna write a report on El Salvador. The flag is blue and white. So, the standards and teaching practice are asking the questions and making the connections. That's what you do in reading now. You know, make connections, make predictions, ask questions, compare your prediction to what you think happened. It's not just a book report. (Int. 2, pp. 4–6)

Priscilla did not believe in teaching culturally responsive lessons in isolation. For example, she did not think it was appropriate to have designated times throughout the year for African American history or Hispanic heritage, etc. Therefore, her multicultural lessons were spiraled throughout the school year. This is a culturally responsive instructional practice for a teacher who has embedded culture into her instructional repertoire. She exemplified this by talking about teaching the skills of making connections, making predictions, asking questions, and comparing your prediction to what you think happened *through* multicultural lessons and materials.

However, even though she was knowledgeable about bilingual materials and the lawful uses of them, she encountered obstacles at the district level. She added:

I have many materials in both languages, which is important. I don't have a copy of

the Spanish language textbook. Kind of two things happened. One is they brought in

that textbook because Common Core came in and they wanted a textbook that had

nonfiction. They were supposed to buy the Spanish, they didn't do it. That's against

the law. They ignored the law. But it turns out that textbook is not necessarily what

we're looking for because we want to have more of a reader's workshop model where

the students have more choice in what they read. So, you look at my library it's quite

extensive. The Spanish one is over here, not quite as extensive but better than most

libraries you'll see in classrooms. (Int. 2, pp. 3–4)

Priscilla was ready to advocate for her students at an administrative level regarding legalities of

the use of materials. She was knowledgeable about them, even though most teachers may or may

not be, and she was willing to speak up about it. In this case, it turned out she did not need to.

When making decisions about math, Priscilla also found other resources to make sure her

students were represented in the language of math, both culturally (translated into their native

language if needed) and at their reading levels. She explained:

So, the district has purchased a program called My Math. I don't think it meets the

standards so I use EngageNY, which is online, it's free. It's also translated into six

languages. So, I use that and if the translation isn't right or it's too wordy, because

when I look over the translation of something, it doesn't make sense so I change it to

something easier or more relatable, or if they say you know, you might change

something from pancakes to arepas. Definitely, I'll use their names in a word problem,

their own name. So, whenever I have the opportunity. (Int. 2, p. 6)

Priscilla made multiple varied attempts to include her students not only in math, but in her classroom as a whole. Her inclusion of her students was just another culturally responsive indicator, out of several, that she included in her classroom practices. A driving force for Priscilla to teach in this way, when asked why prioritize teaching about different multicultural perspectives with her students even though it is not a standard in the curriculum, Priscilla's response: "To make them better people" (Int. 2, p. 4). In other words, teaching with attention to culture, even though it is not a tested or measured skill, is a priority for her because she was teaching more than that, which was preparing her students for their futures in the world, in relationships and connections with others. She believed that her teaching could prepare them to be better people in the world.

As noted in the literature review, the second part of the definition of culturally responsive teaching includes thinking critically and using multicultural texts (Gay, 2002) as a means to alter the traditional, or mainstream, curriculum that focuses on the old student majority: White and middle class. However, Priscilla and her two colleagues had already begun to alter this curriculum in some way, in order to teach to the new majority: their students of color.

Bridging the Curriculum to Students' Families

One of the misconceptions of culturally responsive teaching is essentializing information about a culture to all people from that culture. This can lead to stereotyping (Sleeter, 2012). Expanding that idea, the third tenet of CRT asks teachers to listen to the voices of the marginalized, or highlight their stories to the mainstream. Most families of color are often not heard, or their stories are not told (Tate, 1997). However, each of my participants made it a priority to get to know the students' families personally, as well as gather information from them

that would enhance the children's experiences in the classroom. My participants got to know

them and listened to them.

When Priscilla first started teaching, she admitted that she would not consider herself

very culturally responsive, but her life history, which included a multicultural family, as well as

teaching in southwestern U.S., began to change the way she looked at things. She shared:

> I was ready to hear information and so then when I continued teaching, I was able to
>
> be more responsive to the students . . . how do you deal with parents because their
>
> culture and the way they raise their kids is different the way than the way I've raised
>
> my kids and the way I was raised . . . I guess in my twenties I really made that change
>
> and started recognizing all those things cause I was also married to a Colombian and
>
> um, I'd be like, oh, we're going to have a sleepover. 'm, my kid's going to go sleep
>
> over at that person's house. He's like, are you out of your mind? (Focus Group, p. 9)

In her household and upbringing, sleepovers were permissible but for her husband and many

Latin American cultures, it was unheard of unless they were a family member or extremely close

friend of the family. This "interesting cultural difference" helped Priscilla to realize that among

her students' families, she needed to hear information from them and learned to deal with parents

because of the cultural differences. This supports listening to the voice of the marginalized as a

tenet of CRT (Tate, 1997). In the early stages of her teaching career, Priscilla was developing the

first part of the definition of being culturally responsive.

More recently Priscilla described engaging in more opportunities to get to know parents.

She shared:

> We had this amazing speaker talking about civil rights and unsung heroes of the civil
>
> rights movement a couple of months ago . . . that she [the principal] brought in who

actually held a session for the kids but then she held a session for the families at night,

and they came! (Int. 2, p. 2)

Priscilla described how the speaker engaged the families by reminding them that they each had a

story. She shared that the speaker said, "You have a story to tell." She continued:

And a lot of the people in that room their story to tell was walking here, was the

reason they left, was adjusting to the culture here, adjusted to life. This is not an easy

place to live in . . . And all my students are from Central America and Mexico a lot of

them are coming from this crazy violent dangerous you don't know what's gonna

happen tomorrow kind of world. And pretty much shelter their kids from that and they

do. They do ... there's political debate around their ability to be here right now, right

here and they are purposely sheltered. The parents aren't usually talking about that in

front of them. (Int. 2, p. 2)

Because Priscilla believed that where the families come from plays a significant role in how she

attended to different cultural issues, this example also exemplified all three strands of the

definition of culturally responsive teaching. Priscilla was excited to attend a culturally responsive

gathering because the parents were present. She was fully aware of the struggles the families

have had on their journey to come to the U.S. For example, "Parents show me their ankle

monitoring bracelets" (Email communication, September 6, 2020), which means that they are

being monitored in some way by some kind of law enforcement, and in many cases, for

immigration status issues. In addition, she was aware of political issues affecting these families

where deportation has been a threat to many of them but she knew her families well enough to

realize that the students were being sheltered from most of the horror associated with these

experiences. She shared:

The day after the 2016 presidential election, as we were walking into class, one of the

students looked down. "My sister is going to get deported because 'he doesn't have

papers." she told me. Her sister was not actually targeted for anything, but the anti-

immigrant sentiment was very high at the time. Whispers every time someone saw a

white van in the neighborhood. Parents routinely did not let their kids watch the news

during those times. But they knew, and they were afraid. "I have papers but my wife

doesn't," one parent confided in me. We stick close to home, we go to church and the

grocery store, that's about it." (Email communication, September 6, 2020)

Therefore, Priscilla knew how to deal with these issues in the classroom. She did not ignore it,

but she knew how deeply to address it. Finally, Priscilla shared:

I don't know if I mentioned this before but two years ago, we had this amazing

opportunity to talk to parents about what they wanted, felt, thought. It was like a

district thing and it's like well what do you want from the schools? Well, what do you

want for your children? Well, you know "primero, Dios" [first, God] and then they're

all like I want them to become professional and I want them to serve their community.

And everybody at the table said the same thing. So, this is a community of people that

they're all in, they're all in here. (Int. 2, p. 2)

Priscilla talked about valuing listening to parents and gathering information from them to best

inform how she teaches her students. As a culturally responsive instructional practice, simply

engaging in these conversations with the families was relevant. She taught with culture as a

priority in hopes that this will "make them better people" (Int. 2, p. 4).

Priscilla's culturally responsive instructional practices were evident in different ways.

She used funds of knowledge by seeking out information from her students and their families,

thus using their religion, traditions, and ideas about gender and home environment to build

background knowledge and expand lessons. Her passion for high quality literature in English and

Spanish demonstrated her understanding of how important it is to use heritage language in the

classroom. Using her South Africa lesson to teach about social justice as well as have students

relate their immigrant experiences to those of the characters also exhibited a deeper example of

culturally responsive teaching.

The common threads among all participants were present for Priscilla in a unique way.

Priscilla bucked against the status quo by not adhering to prescribed curriculum and materials

across planning as a leader in her grade level. Priscilla's excitement when talking about how

families share information with her about their lives here in America was an indicator as to why

she prioritizes her relationships with them. One reason could be Priscilla's experience with race

and racism, as a White teacher. I dive into this part of her in this next section.

Examining Race and Racism: Priscilla and Negotiating White Privilege

This study addresses race and racism through culturally responsive teaching through the

actions and interactions of my participants. First, Priscilla, who self-identifies as a White teacher,

navigated an awareness of her own culture, that of her students,' and the ways these intersect.

This is the first part of the definition of culturally responsive teaching where most teachers have

the awareness of their own and their students' cultures but more often than not, miss the third

connecting piece. Because the literature is clear that affirming students' cultures while being

knowledgeable about your own is a key concept of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010;

Ladson-Billings, 1995b, 2017; Villegas & Lucas, 2002), it is important to note that Priscilla is

keenly aware of the third piece. She negotiates her white privilege in various ways and how it

relates to her students of Latinx and African American backgrounds. Upon our very first

meeting, I saw evidence of this awareness in Priscilla and was curious what my data would show.

When discussing parent-teacher relationships, Priscilla was adamant that one way to be culturally responsive would be not to be judgmental toward parents. She shared this sentiment of not being judgmental in two different ways. The first was when she had experience seeing evidence of this among White parents toward parents of color. She shared:

> [A] gringo might look at these parents and be like, they're so permissive. They don't
>
> scold them, they don't, there's no discipline. They might think, um, but they're also
>
> very protected. It's a very different way of perceiving. (Focus Group, p. 9)

Priscilla used the term "gringo" which is slang, and in some cases offensive, for a Latinx person to describe a White person. She has heard White parents, or White teachers, judging parents of color. Her experience teaching bilingual education in Southwestern U.S. and in the Northeast opened up different racial experiences for her as a White teacher of students of color. She recognized that one way to not be racist is to try and not to judge others.

The second way Priscilla was not judgmental was by focusing on her students' strengths and not what they cannot yet do academically. She also explained her beliefs about why she does this. She shared:

> So, a teacher has to understand the culture of each student and do some research and
>
> learn about them and listen to them when they tell you things and, and then use those
>
> things to, to teach with . . . They need to be seen and validated because that's the
>
> culture they come from . . . All our kids come from different kinds of places and for
>
> the most part their parents love them and give them what they think is right . . . I
>
> guess I'm really looking for opportunities to celebrate the kids and affirm who they are

and make sure that they know that where they're from is valuable and, and whatever

they have as their home background and knowledge is valuable. . . .I had a kid who

couldn't read, not his M from his P in third grade last year, but he knew everything,

knows how farm animals were born cause he [had] seen it all, 'oh yeah, oh yes, yes in

my country I did that.' (Focus Group, pp. 18–19)

Priscilla believed that her students' parents were doing what is best for their children. She did not

judge their parenting decisions, but instead focused on, and celebrated the strengths of the

students.

Priscilla discussed her cultural difference from her students in several examples. She

grew up in a "White, rural town in [New England]," but around "very progressive thinking

people." Most people were ethnically diverse and lower to middle class. For high school in a

different northeastern state, she described that it was more diverse compared to her previous

town. One piece of data that emerged from the review of the literature was that the first step in

realizing CRT one, of racism as a normal fabric in U.S. society is to believe that institutional

racism exists. Priscilla was aware, and believed that it does. This was the only way she could

acknowledge, understand, and process her views about racism. Priscilla's biographical words to

describe herself–White, exposed to progressive thinking people, ethnically diverse people,

moving to a town that was more diverse, and noting socioeconomic class–were all indicators that

Priscilla understood her position of privilege because of her race. She realized that because she

was exposed to "progressive thinking people" that she was able to think differently from the

mainstream. She used terms ethnically diverse to describe one of the communities in which she

lived. By doing so, she demonstrated she is already aware that having a homogeneous

community was not one she would choose to live or in which to teach.

Priscilla's awareness was evident throughout her life history in her teacher training. She recalled:

> I did all of my field work in Urban Ed so I did a field in an elementary school in [New England city] which is working class, very diverse (there are Colombians, Thai kids, African American–all kinds of kids and there's some White kids, different ethnicities, there's very traditional Irish, two traditional Irish neighborhoods in the city, Italian neighborhood). I don't know how familiar you are with [prominent New England city] schools. They're a landmark case of bussing. They had this big bussing thing in the 70s and that caused a lot of white flight so there are White communities [there]; it's a very segregated city that still send their kids to public but most don't and a lot of people left the city, a lot of White people so they ended up turning all the schools into magnets. (Int. 1, p. 5)

This experience of being in a de facto segregated neighborhood, as well as learning about, then witnessing the effects of bussing from twenty years earlier, informed Priscilla's views on race and racism in education. Specifically, "white flight" or "white exodus," happened in neighborhoods throughout the country, not only in the case of where Priscilla did field work. There existed a sentiment that if your neighborhood had Black families move in, then your home value would decrease (Burkholder, 2011). Therefore, White owners would sell their homes and move to other neighborhoods, mostly suburban, that they considered still predominantly White. As a result, these neighborhoods enacted forced integration by bussing students, and shifting them in and out of their local schools into other schools in order to diversify the student body (Burkholder, 2011), causing "inconvenience and hardships of busing children long distances to attend predominantly white (and sometimes hostile) schools" (Burkholder, 2011, p. 176).

Because of seeing this experience firsthand during field work, she became aware of the

complexities of institutional racism.

Priscilla struggled with her white privilege in a way that is multidimensional. She was

aware that people made assumptions about her because she was White, but her bilingualism was

not apparent, so that added to her complex racial identity. Priscilla admitted:

> I'm White, so it's hard to, it's not hard for me but it's you know. You might not know
>
> that I'm a bilingual person or that I have a multicultural background or that I get the
>
> kids, you know just by looking at me, obviously. I don't know if that makes any
>
> sense. I do. (Int. 2, p. 10)

She felt the need to share her background and end with "I do" to ensure that I understood that she

does, in fact, "get the kids." She acknowledged her identity as a bilingual White person, but yet

realized that it can be categorized as unrelatable, or misunderstood as incapable of being

bilingual or multicultural. Again, she recognized her position of privilege, yet she also

understood what it means to be othered.

Race and racism were central themes in Priscilla's social justice-themed unit about

apartheid-era South Africa. Priscilla added several different connections to Beverley Baidoo's

Journey to Jo'burg: A South African Story, the central text to her self-selected culturally

responsive unit, during the time of this study. She helped the students have a historical

perspective about race and racism. She brought in comparisons to what they learned during

African American history studies in class. She shared:

> So, I do try to make those connections for the students and provide connected
>
> materials and point things out. Like today, we talked more about South Africa and we
>
> saw a short video about Hector Pieterson who was a little boy who was killed during

the Soweto uprising in 1976, which was mentioned in the book, which is why I talked

about it. And then they had seen a movie called *Selma, Lord, Selma* during Black

History Month so I'm like, so remember we saw that violence happening in our

country. This violence is happening in the other country, and the police are committing

that violence in both situations to the same, to similar groups of people. So, you know,

I was trying to help them make that connection like, oh, things were happening in one

place, things are happening in another place and you know things are better here and

things are better there too. (Int. 2, p. 1)

This example from her social justice-focused lesson comparing two real world events that the

students might relate to spoke to so many points of discussion about race and racism, which

included violent situations. She used a historical reference from the central text about Hector

Pieterson to compare to a movie they saw about voting rights protests from the civil rights

movement in the 1960s. She then connected it to possible violence happening in the present by

pointing out that police are committing violence in both situations but that things have improved.

She was bringing hope to the situation by highlighting improvement in the situation. Hector

Pieterson was twelve when he died, so Priscilla's choice to supplement her central text with this

true story was strategic to present the problem in a relatable way to nine-year olds.

The comparisons among Selma in the U.S., Hector Pieterson, apartheid-era South Africa,

and her students' own dangerous deportation situations spoke to the use of violence as a vehicle

of oppression. Many of her students experience situations connected to the lack of

documentation of legal U.S. status. They also experienced firsthand, or through family members,

fleeing their native countries to the U.S. In both these situations, the students may have

experienced or heard about a family member having interaction with officers in positions of

power. Because Priscilla had a close relationship with her students and their families, they were

very honest and open with her. She shared:

> I had a student whose uncle had been kidnapped while trying to come here. The
>
> kidnappers asked her family for money and they were trying to put some money
>
> together, borrow from friends, everything they had, to pay the ransom. (Email
>
> communication, Sept 6, 2020)

This particular example supported their trust with Priscilla, someone who was not in law

enforcement, but had been privy to a situation that could have involved professional investigative

services. She continued:

> My kids are quite young: eight, nine-years old. Some did travel here undocumented,
>
> sneaking over the border with a coyote. But they are young, it's hard for them to
>
> describe and explain their ordeals. "I was scared. I didn't like it." One child wrote in
>
> her journal. 'And now I'm here." (Email communication, Sept 6, 2020)

The student sharing her experience in a journal for Priscilla's class also showed trust in their

relationship. This student was in a difficult, and possibly dangerous situation, but still shared her

fear with Priscilla through a journal entry. Using her social justice unit could have been an

additional outlet for this student.

It was important for Priscilla to draw comparisons to violent or dangerous

situations from this unit. She continued:

> I want to emphasize that they're [current sociopolitical situations] not perfect but I
>
> also want to emphasize that they're better. I wanna make sure they make the leap from
>
> there was a problem and unrest and violence to after 1994, things improved and you
>
> know everyone has freedom and they had this amazing truth and reconciliation process

but they're nine so it's hard to explain all of that. (Int. 2, p. 1)

In her attempt to infuse hope, she also held back because she believed they were too young to process certain levels of this discussion. The literature (Abril, 2009; Boyd et al., 2011; Clarkson & Johnstone, 2011; Conrad et al., 2004; Copenhaver, 2001; Kleyn, 2008) points out that many teachers feel uncomfortable discussing issues of race and racism. In this case, even though Priscilla did address race and racism, she was only comfortable discussing it up to a certain threshold, then she pulled back. This tension was particularly important to pay attention to for further study. Race and racism are not straightforward topics, especially when it comes to student discussion. It was important to note the necessity for further research on how to gauge and analyze comfort level among teachers, then work with teachers who have different levels of comfort discussing race and racism in the classroom.

Furthermore, Priscilla connected the South Africa unit to comedian and television host Trevor Noah, who is biracial and published his autobiography, *Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood*, about how his Black South African mother and White, Swiss father had committed a crime by having him –a biracial son during the apartheid era. She shared her students' curiosity about this connection:

> So, they were curious about that, curious about race and curious about all right, well is
>
> he Black or is he White? I'm like yes, yeah right, because of course that's also an
>
> artificial construct and it's an American idea in our country of who is Black and who is
>
> White and who is this and who is that? (Int. 2, pp. 1–2)

Having this conversation explicitly taught about race and racial identity. First, Priscilla was aware that race is a social construction, which was the third tenet of CRT. This means that if there were no classification of races in the first place, then racism could not exist, therefore, it is

a construct devised socially in order to classify and order races in a superficial spectrum of superiority.

"In other countries and the countries they come from, those ideas are different. So, we didn't talk too much about that in class" (Int. 2, pp. 1–2). In this instance, Priscilla also pointed out that in many Latin cultures, colorism is the main race issue, where the social construct is not simply Black or White, but who is lighter skinned versus who is darker skinned. Therefore, Priscilla also engaged in problematizing that race is fixed. Much of the research about elementary school teachers explicitly discussed race (Boyd et al., 2011; Clarkson & Johnstone, 2011; Conrad et al., 2004; Copenhaver, 2001) focused on the use of picture books, videos, and read-alouds. Although teachers described the discomfort of talking with children about racism, the teachers in those studies still documented their work addressing racism with young children. Priscilla also dove into this realm with her South Africa unit. She continued:

> They were curious: were they not allowed, did he know, did he know there was a problem, did he know it was against the law and he had explained in the clip that he was very sheltered from it like he thought it was normal? He said in the clip, well I thought all dads were White and all uncles were Black, that's just the way it was. (Int. 2, pp. 1–2)

She stated that she and her students do not talk too much about the concept of race and racial identity in class. It seemed that the main reason was because the idea of race in Latin countries was different than in the U.S. Their curiosity about Noah's experiences could have been a great avenue to continue openly discussing race more deeply. However, Priscilla does not expand on this. The choice to hold back was a source of tension in this study. Priscilla seemed to struggle with several intertwined issues at the point of this discussion. First, she had to consider

her students' ages and what content she was prepared to share with them. Second, some of her

students, or their family members, had already experienced traumatic events at the hands of law

enforcement because of documentation status and entering the U.S., so she had to consider this

surfacing in the conversation. Lastly, she had knowledge that parents chose to shield their

children from the current anti-immigrant political climate, so she was unsure about opening up

conversation that would linger into the homes of these parents. In the methodology chapter, I

described, in depth, how the tensions in this study centered around race and racism, with the

code words used, as well as the discussions that were not had. The conversations that are not

happening in the classroom are the very ones that could ameliorate race discussions, once they

are explored. However, as teacher educators, we are responsible to facilitate the teaching and

learning of how to have these conversations with teachers across experience levels.

Priscilla, being a seasoned teacher, made decisions about how deeply to discuss race and

racism. She continued on the topic of her students being sheltered like Noah was:

> Cause you know and our kids are like that too. They're very sheltered from what's
>
> going on, I mean there's political debate around their ability to be here right now, right
>
> here and they are purposely sheltered. The parents aren't usually talking about that in
>
> front of them . . . And all my students are from Central America and Mexico so yea a
>
> lot of them are coming from this crazy violent dangerous you don't know what's
>
> gonna happen tomorrow kind of world. And pretty much shelter their kids from that
>
> and they do. They do. (Int. 2, p. 2)

Priscilla's tone at the end of this particular quote showed how disturbed she had been about how

certain laws were affecting her students' lives. Through this unit, she had hoped to make

connections to help them process any difficulties they could have been having from their own

stories of immigration, crossing the border, etc. Priscilla did not outwardly ask about her families' immigration experiences, "but they regularly volunteer this information, sharing their difficulties navigating in a system that is hostile to them. The world my students live in, where their families are literally under attack by a hostile government and culture, where their very existence is "illegal," is confusing and difficult to navigate, especially for an eight-year-old mind" (Teacher Reflection). Her students' migration ranged from fleeing for their lives because of violence in their home countries to living here without immediate family because their parents are still in their native countries to living in fear of deportation.

Priscilla opened up about what an older mother told her at the parent teacher conference:

> 'I can't help K. with division, because I never learned it.' She went on to tell me why, quite graphically. Her father had been murdered when she was two, and her mother killed in front of her when she was K.'s age. 'Someone took me in, but I had to sleep on the floor and eat only beans. The floor was so hard and so cold. And my mother's blood was still on my dress. Then I lived with my grandmother and I had to work instead of going to school because she was too old to work.' She told me all of this in front of K., who sat with no reaction. (Email communication, September 6, 2020)

As yet another example of the varied, but violent and scary situations that her families have dealt with, it seemed a delicate conversation for Priscilla to dig into. She did want to make the connections to the South Africa unit, which she did to a certain point. However, the students' curiosity about Trevor Noah and his upbringing could have also directed the conversation about race and racism to a different level. They asked many questions about Trevor Noah, who believes that:

> In South Africa, the atrocities of apartheid have never been taught that way. We

weren't taught judgment or shame [in contrast to Germany where students are taught this way because of the Holocaust]. We were taught history the way it's taught in America. In America, the history of racism is taught like this: "There was slavery and then there was Jim Crow and then there was Martin Luther King Jr. and now it's done." It was the same for us. "Apartheid was bad. Nelson Mandela was freed. Let's move on." Facts, but not many, and never the emotional or moral dimension. It was as if the teachers, many of whom were white, had been given a mandate. "Whatever you do, don't make the kids angry." (Noah, 2015, p. 182)

This succinct summary comparison between apartheid in South Africa, and the U.S, civil rights movement, spoke to Priscilla's knowledge and understanding of race issues that affect education in the U.S. and her students. The connection between the book they were reading in class, *Journey to Jo'burg: A South African Story*, and Trevor Noah's life was a purposeful connection, as Priscilla stated. She carefully depicted apartheid and connected that to similar situations her students may be experiencing when it comes to their cultural identity and what is/was accepted by the law of the country in which they live. Racism is a norm in American society and Priscilla has attempted to raise awareness about how it is normalized through these lessons. Noah explains his historical comparison between South Africa and America and the similarity of the issue of race from each country's past never being addressed in school curriculum, whereas in Germany, the Holocaust is taught and shamed as part of the curriculum. Even though Priscilla did not touch on this at all in her class, because she believed that developmentally, it could be too abstract for eight-year-olds, she stated in her reflection of this self-selected culturally responsive lesson:

We do NOT have these eight-year-old students formally compare the status of Blacks

in apartheid-era South Africa to the status of undocumented migrants in the modern U.S.

That is not the purpose of the unit. The purpose of the unit is to follow a character on

a journey, documenting her thoughts, feelings, and actions, and how they change

through the story. But because it has themes so similar to issues in my students'

community, it becomes a way for my students to process what is going on around

them. (Teacher Lesson Reflection)

Although Priscilla did not think it was developmentally appropriate to venture more deeply into

comparing Blacks in apartheid-era South Africa and the status of undocumented migrants in the

modern U.S., there was potential for much more critical analysis if Priscilla made the decision to

dig into this topic more deeply.

In addition to the self-selected culturally responsive unit on South Africa, Priscilla

addressed race and racism in other parts of her curriculum. One of the ways she did this was by

extending her lessons and units on the following topics: African American history, studying Dr.

Martin Luther King, Jr., Latinx heritage, her classroom library, and in math lessons. Priscilla did

not adhere to the February only African American history lessons, nor teaching about Dr. King

only near his birthday/holiday observance. She shared, "My African American unit is like three

months long. And I don't do Dr. Martin Luther King in January and Black History Month in

February and I drop it" (Int. 2, p. 5). In May, she still had flags used by her students from a Black

History Month parade the school had in February. When I asked about the flags, she commented:

"Oh yeah that's from the Black History Month. It's still up. So, we did a, the school had a parade

and they asked us to make flags so we made flags into the parade" (Int. 2, p. 7). She continued to

make instructional decisions that go against the status quo curriculum by discussing race and

racism throughout the school year. For example, she did the same with Hispanic heritage when

she explained that studying Hispanic heritage is "heritage itself" and they examined celebrations

and connections to others.

Priscilla strove to give her students a voice in her lessons. In her literature lessons, she

strove for high levels of inquiry and discussion and believes it's important for students to learn

about differences and discrimination and have these discussions. Her South Africa unit

exemplified this. At the end of the unit, the students produced a postcard from the position of one

of the characters in the book. Through this activity, students were able to create their own

scenario related to the plot of the story, sharing feelings surrounding being in a potentially

dangerous situation (Picture 1). In the student work pictured, the reader can see how the student

connected the feeling of fear from the book and added it to their postcard.
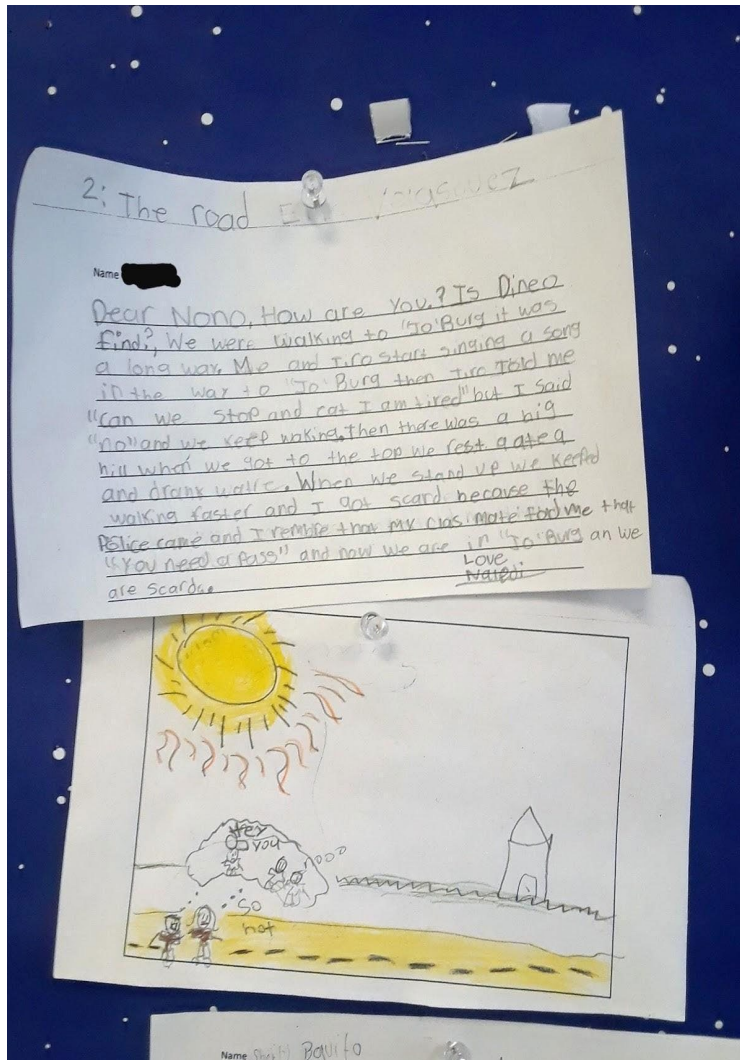
Furthermore, Priscilla used different methods to amplify her students' voices. One way was through her math lessons by strategically using her students' names in the word problem of the day even though the publishers already attempted to add diverse names to their texts. She shared:

> So, whenever I have the opportunity because there's one word problem of the day, I pick a kid from the class and that kid's name is in the word problem instead of whatever name that they give. And you know they're [publishers] careful to make sure there's a diverse list but that trips them up sometimes, so I'll see like you know

the name Jay-ling is the name of the kid and they're like what is that? (Int. 2, p. 6)

Even though the math book publishers claimed to use "diverse" names, those names made no connections for Priscilla's students. Therefore, she changed the names to names of the students in class. What seems like a simple, seemingly trivial switch also demonstrated the need for Priscilla to add her students' voices to the important and seemingly not-so-important parts of the classroom.

In summary, Priscilla knew what was important when it came to teaching in a culturally responsive way. Her identity informed this practice as the data showed in her life history. One way her life history informed her instructional practice is that she sought connections as a student both among her peers and from her teachers and now forms connections for her students. In addition, she thought critically about world issues as a young person because of the people in her surroundings and now creates a classroom environment that encourages critical thinking. Moreover, she led and developed lessons and units that challenge the status quo through materials and social justice discussion. Furthermore, she formed relationships with her students and their families that exponentially impact their lives in and out of school. I discovered that she uses funds of knowledge to tap into the students and their family's expertise and experiences to enrich and add to the classroom experiences. Finally, she possessed a self-awareness of race that interrelates with the culture of her students so that she can teach at her highest capacity.

Anna Mae and Her Life History: Accepting of All and Overcoming Much

My second volunteer, Anna Mae brought a high level of excitement to my study. She is a very positive person as evidenced by her enthusiastic exchange with me at every interaction, and this translates to her classroom. Similar to Priscilla, Anna Mae's life history informed who she is as a teacher. Anna Mae grew up in a diverse neighborhood and family, so she strives to accept all

people. In addition, she experienced several obstacles in her schooling and the beginning years of

becoming a certified teacher, which translates to holding her students in very high regard that no

matter what, they already possess everything they need to succeed. Anna Mae scaffolded

students' learning for success: "When students are in my classes, it's important for me to help

them transform into better versions of themselves; not remain the same" (Email communication,

October 18, 2020). I was able to see evidence of this in her quilt making lesson that she chose to

include as her culturally responsive lesson set submission for this study.

Anna Mae had been teaching for eighteen years, and was beginning her nineteenth year at

the time of this study. She had taught grades K-6, completed the school year teaching

kindergarten, and had started at the middle school level as a data coach at the time of this study.

She held certifications in PreK-3, K-8, and had a principal's license. She did not have any

professional development training in culturally responsive teaching. Anna Mae shared that her

family was extremely diverse and she has been surrounded by different kinds of people her entire

life. With her bright smile and inviting demeanor, she reflected: "I was raised in a very diverse

and culturally accepting environment" (Int. 1, p. 1). She was in her late forties, wore her light

brown hair very short, identified as African American, was married to a Black woman, and had

two sons. Her oldest son was in college and her youngest son was ten years old. She moved to a

town that was diverse and inclusive on purpose to raise him in a similar kind of environment in

which she grew up. She transferred this life experience to her teaching in this way:

> So, for me as an educator, while I'm wide open and I'm an open book, I do know that
>
> people come with, already, their biases. And so, I'm very delicate when I first meet kids
>
> because I need to see them play themselves out so I can know how to approach them,

work how I'm going to teach them or know the things that I want to say. (Focus Group, p. 11)

Anna Mae emerged as a participant after my round of personal visits to each school. She identified as local to the area, active, very social, and outgoing. In addition to growing up in a racially and economically diverse neighborhood with strict parents, she grew up learning to be accepting of anyone who would be considered other. She reflected: "I was exposed at a young age to things that people just now [are] becoming accepting of: same sex marriages, interracial marriages, people with rings in their nose, tattoos, orange hair, blue hair, shaved hair on the side. Like that was not new to me" (Int. 1, p. 1). Her family in itself is also very diverse. Her grandparents got married in the 1950s and were a Black and White interracial couple. She shared:

> My grandfather made it very clear that family is first and that those relationships are important because when no one else respects, accepts, or values you (referring to the injustices he experienced being married to my grandmother of African descent), your family will rally around you and give the support that makes you feel as if everything is okay, even if it really isn't. (Email communication, December 4, 2019)

She also had other racially mixed marriages in her current family. In addition to striving to be accepting of everyone, Anna Mae overcame several obstacles to obtain her goals, whether that was getting into schools or getting a job. Anna Mae consistently had to "try twice" before entering into the next chapters of her life, whether it was to get accepted in a school or to attain a new job, she rarely got it on the "first try." This tenacity mirrored her drive to try to motivate her students to be the best they can be, regardless of outside influences.

Anna Mae's life was inundated with having to try a second time; things did not come easily to her the first time. She explained: "In my life, I've done everything more than once" (Int. 1, p. 1). However, she persevered numerous times to be where she is today; a teacher that wants her students to believe in their full potential. Anna Mae works to help her students realize they are powerful from within. She shared, "I remind my students of all ages, of course in age appropriate lingo so that they understand it and are able to apply it; that they have the power from within to create their realities." (Email communication, October 18, 2020) She is what I am calling an intrinsic motivator. Anna Mae's personal life lessons of initially being told "no" were not obstacles or hindrances, but instead motivated her, as she shared, "I get turned on by adversity. When someone says no you can't, it makes think of ways that I can." (Int. 1, p. 2) In fact, these experiences have informed her mantra that every child is valuable, special, and possesses power within, no matter the influences from the outside.

Anna Mae grew up in a racially and economically diverse community with strict parents. Her mother was very active in the schools as a member of a parent teacher organization (PTO). She was raised to look out for others, and especially the family. For example, one day she went home from school, even though she knew her cousin had to stay late. She shared: "When I got home, my grandfather said no, you are family, go back to school and you just have to wait for your cousin" (Int. 2, p. 1). This need to make sure that everyone was okay and to "carry the weight" of others continued to be part of the way she teaches. She reflected: ". . . even in my school and how I interact with my colleagues, even if somebody may be going through something or doing something that [I] may not think is appropriate, I say to them hey let's . . . and do it this way. Let's do it another way, because I just believe that's what you do" (Int. 2, p. 1). Anna Mae's mother looked out for her when Anna Mae was preparing to go to high school.

Her mother wanted her to go to a competitive, magnet high school in a nearby city, which required application. Anna Mae took the admissions test and failed, but her mother, who was also extroverted, arranged a meeting with the principal to interview Anna Mae. She shared: "My mom met with the principal . . . and he said well have her write an entrance essay as to why would we should choose her and then I guess submit all the grades from [her school] . . . and then we [will] have an interview" (Int. 1, p. 2). Fortunately, on the second try, she was admitted into the school.

This was the beginning of Anna Mae's journey of "everything I did I had to work for." She shared another example of having to work twice as hard: "So I was getting straight As and I had a 4.0. [But] people had a 4.5" (Int. 1, p. 2). When it was time for college, Anna Mae applied to a nearby technology/engineering school because she wanted to be a commercial pilot. After one year of being at this college, her father helped her see that it was not a good fit for her outgoing and social personality. She shared: "Most of the people there are focused. I didn't study. I was loud, you know and even though I managed to get good grades, I felt like I was trapped because I didn't find the people that I could relate to. Just study, study, study and I wanted people who I could talk to and laugh" (Int. 1, p. 3). She then transferred to a university in an adjacent state, which she loved, because it appealed to her academically and socially. She reflected "I *LOVED* it, had the best of both worlds. I found not just an academic home but a social home" (Int. 1, p. 3).

After obtaining her bachelor's, she applied to a local university for her master's and was not accepted. However, she received some help from a professor at the university and eventually *did* get in through a different route. She told the story of her alternate route:

I ended up taking one class and I remember this lady . . . was one of the supervisors

there for early childhood education . . . and she said why don't you take another class?

I took two classes, aced them and then reapplied and I got in. So, my educational

journey was one that wasn't like a direct path but it fit me and I think that's why I'm

successful because I did it my way. (Int. 1, p. 3)

After this, she persisted through different obstacles working in corporate for a few years in a

science-related field, and after she had her first son, she realized she did not want to travel, which

was required for her position. She recounted:

December 1998, I was living in [town where she grew up] and I mapped out all the

different school districts that were close and I applied for [local districts], you name it.

Out of all those school districts, this woman from [a local district] called me. I'll never

forget her. She was the supervisor of human resources and she called me for an

interview. She knew I wanted to sub because I put down you know subbing or whatever

and I didn't have my teaching certificate. I just had my bachelor's, my master's, my

MAT and my BA. (Int. 1, p. 4)

She was hired as this supervisor's administrative assistant because the current employee was in

the military and was being deployed. She remained in that position for two years, then finally

was given an opportunity to begin teaching full time, then returning to the university where she

got her master's, and obtained her teaching licenses with the financial support of her new school

district. This additional example of not being hired the first time for the position she was seeking

added to Anna Mae's repertoire of having to make an additional attempt to attain her goal.

Anna Mae's many experiences with adversity affected her teaching goal to motivate her

students today. She attributed this belief in her students to her upbringing:

When I say upbringing, I don't just mean parents, I mean friends and experiences and

all of that stuff. Things that didn't work out, obstacles, all of that, all of that is in that

too. I do believe that my tone, my behavior, my words, the way I deliver instruction,

the flexibility and then just the integrity that I try to instill in the kids and have them to

show one another. (Int. 2, p. 2)

Anna Mae focused on her kindergarteners as whole people, not just the academic part of them.

She tried to help them see what makes them happy, as well as what makes others happy. This

belief in others as a result of her life history has spilled over into her pedagogy. She shared the

root of this based on what her grandfather instilled on her early on and she has carried since:

He let me know the importance of family and making sure that it was my duty to give,

share and spread love and kindness wherever I am, no matter what is going on around me

(news, turmoil, etc.) And that's how I live. I am the wife, parent, sister, friend, co-worker,

stranger, humanitarian, that I am because of the values instilled in me at such a young

age. I also realized early on that being loving, caring and giving not only makes the

recipient feel good, but it also makes me feel amazing as well, so I have been addicted

ever since to spreading my joy. (Email communication, December 4, 2019)

Anna Mae hoped that her attempts to instill motivation and inspiration in her students

continues after they have left her classroom. She stated: "I'm a very positive person. I do not

accept their negative thinking because I'm always in my head. I'm always creating or visualizing

the outcome that I want. I teach them to do the same." (Int. 1, p. 6)

Another way to describe Anna Mae's relationship with her students was that she treats

them like kings and queens, making them feel important and special. She shared:

I remember helping one of my kindergarten students understand that the other

students were hesitant to play with her because she didn't make them feel good . . . So

> I had explained to her using the words she would say to her classmates and ask her
>
> how she felt if Ms. Flood said those things to her, and her eyes would light up, with an
>
> understanding. I used to smile as I would see her making an effort to say nicer things
>
> to her classmates and apologize immediately if she blurted out something that she
>
> realized was unfavorable. She would say: "Ms. [Anna Mae], I feel good, so my
>
> friends feel good too." (Email communication, October 18, 2020)

Here it seems she strove for this student to believe in the very best of herself in her interactions

with others. Anna Mae's experiences throughout her upbringing did not detract her from her

goals. In fact, they propelled her to be her best self. She proclaimed, "I get turned on by

adversity" (Int. 1, p. 2). This is the same power from within she expects of her students. This

speaks to the high expectations as a strategy of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2002;

Ladson-Billings 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Instructionally, many non-culturally responsive

teachers may possess deficit thinking toward their students (Delpit, 1996; Nieto, 2004; Villegas

& Lucas, 2002; West-Olatunji et al., 2008), but culturally responsive teachers believe that their

students are the highest and best, or possess all they need to achieve at high levels.

Anna Marie espoused this belief of "highest and best" of her students. This belief in her

students is linked to her adverse experiences in her life history, but seeing herself as successful in

spite of, *and* because of these experiences. In this next section, I discuss specific evidence of her

culturally responsive practices being linked to her beliefs.

Culturally Responsive Instructional Practices: Anna Mae Has High Expectations

> When I come into a classroom, it's not about the academics. That's the easy part. But
>
> how do you get through to them? What do you say to them? What turns them on and
>
> not turn them off? What are you going to say to them? That they're going to dream

about that night; what they think about that night that either makes them happy or

makes them sad? (Focus Group, p. 12)

It is important to tie in every participant's life history to their instructional practices

because this study continues to indicate, through Anna Mae, that different life influences

including, but not limited to identity, experiences, obstacles, spirituality, and relationships shape

who she is as a teacher. Anna Mae's life history was that of being raised in a diverse family and

being responsible to help those family members, while at the same time having obstacles that

made it harder to attain her goals. Her high expectations of her students were influenced by her

life history. Her belief in her students helped to motivate them to reach their highest potential,

which in her mind, has no limits. The driving force that helped her through her life history is the

same force that she sought for her students to realize exists within themselves.

High Expectations

Anna Mae's focus in her classroom was to inspire her students beyond their expectations,

even of themselves. Anna Mae operated with a highly positive mindset:

Every morning at 5:00am without fail, even when I feel low, am under the weather,

Etc. I declare that I am going to have a magical day, full of joy, laughter, kindness,

prosperity and love. I also picture in my mind what that is going to look like and then

I say: "I love you [Anna Mae] ten times, and then I proceed with my day.

She translated this positive self-talk to her students so that they could be focused on their power

from within, which Anna Mae said cannot be shaken, no matter what negative influences are

around you. As a culturally responsive characteristic, having these high expectations, and

teaching her students to view themselves in the same way, is not a traditional way of teaching.

Anna Mae used several methods to accomplish this goal. One way was she got to know her

individual students very personally through observations, conversations, and discussions. Anna

Mae also invested in the social-emotional development of her students. Besides treating her

students like she would her own children, she allowed her spiritual way of being, with positive

daily self-talks as an example, to transfer into the classroom to conduct emotional check-ins and

allowed herself to be vulnerable to model that there is power in vulnerability. She exemplified

this further by teaching her students to mediate their interactions with others through their

feelings. She explained, "I teach the things that people only get when they're older from Oprah,

or they only get from Deepak Chopra or they only get from Tony Robbins" (Int. 2, p. 3). Anna

Mae shared many examples of helping students tune into their feelings and mediating these

feelings within interactions with classmates.

When it comes to getting to know her students individually, Anna Mae said:

I am very free, very open. I think one of the qualities that I have as an educator is the

ability to have a lot of different personalities or know each one individually. So when

people say twenty-six is a lot of kids. It's a lot of kids as a number 26, but if you get to

learn them individually, you learn to be flexible and learn to on a whim, on a fly be

able to navigate instruction. (Int. 1, p. 6)

Anna Mae's practice of getting to know her students individually was paramount. As she

stated that having twenty-six students maybe seems like a large number, but to her, getting to

know each one individually, was not daunting, but instead helped inform her instruction through

much flexibility. She did this on a cultural level in the lesson she chose to submit as her

culturally responsive lesson for this study.

Anna Mae's self-selected culturally responsive lesson set was with her summer students

creating a class quilt. She explained:

The squares represented families, siblings, parks, sports, food, toys, emotions

expressed through hearts, homes, favorite colors, parents, favorite shapes, etc. My

students even chose their favorite color squares before they even began their projects.

[The] quilt allows [the students] to immerse themselves in their culture and freedom to

express themselves. (Teacher Lesson Reflection)

She was able to learn about the "lives and sentimental values of [her] students in a short period

of time" (Teacher Lesson Reflection). As stated in the previous example, she values getting to

know her students. Her lesson included getting to know the students' cultures.

During the school year, she observed and engaged in discussions with her students to

learn about them. She admitted:

I observe conversations. I look to see what turns them on and what makes them smile.

What turns them off and makes them happy. I listen to dialogue. Dialogue is very

important because they'll talk to each other and tell exactly how they feel. So, I'm

very careful about how I delegate things with them about how I interfere with

conversation. (Int. 2, p. 4)

Anna Mae chose to observe, *then* opened dialogue with her students, allowing them to interact

with one another, and was careful when and how to join the conversation.

The Social-emotional Dimensions of a Child

Anna Mae's spiritual connection leaked into her classroom in various ways. She worried

about her students' social-emotional development, taught about their feelings, and had them alter

their choices after self-reflection. Anna Mae modeled her care for her students by also becoming

vulnerable herself in certain situations. She knew her students, focused on what they responded

to for her to reach each student as a whole; not only academically but socially-emotionally as

well. One example of her attention to the social-emotional was when she greeted her students in the morning. She shared that she is "very loving, caring and giving" but her teacher style is "very spiritual." She furthered:

> I lead from within, not without so everything that I do or every decision that I make is always from asking a question to the outside to the universe to whoever it is, it could be to God, it could be to an ancestor, it could be to a deceased loved one. . . I may do it out loud, everything that I do and every move that I make has already been consulted with I know the powers that have my best interest at heart so even when to talk to the kids and the kids come to me and in the morning, we greet them in the morning and we say good morning . . . and some of the kids will come in and I'll say good morning. I say good morning, I touch them here (chest), so when they come in in the morning, I touch them in their heart. Good morning, good morning because I want to transfer that energy right to them. (Int. 1, p. 6)

Through her practice of saying "good morning" to her students in this specific way, Anna Mae tapped into how they were feeling before they even stepped into the classroom. Her approach set the tone for how Anna Mae should be reacting to her students first thing in the morning, addressing any urgent issues, and making sure their school day begins on a positive note. Her attention to the social-emotional part of her students was a culturally responsive instructional practice.

Treating her students like her own children.

Anna Mae overlapped how she raised her own children with how she empowered her students. By leading from "a spiritual realm" (Int. 1, p. 6) and wanting to transfer positive energy to her students, she mimicked what she did at home. In other words, she treated her students in

the ways she would treat her own children. She explained, "And my kids are magical and they're powerful. My personal kids because that's the upbringing they've had so they celebrate themselves" (Int. 2, p. 6) By treating her students as her own, she enacted culturally responsive teaching because she had high expectations of her students in the same way she did of her own children. She inspired her children at home in the same way with positive thinking and talking first thing in the morning. She shared, "I tell my son at home–before you start your day claim what you want your day to be. Declare it. Everyday." She carried this same attitude into her work with her students.

Another method Anna Mae used to tap into the students' social-emotional well-being is through modeling vulnerability. She added:

Another way that I do it is I become vulnerable. So, I make myself vulnerable to

them. How do they learn to become vulnerable? By seeing you become vulnerable.

It's like a mirror image so I use myself sometimes to be their mirror image so that they

can see a part of me in them. (Int. 2, p. 4)

She was open to talking about her feelings and changing behavior based on those feelings.

Anna Mae delivered her lessons very gingerly because she so greatly valued the effect it had on her students. For example, when mediating a situation between peers, she included that as a classroom lesson because she doesn't only teach "pedagogy, [but also] growth mindset," which was believing that intelligence can be developed through specific strategies and habits (Int. 2, p. 3). She extended her theory when she said:

I believe that your mind is strong and your income, meaning the things you put inside

you, is strong, then your outcome is powerful. So, I do that, I incorporate that within

my classroom through words through actions, through instruction. Through the

> delivery of the way I deliver instruction. I rectify, or have the kids rectify their
>
> situations in class. I tell the kids, sometimes you don't want to speak to your friends
>
> and it's okay to be with you versus you know some teachers may say no, you have to
>
> be friends, we're all in this together. You can be in everything together but you can
>
> also take your me time. And you can take your me time in your class. It's ok to take
>
> your time. (Int. 2, p. 3)

Through these examples, Anna Mae deliberately explained how she carves out spaces for her students to grow in their social-emotional habits and how they interact with their classmates. She added:

> I believe in hearing how kids talk and seeing how they work out problems and see
>
> how they get when they frustrated but say Ms. [Anna Mae] I'm gonna do it again, like
>
> a kid said today, Ms. [Anna Mae], I didn't like the fact that I didn't have planned a
>
> review so tomorrow I'm gonna make good choices. So, being able to sit down and
>
> self-reflect at a kindergarten level, something that adults can't even do. (Int. 2, p. 6)

One example of how Anna Mae helps students solve their problems is by helping them communicate their own feelings and how they feel toward each other. She continued:

> So, a little girl came to class and she had these little two pigtails but her mother made the
>
> pigtails pink so when she came in, she had her hair like this on her head. So, I said,
>
> Graziela, you look beautiful! C'mon, come over here, just walk, act like this is a
>
> runway, just walk down, come get your breakfast. And then it was time to line up for
>
> music so she got in line and one of the kids said, 'Graziela why'd you do your hair
>
> like that?' (Int. 2, pp. 1–2)

Anna Mae intercepted early in this example so she could address both students' feelings in this situation. She continued:

> Ryan come here for a minute. I said Graziela, come here. And so, I said Ryan, 'what is one of our goals in school to do besides learn?' And the kids already know me very well. And we practice this. So, he says 'to make people feel good.' So, I said, do you think you made Graziela feel good? I said you know, everyone has different styles, right? And it's not that we have to like them, we don't have to like them. But we have to make people feel good. So, what is a different way you could've asked Graziela that? He said, I could say, Graziela, why do you have pink in your hair? And then I said, Graziela would say, Graziela said, oh cuz my mommy did it, she wanted to change my hair. I said see, now Graziela, do you feel good? And she said yes. And then I said Ryan doesn't that feel better to ask the question that way? He said yea. (Int. 2, pp. 1–2)

Anna Mae took this social-emotional teachable moment because of her life history. She said, "So that is a moment, that of course when I saw that, it was based on a moment that I had in my life because I grew up seeing different in my life. I started seeing pink hair before people even cared about pink hair, I grew up seeing people with nose rings and tattoos and things like that" (Int. 2, pp. 1–2). Anna Mae tapped into what could have been a negative experience for two students and turned it into a positive, learning experience for both. This type of care and focus on the social-emotional is a culturally responsive practice.

Thinking about her students' future.

Anna Mae prioritized the non-academic focus of the child. She thought about and prepared the students for what she thought they may encounter in their future. She continued:

So, I think now, this stage in my life, I try to build that so that they don't have to wait until they're 20 or 30 to understand themselves. They can start understanding themselves at a young age, so that they become a more powerful human being when they get older, not powerful financially, not powerful as far as status, but powerfully inside. Because if they're powerful inside, no one can tear them down. And if someone tears them down, they know how to build themselves back up. So, I think my charge and a part of my charge, even though I don't say it out loud is I want my students to leave me because I know they're not always going to have a teacher like me but I want them to be able to successfully talk to themselves or remind themselves that even though they have someone in the classroom who doesn't understand them, it's okay because they understand who they are. (Int. 2, p. 3)

As cited earlier in this study, students of color generally do not see representations of themselves in the teaching force because most teachers are White, however, Anna Mae planned for this by preparing her students to empower themselves, no matter who their teacher will be in the future. Her goal was to have students realize and tap into the power they already possess whenever they need or want to, and not make this dependent on having Anna Mae as a teacher. In this example of culturally responsive teaching, Anna Mae looked beyond the life of her students as kindergarteners. She looked into their future, the obstacles they may encounter, much like she did in her life history. The root of her driving force was to prepare them for a world similar to what she had experienced. Anna Mae realized that building her students up from the inside, from their power from within, could equip them for what they may encounter in the world as children of color. She usually would set up the learning environment for this type of work at the beginning of the school year. She explained:

For the first two weeks of any school year, no matter what grade, or district, I always

worked on cultivating an educational environment that included every student's

culture, religion, beliefs, personality, temperament, etc. by creating lessons that

fostered expressing each person's vulnerable sides; so that we could establish the

words/ phrases that were off limits, the lessons I would introduce and the ways in

which I would teach them, etc., so that I captured all of my student's personalities on a

daily basis. (Email communication, October 18, 2020)

Anna Mae paid special attention to these types of lessons to lay the groundwork for her style of

teaching. She shared an example of what this looked like in action:

For example, in one of my classes, I had a student who was dyslexic so I had

introduced Naruto books (Japanese versions) where you read from right to left so that

her unique learning style was appreciated by her peers and less of a big deal than it

needed to be. But one in which everyone was willing to help her with. (Email

communication, October 18, 2020)

This particular example supported culturally responsive teaching and pedagogy with a

foundation laid at the beginning of the year, and also prepared them for future encounters

without her as a teacher.

Another example of how Anna Mae thought about the future of her students was by

equipping them to navigate relationships with future teachers. She explained:

I find myself teaching in a manner where I'm trying to build strong line so that when a

child does not see a teacher like me, not how I look but like me, a teacher they don't

encounter teacher like me, they have so much they learn from me that it really it really

won't matter or if it does matter, it won't matter for long because they can go back and

> reflect on the things that I've instilled in them. I've taught them as far as you are
>
> magical you don't need anybody to tell you that. Tell yourself that first. You CAN do
>
> it. If it doesn't feel good to you, it's not good. (Int. 2, p. 3)

This exemplified her seeing beyond the kindergarten classroom. I shared with Anna Mae that one way for me to encompass how she inspired her students is that she treats them like they are the most important people in the room; she empowered them from within to tap into a power that already exists.

Challenging the Status Quo through Curriculum

> I use a skeleton of what the school tells me to use. (Int. 2, p. 7)

> As a kindergarten teacher, Anna Mae shared how most of what she does is not readily

quantified and listed as observable criteria on a typical teacher's evaluation. However, most of these practices were, in fact, observable. Because of this, she was confident about having administrators observe and evaluate her, in addition to meeting her students' needs even though these needs may not be documented. Moreover, she made decisions about her students' math, reading, and social/emotional problem-solving skills, and omitted entire curriculum altogether. This was similar to Priscilla, disrupting the status quo to make curricular decisions that align with her students' cultures. She shared:

> This is the power and the beauty of the way that I LOVE and educate and create the
>
> environment that I create a classroom because even though what I do is not
>
> documented and may not be valued, what's not documented on the outside and what's
>
> not valued means nothing. It's what's documented inside a person is valued and that's
>
> why the way that I teach my children is to feel proud and feel good because if they go
>
> out to another class or another school, another country or whatever, if they are in front

in a classroom where the head of the class doesn't feel like they're valued, none of that

means anything. Why? Because THEY know they're of value. (Int. 2, p. 6)

Anna Mae believed in teaching to the whole child, and beyond kindergarten. She had

expectations of them that went beyond academics. When asked what kind of tools she gave them

to tap into their power from within, she shared:

> The tools I give them are: their words have power and that other human beings show
>
> them how they're acting by the way they treat them and that their imaginations create
>
> what they see. (Email communication, October 18, 2020)

Because of this style of teaching, she was open to having anyone enter her class for whatever

reasons, because she was confident in her outlook of her students and her ultimate goals for their

lives. She continued:

> Because those kids are kindergarteners and they soak it up and they give it back and
>
> they give it out and they tell it. Right? They tell it so you know I'm pretty sure that
>
> people see, they see the way these kids value themselves. That, to me, I don't know.
>
> That to me in a nutshell is, that's how I make sure you know that things that can't be
>
> observed and when things are valued. That's how I feel about it. It means nothing,
>
> nothing more if that kid knows it himself or herself, if she's valued. So, when I think
>
> about observation, I think about my principal, she says, let me know when a good day
>
> to come in to observe. I say any day is a good day to observe because the observation
>
> that you're gonna see is gonna so deep and deeper than just subtraction and addition
>
> that they're doing, that I'll guarantee you when she leaves, she'll see something or
>
> notice something that's powerful. That's the experience that I hope that people get
>
> when they come through that door. (Int. 2, p. 7)

So, Anna Mae, although she challenged the curriculum, was not afraid of her principal observing because she knew those decisions that may have gone against the district expectations would be viewed as sound decisions upon seeing how they affect her diverse students by defying the status quo.

Anna Mae's teaching style was one that she believed was unique. She admitted she only started teaching this way *after* she no longer felt like a novice, once her confidence increased after approximately six years. She revealed:

> So, I think my teaching style is not to prepare kids to go, sit, and learn in a classroom environment the way the teacher thinks they should learn or teach them to be able to successfully pass and take a test, No. My teaching is to help kids develop so that no matter WHERE they go and no matter WHAT test they take, before they even sit down and start something or start a task, or begin a task, they know: a) they can; and b) if they don't do as good as they can, they can always try again; c) they don't need to see a grade before they themselves; d) they don't need anybody to come and tell them you did a good job, they can celebrate themselves and say yes! On their own. Right? (Int. 2, p. 6)

Anna Mae's curricular choices were not only for kindergarten academic success. She was planning and teaching for them in the future. She believed that there was so much more than teaching for the classroom environment, but for various settings that her students will encounter. In math, she explained that she evaluates her students' preparedness:

> So, I will do the math curriculum, however, if the math curriculum says today, you're going to do subtraction and you gonna do subtraction within 10. If my kids aren't ready, I'm not doing subtraction within 10. If they are ready, or some of them are ready, I split put them up in groups and they work on it. The others, I wait because it

makes no sense because then you're gonna have a disconnect. So, for the most part, I

will say I follow the curriculum, but my delivery of the curriculum and the

manipulatives I use may be different and the timing may be different.

Anna Mae strategically followed what to teach, but altered *how* she taught it. She made

instructional decisions based on her students' needs of materials and timing, while at the same

time disrupted the status quo of curriculum, not doing it exactly as it was prescribed.

With realizing the timing needs of her students, Anna Mae shared:

I have never stuck to a pacing guide because it's not fair. I know that the district has to

hold us accountable and they have to have some type of measurement which is great. I

know why they do it but it would be an injustice in class if I followed it because it

would have people lagging behind. So, I have groups in my class. I have those that are

accelerated and they work according to their ability. I have those that are low and we

work towards their ability and I have those that are in the middle. So, in my class, we

have groups so that those that need to use [manipulatives] to count, they use

[manipulatives]. Those that use their fingers, use their fingers. I've been in schools

where administrators say I shouldn't see kids using fingers. Well, I don't know what

to tell you because this is how these kids learn.

Anna Mae was very in tune with the needs of her students, even when it came to *when* to release

information and to whom. This is culturally responsive instructional practice at a high level

because she wanted her students to achieve at their highest and best and would set scaffolds so

they would not experience failures. She calls it an "injustice" if she were to do so.

Anna Mae shared several examples of how she "rebelled" against the status quo

curriculum. She reflected:

So, I think I'm such a rebel and have such a love for, and a passion for students and

teaching that I think that's honestly what has saved my job. It's that because I come

from such a caring place I think universally, I've been protected because I am a teacher

who DOES go off the grid as far as curriculum is concerned. Manipulatives, we have

it all. I use it all. I use whatever I need, if I need to use shaving cream to show density

and volume. If that's what I have to do, I do. So, to answer your question, I will

deliver, I will deliver material that is carefully prepared ahead of time and I will be

behind at times. But at the end of the day when it's time for me to reflect and it's time

for me to sign off and for them to go to first grade, I like the fact that I'm able to smile

and feel good about the progress that we made. And in doing that yes, I do follow

curriculum but at times, I go astray and I introduce it in a way that meets the needs of

my children. And that's every year because the kids change. (Int. 2, pp. 8–9)

Anna Mae also realized that she needed to adjust her curricular decisions each school year, based

on whoever her students are at the time. Culturally responsive teaching is fluid (Gay, 2002).

Anna Mae did not make a decision and stick with it year after year, she based her decisions on

her students.

For reading, Anna Mae changed a prescribed phonics program for the benefit of her

students. This program was pre-packaged by a specific company, in this case Orton Gillingham,

where all lessons, materials, etc. were prescribed for the teacher to follow. She explained:

So, for instance, I do Orton Gillingham (OG) every single day. I believe in it. I love it.

I see the growth in Orton Gillingham, however, there are certain things I don't do. For

instance, when we do red words or green words, I don't have them, I don't have the

kids use their fingers and point. The reason being is because when I first did that with

> Orton Gillingham, the kids preferred, when you do the red words and you tap out the
>
> red words. The kids got a kick out of that and I saw that they were learning their red
>
> words based on that, not pointing and reading the red words so I omitted that. (Int, 2,
>
> p. 7)

She believed that what was prescribed was beneficial to them, but she altered *how* she used the

program based on her students. She continued:

> Next year kids may like that, I may do it. They may like that better than the tap. I may
>
> do the tap. Not as much as I do it now. When they do the pound and tap. These kids
>
> love pound and tap, they love it. So even though OG says, do your drill Monday,
>
> Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday could be your test day. I do pound and tap Tuesday,
>
> Wednesday, AND Thursday and Friday, when I give them their test, I pound and tap.
>
> They love it, it turns them on, they have a good time, and as a result,
>
> the results are good. (Int. 2, pp. 8)

Again, she also stated that these strategies may change the following year, depending on her

students. However, she measured how well the students were doing and also used that to drive

her decisions on teaching this program.

Anna Mae swapped the social studies curriculum for experiences that were from the

perspective of her students. She revealed:

> So no, I pick and choose HOW I'm going to deliver it, the material. I will deliver the
>
> material but I pick and choose. The one thing I do not really stick to and I haven't
>
> done that in any school I've been in, except for like I said, those six years where I was
>
> copying because that's just, that's what I thought I needed to do at the time. I do not
>
> follow a social studies curriculum. I just don't. I don't teach about this is what

> happened, this is what it is. I look to see where my kids are from and then I teach
>
> from that perspective. (Int. 2, p. 8)

She chose not to follow a social studies curriculum. She admitted that in her first six years of

being a novice, she did follow one, but now chose not to. She explained:

> While I follow certain things in the curriculum, I go a little deeper as to why people
>
> have done the things that have been recorded in the history books, and relate it to their
>
> current reality. To teach slavery without meaning and feeling and an open dialogue, is
>
> merely a conversation; and when students are in my classes, it's' important for me to
>
> help them transform into better versions of themselves; not remain the same. (Email
>
> communication, October, 18, 2020)

She shared how she did explain how things have been recorded in the history books, not

necessarily that they are the ultimate truth. Then, she added dialogue and conversation around

these topics. She continued:

> How many times have we heard the same history stories and never think about our
>
> personal encounters outside of our homes and classrooms. Meaningful lessons are the
>
> ones that make you think about the things we say and do, despite what we are used to
>
> saying and doing.

Going against the status quo curriculum, Anna Mae shared how she tried her best to go against

what the norms were, or what "we are used to saying or doing."

> She also taught from the perspective of her students, which is being culturally responsive.

She continued:

> When we do the pledge my kids, at least thirteen of my kids speak Spanish so they do
>
> the pledge in Spanish. When we have birthday parties in school, if the parent speaks

> Spanish, the Happy Birthday song is the Spanish version so, there's a lot of things that
>
> I go off the grid with, however, I think what I've learned and what continues to
>
> happen is if you show growth within your classroom, and if your administrator sees that
>
> they're learning, I kind of get away with it. (Int. 2, p. 8)

In this example of a culturally responsive instructional choice, Anne Marie responded to her students who predominantly are Spanish speaking. She absorbed their native language into the lessons. She also stated that she could "get away" with these decisions because she could show evidence of progress among her students. Anna Mae also made choices about words in lessons and supplemental materials. She shared:

> I would say 90% of my class from teaching and how I interact with my students in the
>
> words I use and even when I'm teaching lessons, I'll change lessons, if I don't like the
>
> wording. They're certain social programs that I won't show in school and I won't use
>
> because they seem like they count, they include certain people, count the other ones
>
> out. So, certain YouTube videos I won't show because even though the wording is kid
>
> friendly, to me, it doesn't include all the kids in my population. Now if I was
>
> someplace else, maybe I would show it because it included the kids in the population.
>
> (Int. 2, p. 1)

Anna Mae did not use materials that were not representative of her students. She was acutely aware when she said that certain programs "include certain people" and "count the other ones out. So, certain YouTube videos I won't show because even though the wording is kid friendly, to me, it doesn't include all the kids in my population" (Int. 2, p. 1). From her perspective, she believed that omitting any representatives of her students would account for her not including this material in her classroom.

Anna Mae shared many examples of how she went against the grain with regard to curriculum. This common thread among all three participants posed the question for further study regarding changes in curriculum to be more representative of a cultural mix of students.

Bridging the Curriculum to Students' Families

Anna Mae strove to include parents as much as possible. She believed they were a valuable part of her relationship with her students. When it came to holidays celebrated in her class or schoolwide, Anna Mae created a very inclusive environment. She shared:

> You have to change the wording sometimes. I also have to let parents know that, you know, to send a letter sometimes that we're gonna have multicultural day, you know, since I know that [student]'s not able to celebrate Thanksgiving, we're gonna turn it into a multicultural day so she could be a part of our celebration, of our class that day. And I ask the parents yes or no. (Int. 2, p. 9)

Anna Mae changing a class or schoolwide celebration to include all students spoke to her life history of being accepting of all people from all backgrounds as well as her culturally responsive classroom practices. Reaching out to the families to ensure that they knew there are celebratory options for their children, as well as reaching out to the families who *did* celebrate said holiday, to inform them that her classroom is inclusive of all celebrations, was an example of a culturally responsive practice. On the topic of celebrating holidays at school, Anna Mae also shared:

> So, when the kids are having those conversations, my thing is to not, I don't get involved in such a strong way because I know that it's coming from their upbringing but I really encourage the kids understand that we can believe in different things. (Int. 2, p. 10)

Anna Mae believed in inclusivity so all holidays were celebrated. It was important to her to provide a delicate balance about the students' and families' beliefs and the desire to be inclusive.

All of the instances of high expectations that Anna Mae had for her students required subthemes to be able to show the data in this section. Because she was challenged as a young person when she tried meeting her educational and professional goals, and succeeded, she did not allow her students to believe anything but the best for themselves. The data showed high expectations by being invested in the social-emotional parts of her students' development, treating her students like her own children, thinking about her students' futures, challenging the status quo curriculum, and establishing relationships with her students' families. Anna Mae's upbringing of being surrounded by diverse people also informed who she was as a teacher. It also emerged in the data for this next section about race and racism.

Examining Race and Racism: Anna Mae and Being Inclusive of All

As I examined races and racism throughout this study, Anna Mae's upbringing magnified many of her choices in this section. As a self-identified African American woman, she was a proponent of diversity. She was raised around people who looked, thought, and acted differently from the norm at the time, and her family consisted of and continued to be made of interracial marriages. She also sought out to raise her family in a community that reflects this belief and her own community as a young person.

Anna Mae's life history of being around diversity and thus being accepting of all people of all backgrounds had an effect on her perspectives on race and racism. She shared:

> I grew up in [northeastern city] so it was very diverse. I was exposed at a young age to things that people just now becoming accepted of same sex marriages, interracial marriages, people with rings in their nose, tattoos, orange hair, blue hair, shaved hair

on the side. That was not new to me. (Int. 1, p. 1)

Being exposed to people of different backgrounds as a part of your upbringing normalized the people and their differences. Anna Mae's deep connection to her grandfather's words motivated her sentiments on race and racism today. He instilled that family was important, and that she should "share and spread love and kindness" in all situations. Because of this, and realizing the reciprocal joy of these actions, Anna Mae had "been addicted ever since to spreading joy." Her grandfather was in an interracial marriage beginning in the 1950s. He then passed these words, which include taking care of your family, loving and caring for others, etc. to Anna Mae as actions she could continue. Anna Mae's family continued to be diverse present day with more interracial marriages. She shared:

> My brother-in-law is Asian. My cousins who live in [northeastern state], are married to Caucasian men. There's Black cause they're Spanish. My grandmother married my mom's dad. They were both post office workers in [northeastern city], in the 40s, 50s. And it was frowned upon because she was black and he was white. So, I think for me in the way I've been brought up and I try to stay in communities that are more open to multicultural families and mixed families. (Focus Group, p. 11)

This enabled Anna Mae to carry on disrupting racism and discrimination in this way, loving and caring for others. She also sought out neighborhoods that are diverse and multicultural to raise her family. She shared about her youngest son, "I want him to have that experience because I wanted something where he lived, and the friends he played with to mirror who his family is . . . I want it to be all inclusive."

> Her life history directly influences who she is as a teacher. She shared:

> So, for me as an educator, while I'm wide open and I'm open book, I do know that

people come already with their biases. So, I'm very delicate when I first meet kids

because I need to see them play themselves out so I can know how to approach them

or 'now how I'm going to teach them or know the things that I want to say. When I

came into this classroom, I sat in the background even though there are a lot of things

I disagreed with, I purposely sat in the background because I wanted to get a feel of

the kids individually, and I didn't want to come in with what people told me was

going on in the class because that can be changed. But I wanted to see the kids for

themselves. (Focus Group, p. 11)

Because of her life history, she observed and examined people so they could reveal who they

were, what their biases were, so she could devise strategies to address it or interact with those

people. As a teacher, she collected this information about her students in order to teach them.

She believed that racism is a normal fabric in our society, so she knew to look for it, so she could

make decisions about addressing it. Along these lines, she continued:

So, I knew how to come in because you want to add and make their lives better. You

want to add to it and not subtract from them. So, I think my perspective and anything

that I conquer in life and whether it's with adults or meeting a group of people, adults

or a group of kids or parents or whatever, I'm always looking to see the characters play

themselves out because they'll show you how they want to be treated or they'll let you

know what you should say to them or not say to them. So, I think in my teaching,

that's how I approach a classroom. When I come into a classroom, it's not about the

academics and all things that's easy. That's the easy part. But how do you get through

to them? (Focus Group, p. 12)

She was consciously assessing how to disrupt the normalcy of racism and discrimination in her

classroom. She feels this was essential to "get through to them" and "make their lives better."

Anna Mae discussed how she was sensitive to racism with this example:

"So, it's a very delicate thing for me because I'm a part of a family where I know my

sister, when she first met my brother-in-law, the only place they felt safe was in

[large, metropolitan, northeastern city] because they saw more couples like them [there].

So, they hung out [there] a lot, you know, not where they lived but, in another state, even

though it's next door. But they hung out where they felt comfortable where they saw

more of them. So, for me, coming to Meadowside where I don't see, in the population we

have here, I mean I see more of me, but I don't have to see more of me to inject me into

the kids that I see. So, I think that's my life. My family life has taught me that and it

continues to teach me that. (Focus Group, p. 12)

Anna Mae's life history with her diverse family growing up, which continued into her current

family with her son and extended mixed family, influenced how she was in her classroom. She

even shared that in Meadowside, she did not see representations of herself, but for her, that was

not necessary. She was accustomed to being "different" than the norm. In other words, her

differences naturally translated into her disrupting any racism, discrimination, etc. by just being

who she is.

CRT is an intersectional theory, where multiple truths can co-exist. For example, Anna

Mae discussed how in her classroom it was okay to "make mistakes," there was no "right or

wrong," and instead of saying "bad or good," they said "choices." She believed in being

inclusive of all cultures, races, languages, etc., especially if they were represented in her

classroom. She felt adults have trouble with open honesty and she contrasted:

Adults don't want to be, or don't want to not engage in something or not want to

be honest about something because they don't want to feel as though they did

something wrong, whereas in my class there is no right or wrong, we don't say bad or

good, we say choices. I believe that my teaching equips kids to go anywhere and not

have to worry about being, having something documented or feeling valued

because they've been taught that *I am of value*, whether you know it, realize it, or

believe it or not, it doesn't matter. What matters is what I know and that's the power.

Not the outside power but the inside power, what I believe and think about myself. So,

I think that's the way I teach, instills that and I know it's embedded in me because

that's how I teach my kids. And my kids are magical and they're powerful. (Int. 2, p.

6)

Anna Mae's drive to uplift her students came from this belief of seeking out the choices that best

suit and celebrate you. She instilled this "inside power" in her students. Anna Mae shared many

times that this was the crux of her teaching but it was not clear how it manifested in curriculum

and pedagogy.

Anna Mae continues to address racism by adding linguistic decisions to her instructional

practice. Because most of her students were Spanish speakers, they recited the Pledge of

Allegiance in Spanish and sang "Happy Birthday" in Spanish for celebrations.

The following school year, Anna Mae had been scheduled to be a data coach at one of the

middle schools. She shared:

I'm doing data over there. So, I'm constantly writing. That's another thing. When you

look at numbers, you know that now I'm looking at numbers. So, it's easy for a

population to say, oh my God, the tier three kids are, you know, reduced lunch. I mean

that's a cop out. That's easy. That's easy too oh there's single parent homes or they

know, because I can for everything that you say, I can also show you the same person

who became something. So, you know, even looking at numbers, it's like look deeper

into the numbers. You know, maybe look at the season, maybe the kids had surgery,

right? Maybe the kids were out of the country for two months during the testing. For

me, where they are, it's a history behind it, those numbers. I'm thinking about how do

I look at these numbers, right? To make change, to effect change. (Focus Group, p.

13)

Anna Mae was looking forward to analyzing the student test data because she hoped to look for

viable answers as to why the data looked as they did, instead of excusing their results through

poverty or family structure. She would again, be flexible, looking at all aspects of the students, to

analyze the data. Because this followed into the following year as a future change in her position

in the district, I was not able to collect data on what this looked like in practice.

Besides wanting to effect change as the data coach at the middle school, she intended to

also give the middle school students a voice. She explained:

Totally different population because the kids are older. So now my duty is to go in

there and then see how the kids, who they are, what do they like, what, you know

what I mean? How would I approach them? Cause not only am I going to a middle

school, even though they're Spanish speaking, but where are they from? Are they from

Guatemala or are they from Colombia? Are they from Puerto Rico or are they from,

that's a whole other ballgame. So now I have to now go and learn again. So, you're

constantly, I'm constantly learning. (p. 12)

Anna Mae's willingness to be fluid and adapt aligned with her belief in being inclusive of all

cultural, racial, and linguistic backgrounds. She planned to gather information about her

students' cultures and languages to inform her analysis of the data.

Anna Mae's self-selected culturally responsive lesson on summer quilts also addressed

voice. She excitedly shared, "everybody has a story, everyone loves sharing their story." Each

student used crayons and colored pencils to create two squares each to combine and make a class

quilt. Students were encouraged to share things they liked, family, and any activities and hobbies

they enjoyed. They discussed how quilts can be used to wrap around you (Video lesson).

As was evidenced by Priscilla, each of my participants' life histories revealed a

connection to their culturally responsive instructional practices. Anna Mae grew up around all

different kinds of people, was taught to be accepting and to love others, and had challenges

achieving goals in school and at the beginning of her career. This translated into her instructional

practices of having high expectations of her students, but in three very specific ways, also

reflecting her life history: valuing the social-emotional aspect of each student, treating them like

her own children, and thinking about their future after they leave her classroom. Because of her

life history of being around a diverse group of people and being raised to love and carry family

and friends when they need it, these three ways of helping her students be their best makes sense.

Finally, Anna Mae's take on race and racism follows a similar pattern of being inclusive of all

people. Next, I discuss Cleopatra.

Cleopatra and Her Life History: Empathizer

My third and final participant volunteered at the end of the school year and, although I

was grateful to have three participants, I was not sure about the time she would be able to

dedicate because it was at the hectic end of the school year. However, Cleopatra was committed

to this study and participated fully. Cleopatra's stand out characteristic was empathy with others.

Her life history, being a mother, and her foreign educational experiences allowed for varied experiences to serve as platforms to be able to relate to others. Cleopatra was raised in Jamaica and completed all of her pre-college years there. Teaching was also her second career. All of these experiences informed who she was as a teacher today.

Cleopatra had been teaching for eight years and was beginning her ninth year at the time of this study. She had taught kindergarten, first and third grades, and currently teaches first grade. She held certifications in teaching and supervision. Her professional development experience with culturally responsive teaching came from district-led workshops. She was not married and had one daughter. She was in close contact with her siblings and parents. As a dark-brown skinned woman, she identified as Black, but not African American, because she was raised in Jamaica. However, she credited her learning of African American history from interviewing different African Americans who lived during the civil rights movement and played a role in changing education during that time. Cleopatra, now in her early forties, smiled as she shared about the opportunity to do this when she first arrived in the U.S. This experience served as the foundation for understanding her students and their journeys in the U.S. In her Jamaican accent, she reflected that this learning experience impacted the way she approached her students and the acknowledgement of how they came to the U.S. and "the risks that their parents take for a better way of life" (Focus Group, p. 10). She continued:

> I think that all impacts the way I interact, my expectations, understanding the different cultures, their expectations of me. It makes my classroom a learning environment in which all are welcome. Because it's no longer governed by pen and paper or what the professor said, but it's governed by us creating together a learning environment where we are all intertwined, we're all being equipped to care. I think that made a big

difference, just understanding the history of the people and the changes and the

influences that they have made and what they, they took for us to get here. I think that

that's it, just me understanding that and appreciating that and seeing these kids, all

they want is just to be a part of it. Who am I to hold them back? (Focus Group, pp.

10–11)

She stated, "I came from a family that expected a lot because of the lacking on their part

of what they got" (Int. 1, p. 1). Cleopatra's statement joined together her salient quality as a

teacher, empathy, and the deep roots of her life history of growing up as a good student in

Jamaica. Her educational experience was that of "The teacher teach[es], you learned and so if

you were good at listening and following directions, you would succeed. It was just a teaching

style of one-size-fits-all back then. You sat in a row, there's no group, there's nothing" (Int. 2, p.

3). But even though she was a good student, she saw others not succeeding in this type of school

environment. So, in her classroom, she strove to create the opposite; to have a very student-

centered environment and to make sure to rectify any inequitable situations affecting her

students. At the forefront of all this, she put herself or a loved one in the position of her students

in order to build a foundation from where to begin to address issues of equity.

Cleopatra's childhood in 1970s Jamaica was a happy time in addition to all the school

work. She recalled playing after school with her siblings after the morning shift of school:

I went to school for 7, finished at 12:30 but we never had specials, like pushes the day

longer here but after school we found time to play. I had friends. I went to church

every day–I felt like it was [everyday]. There was no going out Sunday. Sunday night

to Tuesday with Grandma because we needed to go to church. I think academically,

because of the push our parents wanted so much from us that I buried myself in books

and it paid off. [We] would go to the beach because we're on the island, still don't know

how to swim so basically, I think I did okay. (Int. 1, p. 1)

Cleopatra "buried herself in books" to fulfill her parents' expectations but school came easily to

her, unlike some of her siblings. She grew up with no television, so her favorite thing to do was

listen to stories on the radio and visualize what the picture would be. Cleopatra reminisced

saying, "I felt loved, never felt that I needed anything. We never knew we were poor because we

didn't lack anything" (Int. 1, p. 1). In addition, in Jamaica, everyone shared the same culture.,

contrasting to the U.S. where often several cultures are represented in a single classroom.

Cleopatra explained, "We're from the same neighborhood. We know each other's mom, the mom

knows our dad, and so we could identify with each other. We could relate to each other. The

teacher most likely live[d] in that area and so it was one big family" (Int. 1, p. 4). If the teacher

had to call home or come to your house, she further explained, "then that means teachers gon

whoop me, Mom's gon whoop me" (Int. 1, p. 4).

In Jamaica, Cleopatra witnessed educational inequity for her brothers. They were not

studious like their sister. They would not listen to the teacher. She remembered:

My brother, they would tie him up on the chair. I remember that, plugging him to sit

and learn and he would just get loose and run home and the teachers didn't take into

consideration his learning style. He couldn't learn what they were teaching him. My

youngest brother was sickle-cell, always sick, always out of school. When he came

back, no one cared how far he was behind. And if you want to learn, then your mom

and dad has to pay extra money for extra lessons. (Int. 2, p. 4)

Both brothers are now successful entrepreneurs, one owning a rental car company and the other

his own hardware store. So, Cleopatra knew that she "didn't want to replicate [the educational

system I grew up in] with my kids and that's what influenced me, my background was not to do that" (Int. 2, p. 4).

Cleopatra completed high school in Jamaica and started college but then emigrated to Canada to complete her bachelor's, double majoring in economics and international relations. She described being in school in Canada as a culture shock, "going to Canada and not being able to, from a different culture, that was a culture shock to me. I had to learn new ways and at times trying to hide my way because you think the other way is superior or right" (Int. 2, p. 3). She struggled with getting accustomed to the climate. "Canada's weather and getting around in the cold that was new to me. I wanted to stay in and socializing was very hard to accomplish when it required me going outdoors!!!" (Email communication, January 12, 2020). She continued:

> The education system that was to be so familiar was not. Here, teachers seemed to
> dedicate time to me and also required application to their system. Economics, for
> example, was my major, and after studying the text religiously I was asked to apply
> theories to the Canadian economy which I could not do. I liked that they were preparing
> me to be useful and not just full of knowledge. In Jamaica, that was not required. Once I
> was able to spit back what was read, I was classified as smart. It was a struggle to get
> used to the way assessments were given and to balance that with fitting it. In the end, the
> academics was given priority and fitting in lost out. I do not know if I fit in or not. (Email
> communication, January 12, 2020)

This experience upon immigrating to Canada informed Cleopatra's way of teaching ultimately in the U.S. She was able to use this "culture shock" experience to empathize with her immigrant students and their families.

After obtaining her degree, she immigrated to the US, settling in Meadowside, and got her teaching licenses at a local university. However, her choice to leave corporate was a personal one because of her young daughter's medical needs at the time:

It was different from the schooling I've been through. I came on from corporate. I was a representative for [a large oil company]. So, my focus has always been business, math, the sciences and so when I came on, my daughter – we have some little medical issues and I wanted to be with her and somebody said well I've been teaching at the library for free, adults. So, they were like why don't you just go in it. And I did. (Int. 1, p. 2)

Cleopatra's personal experiences in education explained her empathy for her students: seeing her brothers not fit the mold of the school's expectations and requirements in Jamaica, her own experience in Canada, and her need to switch careers to take care of her daughter. All of these played a role in the empathy she has for her students and their families. She imagined that it could be her, or her daughter, or another loved one sitting in that student's seat, and she realized that everyone comes with a story, and needs to be met, before they can be successful in the classroom. Cleopatra tried her best to ensure equity for her students from an empathic approach. She shared how her approach to teaching came directly from her experiences as a student in Canada. She reflected: "So the way I approached that is because of me being in a situation like that where I too was new. I was learning, I wasn't dumb. I had to get a pathway to a different way, a different thinking" (Focus Group, p. 7). Without her life history in Jamaica, her experience as a student in a foreign country, Canada, then switching careers for the well-being of her daughter, Cleopatra may not have been able to show the empathy that she did for her students. This was the crux of what makes her an empathizer. She concluded: "So for me, I went

to school in a different country, part of my life and I always said when I started teaching, whenever I enter a classroom, every child in front of me represents me" (Focus Group, p. 7).

Cleopatra's decision to enter teaching from the corporate world was easy. She shared that even though it was best to be with her young daughter at the time, she was surprised about the pay, explaining, "When I came, I realized how different the educational arena is from corporate" (Int. 1, p. 2). She recalled:

I started in corporate as soon as I left university in Canada. I became the western regional representative for an oil company. This includes much travelling and conferences. This was a very lucrative position and compensation was excellent for a person just leaving university with no responsibilities. I was blessed with a daughter and she required medical treatment and days in ICU. There was only one option. I had to be with her… I quit corporate after seven years. I started teaching adults to read at the library twice a week in the American Literacy Volunteers Program. I was told to go teach. I did. I went to school, studied at night and did my master of arts in teaching . . . took the praxis, passed, did my intern for 1 year instead of 1 semester because I knew I wanted to excel in the field and welcome every opportunity to learn. I was hired at the school where I did my intern. It took me two years plus my intern year to get employed (Email communication, January 12, 2020).

Her decision to leave a more lucrative job for a one that paid less was to be able to care for her newborn daughter. Her process to becoming a teacher was not straightforward because she started as a volunteer teacher and took a few years to gain employment once she completed her MA in teaching. This experience added evidence to her life history influencing how she empathized as a teacher.

Cleopatra's life history of being deeply rooted in Jamaica, emigrating to Canada, having her daughter, and making a pivotal career switch because of her daughter's medical needs, all ties into who she was as a teacher. First, it informed and grew her level of empathy. Secondly, it influenced her level of advocacy. Finally, all her international experience raised her own multinational awareness. She took all of these experiences to address culturally responsive teaching in her classroom.

Culturally Responsive Instructional Practices: Cleopatra and Empathy, Equity, and Multinational Awareness

This study continues to support the literature that culturally responsive teaching is linked to different life influences including, but not limited to upbringing, experiences, worldview, and relationships. Just as it did with Priscilla and Anna Mae, Cleopatra's life history shaped who she was as a teacher. In this section, I discuss the themes that emerged from Cleopatra's data, which showed that Cleopatra empathized with her students, strove for equity for each student in her classroom, and that her international educational experiences have informed her multinational awareness. Her culturally responsive instructional practices demonstrated the connection to her life history.

Being empathetic allowed Cleopatra to advocate for her students. "When I look at them and when I teach a certain way . . . this is my daughter in front of me. This is me. It makes a big difference" (Focus Group, p. 7). She believed that her students are as important to her as her daughter, making this the foundation of the instructional strategies she used with her students. The use of empathy as a strategy stemmed from her career switch from corporate to education to have more time with her young daughter because of medical issues, so Cleopatra often made decisions for her students with the same urgency, as if it were her daughter sitting in her

classroom. She strove for equity in her classroom; making sure each student was receiving what they needed, but not necessarily the same things. In addition, her multinational awareness shone as she explained her varied educational experiences in a few different countries. Her school experiences in Jamaica greatly influenced who she is as a teacher in the U.S. She also tapped into her school experiences in Canada as a non-native, which facilitated her empathy toward her students.

Empathy for Students

Cleopatra's upbringing in Jamaica was very deeply rooted in how her life history affected her teaching. In addition to these childhood experiences, she drew upon personal struggles for herself and for her daughter in order to empathize with her students. She explained:

So, I knew the educational system that I grew up in, I didn't want to replicate it with my kids and that's what influenced me, my background was not to do that. I went to school in a different country, part of my life and I always said when I started teaching, whenever I enter a classroom, every child in front of me represents me. For me, it was my own life story, my own personal life experience. I know it hurts my daughter to talk about her dad or not talk about your dad and then we think maybe silence is best so, I know if she gets something to do regard to her father it may not work out versus her getting something to do on her grandfather. It's me losing my mom at a young age. So, my life experience makes me so sensitive to different things and topics that I always see: this is me–I wouldn't want that. (Int. 2, p. 4)

From these personal experiences, we saw that Cleopatra tapped into seeing herself in her students because of her upbringing, her relationship with her daughter as a single mother, and

losing her own mother at a young age. She attributes her sensitivity, or empathy to these

experiences.

Cleopatra believed that her life history directly influences her teaching. From a culturally

responsive practice perspective, she recognized the life and culture of the students, as well as her

own, then connected the two and related to the students in this way. This was an important

juxtaposition of the teacher in relation to the students. Most teachers stop at knowing their

students' cultures and being aware of their own, but few are able to navigate relationships

between the two, as in the first part of the definition of culturally responsive teaching, where

affirming students involves interrelating the teacher's and the students' cultures. (Ladson-

Billings, 1995a).

Cleopatra often compares her classroom to that of hers growing up. She revealed:

I make really extra effort to change in my classroom from being the way I grew up. I

want the kids to be more involved, to push me to where they are, they want to go

while I guide them. For my students to be more thinkers without being fresh. I say that

because a lot of times I see them coming in and they're afraid to say what they think

because sometimes the culture difference too where they're not supposed to answer

back like in some families, the teacher's always right. And so, fortunately for me this

class, I've had them from kindergarten so I've gotten to know the family. I've gotten

to put them in my lesson plans. I've gotten to the point where I feel like they're my

second kid so it makes it a little bit easier and I could . . . when you, if you come in

my classroom for a day, these chairs they're not sitting like this. You'll see some under

the table, wherever. They're very comfortable to move unless we're having carpet

time, which we crisscross. We really listen to each other. They know their voice is

very important. (Int. 4, p. 3)

Cleopatra recognized that her own school experiences were limiting, where she did not always have a voice or an opportunity to actively engage in learning. As a result, she intentionally invited her students' voices into her classroom, even if culturally, they were accustomed to just listening to whatever the teacher says. Because they were first graders, being engaged involved talking and also physical movement. There were certain times, like carpet time, where she stated that they had to sit with their legs crossed, but otherwise, they had freedom to select places in the room to do their work.

Striving for Equity

Cleopatra was adamant about the difference between equity and equality. As Cleopatra explained below, equality is a blanket way to make everything even, whereas equity is a way to make everything fair for everyone. In her classroom, she recognized that all her students do not need the same tools, but they all need many tools tailored to them as individuals. She explained her perspective in this way:

> When I put that in the classroom, especially the fact that I have students that have an
> IEP and different preferential styles of learning, if I don't implement equity, then I will
> give everybody the same thing and most of the students will miss out because I would
> only cater to the needs of just a few. Equity is giving them what they need to succeed.
> Equality is giving them the same thing. In education, in the classroom equality can
> never ever allow for us to have a learning environment where we are all successful
> because of the preferred learning styles of some kids, the auditory learners. We have
> kids who need to touch, to feel, to be involved. We have some who, all right,
> introduce it and let me go. So, when I do for example, of word problem you need, you

have kids you [the teacher] need more scaffolding. If I just leave it on like that, my

higher kids may be able to do it but what did I do for the other kids that needed some

support in order to grasp the information. (Int. 2, p. 1)

Cleopatra included all types of learners in her explanation of equity and equality. She recognized

that students had different needs based on their IEPs, different learning styles, and even skill

levels. She also mentioned scaffolding to provide support for students to accomplish a task or

goal, or differentiate among students with different ability levels. So, Cleopatra was using the

concept of equity/equality to describe the needs of different kinds and levels of learners. She

continued:

So, I think in the classroom, we have to look at when we're giving our activities, not

to think one size fits all because that is the classroom I grew up in and that was

YEARS ago, and the kids we have in front of us with technology and other

developments, with all the brain research that is now available to us. Equality can

NOT stand in the classroom without putting equity beside it. I think there MUST, in

order for there to be equality, there must be equity because only then can we can be

equal because my needs are being satisfied and your needs are being satisfied. (Int. 2,

p. 1)

Cleopatra was in tune with all the different kinds of students she had in her classroom and was

aware that equity was needed to address all of these students' needs, not equality. She extended

this stance by having high but differentiated expectations of all of her students. Cleopatra did not

settle for a "one size fits all" approach in her classroom. She realized this would be a disservice.

She followed up with this student example:

I have a kid that comes in 9, 10 o'clock. I'm finished with phonics and this is her

biggest challenge. I could say you're late again or I could say okay, put your bookbag

away, you're here. Let's go, let's go. She can't help it, she doesn't drive. Okay, you're

here. Where is your bookbag? I left it in the cab' Okay, let's hope we find that cab

again. Let's go get paper. We're done. I don't want to, we aren't gonna bring it up,

we're not going to, we're done. How we're doing cupcakes and everyone bring in a

dollar. I know one kid who said, 'Oh I don't have any.' I don't even ask, he gets a

cupcake. It's just standard what we do and how we do it. (Int. 2, p. 5)

Cleopatra realized her student had many needs but her focus was to have her join the routine at

whatever point she entered so she did not miss any more time on task. In addition, the one

student who routinely did not bring in money for special treats, was not excluded from the

activity. Cleopatra did not indulge in figuring out how to get the money for the cupcake from

him either. She just gave him one. She met the needs of the students with a goal in mind and did

what was needed to attain that goal for each student. Her differentiation was an equitable model.

Cleopatra continued to explain equitable practices in her classroom in contrast to her

Jamaican schooling. She shared:

This is Grade One. And I've seen success with them in terms of just having kids that

came in here, not knowing letters and sounds, straight from Puerto Rico, my two kids.

But now, Level 8. It may not seem like a lot but I got 1 January Level 8 from an A.

That's a big jump. Is he second grade ready? No, but can I see where he has the

building blocks that can build, yeah. So, in a lot of ways, it's the same thing as

growing up where it's we keep going to PDs that's encouraging us to change from the

one-size-fit-all but in a lot of scenarios you see it, and you see where, when I go to

meetings, we are pushing for equality but the truth is what I see in my classroom is

> not a need for equality but equity. It's, if we keep pushing for equality, then we're not
>
> teaching the kids that are in front of us, and I feel like at times nothing much has
>
> changed though it's such an exciting time to be an educator because with all the
>
> changes you see, the difference in terms of demographics, the culture infusion. Then
>
> you look back and you're like ok, we're all learning the same thing in the same way,
>
> manufactured productions. (Int. 1, p. 3)

Cleopatra cited an example of her student who has jumped several reading levels within one year in her class. The student entered below grade level and probably did not meet the second-grade reading level at the end of the year, but he had grown significantly closer to grade-level reading. Cleopatra shared that she gave that student what he needed–equitable differentiation, but she feels that districtwide, through professional development programs, they were always pushing equality, or a one-size-fits all approach. She elaborated that she was excited about teaching with so many changes, including culture infusion, but even with all of this, she felt there was still a push for one-size-fits all approaches. Her culturally responsive classroom practice of teaching to each child was a belief that Cleopatra continued to uphold as a result of her life history.

Multinational Awareness

Cleopatra has had varied educational experiences from her native Jamaica, as well as Canada, and finally the U.S. As a reflection of her multinational awareness, or her knowledge of her own cultural background, Cleopatra's multinational educational experiences informed her culturally responsive instruction practice with her multinational students. Her experiences in Jamaica throughout her upbringing surfaced several times in the data. One instance was how she contrasted how school was in Jamaica. She shared:

> There's no hands on, problems are thrown on the board, we write, we read, and that's–

the kids who can do that excel. The kids who have preferred a different learning style does not. That's me. Here we are the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (emphasis). I still see that and I say that because it's so hard to differentiate when you have ten different levels in your classroom. And so, it's easier for you to do just that, the one thing – some will get it. Those who don't are low, those who need a little help medium, those who do okay great, you are great. You're hot. That's the comparison that I see. What I see that is so different was in Jamaica we're all Jamaicans so we share the same culture, we're from the same neighborhood. In terms here, it's different, it's like–with different parts, different everything, differences are coming together to make this one big salad. It's different for me because my expectations, I have families in my classroom in which they don't want to be responsible homework, nothing because the teacher that's your job and it's not being disrespectful. It's like I'm not involved in the education. That's your job. (Int. 1, p. 4)

Cleopatra shared how difficult it could be to differentiate for each child, and recognized how many teachers could not do so because of the high demands placed on teachers. In addition, she discussed the difference between how she grew up where the teachers and parents knew each other more intimately and here in the U.S. where some cultures are hands off and rely mostly on the teacher. In Jamaica, both parents and teachers would administer corporal punishment, whereas here, there are different kinds of discipline or classroom management enforced in the classroom and at home with students' families. However, the difference she saw was not in the way the discipline was carried out but in the unification between parent and teacher. She also pointed out that the tension of realizing that the current U.S. educational system was not as advanced as her Jamaican schooling experience.

Another example of her multinational awareness reflecting her educational experiences was when she explained how formal education in Jamaica was standard at the early childhood level. She noted that some of her students coming from different countries did not experience formal education. She shared:

That's different and I have to respect that. I've seen where kids are coming in with no formal education. That's different because they're coming in because of various reasons and they may not have school and I'm not used to that for my culture. There's always schooling from nursery coming up. So that's different too sometimes, to understand their world. And to put it into mine or even to begin to understand their journey to put them in my learning environment is for them to feel like I'm here. Sometimes it's beyond what can do and there's other parts that needs to be addressed. So that's different for me to look into that but I acknowledge it and I step outside to see what needs to be done. (Int. 1, p. 4)

Cleopatra shared these examples because she believed that she was responsible for doing something for her students to be successful, thus enacting her culturally responsive classroom practice of providing equity for her students. She realized the challenges in encountering obstacles, as described, that required more understanding on her part. She acknowledged her own bias and tried not to allow it to obstruct her actions to support her students.

Another difference between Jamaica and the U.S. that she recognized was how in Jamaica, the culture was more homogeneous, whereas here, any combination of cultures can exist. She explained:

I've also seen where [in the] same country is what's two different cultures. I have two kids from the same country and it seems like one speaks Spanish, one speaks French,

in terms of the vast difference, in terms of their expectations for learning, in terms of

one family may not have struggled so much, can't identify with the other one. I'd

assume that they're similar and that was wrong on my part, for misunderstanding

because these kids have nothing in common, except the same country. (Int. 1, p. 4)

Cleopatra admitted that she assumed that two of her students had the same culture because they

were from the same country. She quickly discovered they did not even share the same native

language. Being able to adapt her perspective based on her students was also a culturally

responsive cultural practice because of how culturally responsive teaching is fluid and ever-

changing (Gay, 2002). Rather than rigidly sticking to her original perspective, she acknowledged

her misunderstanding and learned from that experience.

Finally, Cleopatra drew from experience as a student in Canada to empathize with her

own students, as well as continued to reflect her multinational awareness. In Jamaica, she did

"high school, college, started university there." Afterward, she "went to Toronto, and finished

[her] Bachelor of Science. [She] had two majors–economics and international relations" (Int. 1,

p. 1). Then, she completed her Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT), which was how she ended up

in the eastern U.S. She cited her experience in this way:

I've seen a big difference too. I'm an immigrant who came here, my dad's here now,

came here for better opportunities, know the struggle. When I went to Canada,

completely different culture, completely different teaching style. Sitting in a class

knowing that I know it but when I express it, I failed. They ask me to compare the

Canadian economy in terms of exporting lots to America. I remember that question in the

economic class. I studied the book. I knew it but they wanted what they taught to be put

in a real life and in reality. I couldn't do that. I didn't know the Canadian economy. I am

from Jamaica, so I wrote about Jamaican exporting and I went to the professor. I had a

voice then I said you failed me and I just wanna explain why I failed because I'm not

from here and he gave me the opportunity to research the Canadian economy. (Int. 1, p.

5)

In contrast, she realized:

But these kids are not university level. What voice do they have? In terms of going

up and saying you failed me because of that. I thought I knew that some of my kids

coming in are facing some of the situation. You know it but you're new to this and so I

think I identify with that. (Int. 1, p. 5)

There are several issues to discuss in Cleopatra's contrast between herself as a university student

in Canada and her first graders in the U.S. First, her experience in Canada was difficult for her,

but she was able to advocate for herself because she was an adult learner. Second, she knew how

to navigate being an immigrant in a new country. However, she realized that her students,

although many are immigrants, did not have the world experience to navigate education in a new

country; they could not advocate for themselves. They did not have a voice, if not for someone

who could advocate for them. She continued to add what her colleagues have said in similar

situations about the students:

And I've seen where my counterparts would be like if it's different, it's just so

different in terms of how they just have to get it. This is America. We didn't have that.

Things they take for granted and should be done. I know it's not the same. (Int. 1, p.

5)

The American way is that the students "just have to get it." This was the sentiment among

colleagues. Cleopatra disagreed with this and advocated for her students through her culturally

responsive classroom practices. I further discuss Cleopatra's advocacy for her students under the third research question on race and racism.

Culturally Responsive Unit

Each teacher self-selected one unit they felt was culturally responsive and Cleopatra's was focused on celebrations throughout the school year. Students began the school year by drawing and writing about different celebrations, including birthdays, individual family celebrations, holidays, etc. The unit stretched the entire school year to include every celebration possible, at the time each celebration was occurring. This unit allowed for student expression, celebrating individual students' backgrounds, and was interdisciplinary. There was also a high level of expectations throughout the school year in planning the celebrations, where students and parents planned everything from food to decoration, incorporating several different subjects. A byproduct of this unit was that the students' drawings were a reflection of how they saw themselves racially. This will be further in the section for my third research question on race and racism.

Challenging the Status Quo through Curriculum

As a first-grade teacher, Cleopatra used several different methods to "skip around" her curriculum. She explained: "The curriculum, I will skip around it, depending on the needs of my kids" (Int. 2, p. 5). She based this on the students' interests and preparedness. She added and/or altered the curriculum with different materials, the math lesson sequencing, and even when assessing for reading levels. She also modified for a yet-to-be-classified student:

When deciding on materials, Cleopatra made decisions her own way. She said:

My resources are different. I use what the district gives me, it's always beneficial. We

make our own stuff. If I travel, I pick up things from different Caribbean islands that

I know. If we go, we bring, the drums, we bring various things and I ask them to bring

things in as well. So, the materials, you have to be creative. (Int. 2, p. 5)

From observations in her classroom, I could see some of these materials, especially those related

to the year long self-selected culturally responsive lessons on celebrations. Cleopatra addressed

the math curriculum this way:

In math they started measuring, I went to measurement because they were interested

in measuring and we yeah, I could do measuring before we do shapes, who says I

can't? Based on [how] they were leading the classroom and I know, ok, if I could get

them to measure and I want them to get back to shapes, all I have to do is measure

this, ok let's measure this part, let's measure this part. Oh, we made a square, then we

can go into shapes. Just by, just, without me saying ok now we're doing shapes, we

just kept moving on. Now we're doing shapes, oh what do we know about a triangle?

So, it's like, everything in the real world, everything connects. In education, we try to

ch-ch-ch-ch-ch (chopping motion, chunk, compartmentalize) but we don't do that in

the real world. In the real world, it's seamless and I think it's, we are preparing them

for a factory that doesn't exist. (Int. 2, p. 5)

Similar to Anna Mae, Cleopatra prepared her first graders not only to grasp the math skills but

for future life lessons. Her high expectations manifested because she was teaching to academic

standards, as well as looking into what her students will need in the future.

This particular story about assessing for reading levels using Developmental Reading

Assessment (DRA), a tool widely used among school districts at the elementary level, was the

most telling of how Cleopatra encompasses culturally responsive teaching. When we had our

conversation about challenging the curriculum, Cleopatra responded, "You have to challenge it.

Because it will tell you, you know it's not right. It doesn't feel right" (Int. 2, p. 6). Then,

supported with this example:

> I have a child in, evaluated and they put her reading in a level 6 or 8. She's my kid
>
> who's reading *Charlotte's Web* with me and I said why, oh comprehension and I said
>
> what book did you give her? They showed me the book. You would've probably given
>
> me a 2 for that. Nothing about that book would interest THAT child. So, when she
>
> reads it fluently for you and you're marking her down for comprehension, nothing about
>
> that book. There was no dendrites, no connection in her head that sparked after
>
> she read that book. It's a typical DRA book that does not apply to that black child.
>
> Nothing about that book would've sparked interest in that child. (Int. 2, p. 6)

With this particular student, Cleopatra knew the assessment, or the book itself, was not an

adequate measure. Furthermore, she knew this child, and recognized what she needed to succeed.

She continued:

> So, I said ok, I'll give you a book, get you a harder book. Give me a grade 5 book and
>
> this child will decode it for you. And we did. She's now at a 20-something. She's the
>
> one who's leading the class in reading *Charlotte's Web*. And I've made it so
>
> interesting, I'm like then we haven't met Charlotte, we know Wilbur, we know Bert.
>
> But this book is not saying Wilbur's Web. Who's Charlotte? And she's like LET'S
>
> READ!! WE'RE HERE TO LEARN!! And she's pretty good. (Int. 2, p. 6)

Cleopatra changed the assessment measure and the student rated much higher. This was meeting

the students' needs, with higher expectations, and finding alternative evaluation methods, which

was a culturally responsive instructional practice. Cleopatra also shared:

> Does she remember the paper was you just gave to her? Oooh, you gave me a paper,

right? Yes, where is it? AAhhhhh, was it just now you gave? Yes, it was just now I

gave you a paper. It's in my hand. Alright, let's read. And that's my kid. So, she's

pretty good. So, I will challenge them. (Int. 2, p. 6)

Cleopatra recognized the individual needs of this child while celebrating her success in particular

areas. As a culturally responsive teacher, Cleopatra was layering many ways she knew this

student: knew her interests, her reading level, in what areas she needed improvements, and how

to best evaluate her based on all the information Cleopatra had gathered.

Finally, Cleopatra also addressed equity for her students who are or may have special

needs. She shared this example:

If one of my kids, if I get evaluated and they're like oh he's not doing the work, I said

no this is a general class assessment and he cannot do it. He's wasting his time. He's

gonna sit until I've set up all the other kids and then I'll go over and we'll probably

read a story. Will he do the assessment? No. What grade will you give him? I said,

exempt. And they look at all his grades? Yes, until he gets classified, I've already

documented that he can't do it and it's wasting his time. But I can sit on the carpet and

read with him while the others are on their computers. They're doing their work and

he's doing something he can do. No one is wasting anyone's time. It's like asking a

fish to climb a tree and I said he's no, I can't. They wrote that up and I answered and I

justified my thing. (Int. 2, p. 6)

Cleopatra believed the lack of a speedy evaluation was a disservice to her student because of the

length of time taken to give him what he needed. He was not receiving equitable treatment, or

ultimately being classified. She was familiar with the student, what he needed instructionally,

and she was advocating for him. She risked her evaluation to highlight that he was not receiving

services but she did not want to make it seem that he was "doing ok" in her classroom because

he deserved to be accurately placed for special education services. The last action was risky

because she put the student's needs before her own, which was yet another example of how she

was driven by empathy and advocacy. The literature that supports the third prong of my

definition of culturally responsive teaching centered on sociopolitical discussion and action is

adamant that teachers act as change agents for their students in some capacity (Gay, 2010;

Ladson-Billings, 1995b, 2017; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Cleopatra used this opportunity to

advocate for change for this particular student.

Bridging the Curriculum to Students' Families

Because Cleopatra was teaching mostly the same students for a second year, she had a

close relationship with the parents, which she truly valued. She believed that families are an

important connection to the students, a part of the students' cultures. Building from her

knowledge of the families, she sent out a bilingual survey to the families in English and Spanish,

even though she does not read or write in Spanish. She explained:

> When you think of parents, they're teachers too. One of the things I do every year is I
>
> do a survey from home. So, in the summertime, I get my class list and I send a letter
>
> home just telling the parents who I am and I know nothing about your child but I
>
> would like to. So, tell me about this child that you're going to entrust to me to just
>
> mold with your help and I do it in Spanish. I do it in English. And whatever way they
>
> respond to me is fine. And then when we have back to school night it's like a game I
>
> want to know more about them, I'm taking notes, anything they like and so what I,
>
> then I talk to the kids . . . And we do celebrations, you know celebrating us and our
>
> differences. (Int. 2, p. 2)

Cleopatra recognized that her parents are also teachers, so she included them in the educational process by disseminating a bilingual survey in the summer. She followed up at back to school night by asking more about her students. She prioritized seeking out information about her students. Her self-selected culturally responsive unit was an additional way she collects information about her students. She was interested in connecting to her students through culture, specifically as well. She continued:

> So, you get to know the kids and you get to know what works. I have a child that came in from Africa and no matter what we spoke about there's no connection and I remember from Jamaica we make dumplings, we make big dumplings and just relating to the food and brought in food from different cultures. Then you realize she started opening up, oh there's something here we have in common. (Int. 2, p. 2)

This connection through the cuisine demonstrated how Cleopatra searched for whatever she could to make a connection with a student and his/her family.

Cleopatra acknowledged a very important similarity between Jamaica and the U.S., that parents prioritize behavior *and* academics: "So that's something that I see in MY culture and it's the same thing in THIS culture. Whether they're involved in the kid's life or not, when they come for parent teacher conference, they wanna know is the child behaving and the grades" (Int. 1, pp. 4–5). Cleopatra's acknowledgement of this important parent value spoke to why she established bonds with them. The fact that the parent attended the parent-teacher conference was enough for Cleopatra to establish or continue a connection with the parent, and she saw that the priority was usually academics and behavior. It seemed that Cleopatra also valued these as priorities. Therefore, she did everything she could to connect with her students, which most certainly included their families, adding to her culturally responsive instructional practice.

When asked specifically to name a culturally responsive practice, Cleopatra shared her practice of including family as much as possible:

> I get the family involved in our classroom . . . there may be different cultures where the parents, everything is left to the teacher and that is not being disrespectful. They're not being lackadaisical. It's just that their culture is, the teacher is supposed to do this part. And when you understand just the expectations from the child, from the family, and what you've said, and I think you're able to bridge a lot of gaps in creating that culturally responsive classroom. (Focus Group, p. 15)

Cleopatra's multinational awareness seeped into her understanding of her families' cultural understandings and expectations. In this example, she shared how some families did not seem to get involved but it was because of a cultural expectation placed upon the teacher. She saw this and interacted with her families accordingly.

Cleopatra's themes were the least straightforward of my three participants. In other words, the themes did not emerge neatly and succinctly. The evidence from her life history where becoming a mother influenced her empathy toward her students was the beginning of my reliving her story. I visited and revisited her educational experiences in Jamaica, Canada, and the U.S., until the multinational awareness theme ultimately emerged. Her experiences in different countries directly influenced how she placed herself, culturally, in society, and how she related this part of herself to her students. Once I pinpointed the empathy, striving for equity for her students, her multinational awareness, and the two common threads of challenging the status quo through curriculum and having relationships with her students' families, I felt Cleopatra's narrative reached an ending for the purposes of this study. Now, I will discuss what the data showed when it comes to her experiences with race and racism.

Examining Race and Racism: Cleopatra, Colorism, and Voice

My aim in this study was to examine how race and racism would be demonstrated through culturally responsive teaching. The evidence that emerged was a mix of what I expected with a few surprises as well. I was surprised by Cleopatra's self-selected culturally responsive unit for submission to this study. As with Priscilla and Anna Mae, Cleopatra's unique life history had shown that her experiences with race and racism informed who she is as a teacher, and specifically her culturally responsive instructional practices.

Cleopatra did not identify as African American because she grew up in Jamaica. She said, "They think I am, but I'm not" (Focus Group, p. 10). However, she had a profound respect and understanding for the African American experience. Being an empathizer informed her instructional practice as to how students can be or have been treated. She explained:

> When I came to America and then just, I read up the history, did the history on it, but when I came here and then really stopped to understand just the journey of African Americans. When I got here and it was different just being in the country, I had the opportunity of interviewing a couple of African Americans that made real change. I had the opportunity of traveling as a group to go and meet and interview African Americans who lived in that time when they were not seen as worthy, driving education. (Focus Group, p. 10)

Cleopatra demonstrated her deep multinational awareness when we described how she learned about the racism on which the U.S. was founded and still operates. It was through her first experience in this country of interviewing African Americans who participated in the civil rights movement with regard to education that she gained this knowledge. She acknowledged that this history very much informs her students' experiences in the U.S.: "That changed the way I spend

presently just looking at the journey of students in my class, coming and the risks that their

parents take for a better way of life" (Focus Group, p. 10).

She shared one example of how she had been stereotyped because of her accent in her

district by coworkers, parents, and students. She explained: "I know what it is to come in and

when I speak my accent, you turn around and right then and there are labeled. I'm labeled

because I sound different from you. I'm labeled because when I say something you look at me or

if I go in dialect, you look at me" (Int. 1, p. 5). Her personal example shone light on the kind of

racism Cleopatra had experienced in the U.S. She realized there was a sense of normalcy that

colleagues, parents, and even students felt justified to look at Cleopatra in a certain negative way

because she was not from the U.S. The literature speaks to her experience through deficit views

(Delpit, 1996; Nieto, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; West-Olatunji et al., 2008) of the former

minority, as well as essentializing cultures, which can lead to stereotyping (Sleeter, 2012). Here,

she was focusing on her Jamaican accent being the target. This is yet another layer of how she

could empathize with her students that are non-native English speakers.

Cleopatra's self-selected culturally responsive lesson plan appeared to be simply a unit

that would yield findings of shared celebrations across students in the class. What I did not

anticipate was a transformative observation of students' racial self-image changing as the lesson

continued throughout the school year.

Cleopatra's year-long interdisciplinary unit on celebrations was focused on art, fashion,

physical education, dancing, language and literacy, shared stories, creative writing, math, and

budgeting. Some of the celebrations included were Hispanic Heritage, Thanksgiving, Black

History, Chinese New Year, and what the students described as "the best" – birthdays (Lesson

video). Cleopatra chose this unit because of her diverse students comprising Hispanic, African, Mediterranean, African American, and Caribbean. She shared:

> So, for me, what better way to show just the uniqueness and the contribution that my
>
> students, well, so that was just the ideal lesson. It wouldn't have shown it, but when
>
> but I know social studies our unit was for the entire year. And the progress made and
>
> just what it entails. So that's why I chose that one. (Focus Group, p. 3)

This unit, as whole, focused on so many disciplines and cultures, and spoke to Cleopatra's culturally responsive strategies where she highlighted the voices of her students and their families. Cleopatra said that these lessons invoked much discussion, especially through the students' drawings.

These drawings were an important part of the lesson. Students were asked to depict celebrations of choice, such as the best birthday. At the beginning with the drawings of themselves, Cleopatra allowed the students to choose colors for their self-image and did not interfere. She explained:

> Well, I let them first of all, the choice. I want to see what happens. The Black kids
>
> will do dark brown and then we talk about where we're from, show pictures of
>
> different families in different areas. And I said to one of my students, I notice there's
>
> another color you should use, you could use that it may match your skin and she said
>
> but I'm white. I said ok, you identify as being white. And I say, well I identify as
>
> being black but I won't use the black crayon, it makes me too dark. I would use like
>
> dark brown because it's a different color. (Int. 1, pp. 5–6)

The way the students represented themselves in September did not match their skin color with crayon color but Cleopatra had small conversations like the one at different times with different

students as the celebrations continued. She allowed for the students to complete their drawings with the colors of their choice. She added: "The Hispanic kids, no matter how dark they are will not identify as being Black, do not pick up the black crayon" (Lesson Reflection; Lesson Video; Int. 1, p. 5). She also shared a different strategy to invoke discussion:

> And I always color myself, especially with this kid because this kid came in completely White and she's not. Now when she colors herself, there's color in her little face. She went a little darker, and she's realizing that it's ok to be who you are. It's ok for me to say I'm Hispanic because I am and we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, we celebrate Black History Month, and they're both races, any races, we make sure we do celebrations around the world. If it's validated, they're very important. And each race has a story to tell. (Int. 2, p. 7)

Cleopatra's first graders began the school making crayon color choices that did not match the color of their skin. There is a multi-layered reason for this but the large, overarching explanation lies in the third tenet of CRT, race as a social construction, where oppression and power inequity are present. Most of what perpetuates these ideals is white supremacy (Tate, 1997), where mainstream society has been conditioned to think anything related to White culture is most desirable. Cleopatra's first graders chose the lighter colors whenever possible. Only after a few months of the celebrations unit did the crayon colors begin to get closer to an accurate depiction of their actual skin color. The Hispanic children identifying as White is a clear indicator that they have been conditioned to think that Whiteness is more valuable. However, Cleopatra's actions address a multi-layered level of racism at the systemic level. Through different strategies, she attempts to have the students understand that their skin colors are to be celebrated because it is a part of who they are.

As discussion continued, through different celebrations, by December, things began to change. She shared:

> We talk about it and I think when I start to do this in Social Studies, we do celebrations around the world, the different cultures and I honor that. I show the importance of that. And by December they're changing their colors. I want them to bring me flags from home. And then I'm like let me see the difference. And before long by the December when we're making a Christmas card, the colors are coming in because I'm really respecting and identifying the different cultures, the celebration. I'm like bring in your food, we have readers coming in. When they come in, I don't change it cause then I'm not letting them see but then we do celebrations all through because not everybody celebrates Christmas. So, we start just identify you know who, letting them see and we do different figures, different political figures, the musicians, the this, the that. And before long, the colors start coming in. Because I'm really respecting and identifying the different cultures, the celebration. I'm like bring in your food, we have readers coming in. (Int. 1, p. 5–6)

Cleopatra was pleased with this outcome. As can be depicted in the students' drawings (Pictures B, C, D), they chose different shades of browns and beiges.

Pictures B, C, D

However, at a different level, some biases continued. Cleopatra shared:

By the end of the year, still some will say I am not from Mexico, I am from United

States of America because to them, I was born here and I want to them to realize that,

to recognize that I was born here. (Int. 1, p. 6)

Many Hispanic students, for fear of deportation, were very adamant to declare that they are U.S.

born, some even to the point they denied their heritage altogether. When people of color were not

the ones in the position of power, or in a desirable position in society, it created this sentiment

among immigrants, as a byproduct of White supremacy, leading to a power imbalance.

Moreover, the denial of your heritage led to adapting a new, American heritage, which most

likely is the mainstream ideal, or being White, and middle class. However, because of

institutional challenges, this is a bamboozlement, or deception, that as a whole, immigrants of

color, were considered equal to the White, American mainstream citizen.

Voice

Cleopatra showed several instances of giving her students and their families a voice.

Aligned with a tenet of CRT (Tate, 1997), Cleopatra believed that their voices should be heard,

rather than silenced because they had been historically marginalized. One way she did this was

by including their names and their relatives in lessons. She shared:

Not just their first name and their last name, but I get to know my students, what do

they like, what are their interests? And I put them in my lesson plan. I love the fact

that my students see themselves if we're doing an activity. Jeffery will see himself in a

soccer question I asked, Camila may see, okay. My question to her has to do with in

the kitchen for read-aloud, I have a surprise. Where I invited Maria's grandma to come

and read a story from back home in Spanish. About Black history, I had Isaiah's

grandma come and talk about growing up in Carolina. So, all my students know that

when they enter the classroom, they're safe. That's the first thing. (Focus Group, p.

15)

Besides including her students' names in lessons and having their relatives participate in

class events, Cleopatra found a way to get her students to open up. She shared:

We do celebrations, you know celebrating us and our differences. So, you get to know

the kids and you get to know what works. I have a child that came in from Africa and

no matter what we spoke about, there's no connection and I remember from Jamaica

we make dumplings, we make big dumplings and just relating to the food and brought

in food from different cultures. Then you realize she started opening up, oh there's

something here we have in common. (Int. 2, p. 2)

Cleopatra reached this student through food, giving a voice to someone who could otherwise not

be acknowledged in the classroom. Cleopatra did not give up, but found a way to reach this

student.

A third instance of amplifying students' voice was the aforementioned example of the

student whose voice was not being heard because her reading level assessment was being

administered incorrectly for that student. Cleopatra discussed how it "didn't feel right" so she re-

evaluated the student on a text that was more accurate for that student. She knew the assessment

text was not interesting to this student, used a different story, and the student was placed at a

reading level that mirrored what Cleopatra saw in her classroom, which was at the level of

Charlotte's Web. Cleopatra knew what this child needed, knew the assessment did not fit this

child, and advocated for her to be properly evaluated. Many students experience improper

evaluations such as this but go uncorrected or corrected late, after damage has been already done.

Cleopatra also advocated for language equity. From a CRT perspective, which included intersectionality where it was not solely about race, but also includes gender, language, etc., her advocacy beyond race was supported. Her students' voices are being heard through her. She said this about challenging a current district issue:

> I will challenge them into the fact that my classroom doesn't get any language. We have no world language because you're assuming all my kids are speak Spanish at home. They don't. So, you are telling me in this society, we're giving kids the tools they need to succeed and one of those is being able to speak more than language but kids that look like me don't get that opportunity because you're assuming. If not, they don't. So, when will they get a world language teacher? Oh, they will learn Spanish when they play in the playground. No, they won't. Then why don't you tell my other kids they will learn English when they play in the playground and I don't have to teach them English? (p. 8)

Cleopatra did not hold back when advocating for her students. She realized the inequity and posed appropriate arguments to support her viewpoint. The lack of a world language for her students spoke to Cleopatra believing that discrimination exists if it is not the dominant language. Cleopatra stated that teaching English is a priority, but not Spanish.

In conclusion, in the same way that Priscilla's and Anna Mae's life history informed who they are as teachers, Cleopatra's life history also did. Her identity as a teacher was shaped by her experiences from her upbringing, being a mother, and being an international student. Her choice to switch careers and become a teacher was a pivotal point in her life, centering around the birth of her daughter. Since her daughter was born, Cleopatra's empathy has been highly influenced because she has shared throughout her conversations with me that she teaches from the

perspective that her daughter is a student in her classroom. Her culturally responsive instructional practices included empathizing, striving for equity, being socioculturally aware, challenging the status quo through curriculum, and prioritizing relationships with her students' families. All of these were influenced by her life history, as were her experiences with race and racism. The specific evidence of her first graders struggling with colorism through their drawings was an eye-opening finding. However, Cleopatra explored this in her own unique way.

Comparing and Contrasting Across Participants

At the close of this chapter, I compare and contrast my three participants. Just as my study was multidimensional and multi-layered, so were they–the teachers who each have been raised in different communities and experienced different interactions with race and racism. Yet, even within these two differences of life histories prior to teaching and their experiences with race and racism, either before or during their teaching careers, all three teachers have made conscious decisions to teach in culturally responsive ways. With my first research question, I discovered that each teacher's life history directly informed who they are as teachers–all their experiences, including but not limited to worldview, relationships, obstacles, spirituality, upbringing, and identity. With my second research question, the teachers demonstrated different culturally responsive practices that included: using funds of knowledge, infusing heritage language, teaching social justice units, prioritizing bilingual classroom libraries, challenging the status quo through curriculum, forming relationships with students' families, having high expectations, investing in the social-emotional parts of student development, treating students like their own children, thinking about students' futures, showing empathy, striving for equity for students, and possessing multinational awareness. Finally, with my third research question, I examined varied experiences with race and racism that included being a White American and

being culturally self-aware to interrelate her culture with those of her students in deeply

meaningful ways, being African American and being accepting and encouraging of all her

students because she was raised in a diverse family, and being Jamaican American and

experiencing discrimination in the U.S. but still exploring how her students view and process

their own racial identity. These topics of race, education, and culturally responsive teaching

presented as interwoven within my study. However, I explain these similarities and differences

in the most succinct way possible.

First, all three teachers' upbringing informed and influenced who they are as teachers,

Priscilla was raised in New England around progressive thinking people and social justice

focused religious ideology. Anna Mae grew up within thirty minutes of Meadowside, the district

where this study took place, in a multiracial family. Cleopatra was raised in Jamaica, then

immigrated to Canada, followed by the U.S., while becoming a mother and changing career

paths from corporate to education. With these different life histories, the one steady similarity

was that each teachers' upbringing impacted who they are as teachers. Priscilla used her

upbringing of seeking connections and wanting her students to make connections across subjects.

In addition, she sought out as much information as possible to make connections for her students.

Anna Mae prioritized being inclusive of all cultures in her classroom. Cleopatra empathized with

her students' experiences after having been a student in three different countries, as well as

treating all her students as if they were her daughter. Each different experience resulted in a

direct effect for each teacher in her classroom.

Secondly, the themes that emerged from their culturally responsive practices were mostly

unique except for two–going against the prescribed curriculum and cultivating relationships with

their students' families. However, again, each teacher carried out these two actions in different

ways, but resulting in the same theme to emerge for all three of them. First, Priscilla challenged

the status quo curriculum that favors White, middle-class culture (Burkholder, 2011; Gay, 2010;

Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 2004; Nykiel-Herbert, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Wright et

al., 2017) by following the standards for language arts and math but changing her delivery of

them in a more multicultural way by using varied curriculum projects, including her social

justice South Africa unit, investing in relevant, bilingual literature for her classroom library, and

by not adhering to scheduled times of the year to teach units on people of color, such as Black

history month. On a different note, Anna Mae's strategies for challenging hegemonic curriculum

were by welcoming administrators' evaluations to see success in spite of curricular changes,

making decisions about her students' math, reading, and social/emotional problem-solving skills

through pacing differently and changing the order of delivery of certain lessons, and omitting

entire curriculum altogether. Yet a third way to challenge the status quo curriculum was through

Cleopatra's strategies, which included adding and/or altering the curriculum with different

materials, changing the sequencing of math lessons, and making changes when assessing for

reading levels. All strategies were different, but all were categorized as challenging the status

quo curriculum.

The ways that each teacher bridged the curriculum to the students' families were also

different. Priscilla's connections to her families emerged from her experiences in her own

multicultural family, so she sought out information from her families to raise her cultural

awareness through various ways, such as school events, and being trustworthy when parents

volunteered information about their undocumented status with her. Anna Mae's relationships

with her families stemmed from being inclusive and ensuring that her parents are aware of and

invited to classroom events that support all mainstream celebrations or change the event for

families who do not celebrate. Cleopatra communicated with her families bilingually, even

though she does not speak Spanish and by having a deep understanding of cultural expectations

of school and teachers. Each teachers' different approaches with families resulted in the same

theme of prioritizing such relationships.

As for the culturally responsive instructional practices that were unique to each teacher,

the themes were as varied as the life histories of each teacher, but yet again resulted in evidence

of culturally responsive teaching. First, Priscilla's culturally responsive instructional practices

consisted of using funds of knowledge by inviting home and community life into the classroom

through religion, traditions, and ideas about gender and home environment, integrating heritage

language and authentic literature reflective of her students' cultures, bringing the students'

identities into the classroom, and designing a social justice unit that studied apartheid-era South

Africa. In the same vein, Anna Mae demonstrated high expectations of her students by focusing

on the social-emotional parts of her students' development, treating her students like her own,

and thinking about her students' futures once they are no longer in her classroom. Lastly, the

culturally responsive themes that were unique to Cleopatra were empathizing with students,

striving for equity for all her students, and her multinational educational experiences. Even

though these individual themes are one of a kind to each teacher, they reflect their life histories

and lead to evidence of culturally responsive teaching.

Finally, each teacher had different experiences with race and racism. Similar to their

having different life histories, these experiences also influenced who they are as teachers.

Priscilla has lived as a White woman around progressive thinking people and social justice

focused religious ideology. Anna Mae grew up in a multiracial family consisting of interracial

marriages. She had also made the choice to raise her own multiracial family in a community that

replicates that of her upbringing. Cleopatra experienced schooling in Jamaica, Canada, and the U.S. She also experienced racism in the U.S. in terms of her race, language, and immigration. She also used these experiences to guide how her first graders explored racial identity. With all these vastly different experiences, the similarity was that each teachers' interactions with race impacted who they were as teachers. Priscilla used her Whiteness to realize that her culture and her students' cultures are interrelated. Anna Mae was raised around all kinds of different people and she prioritized being inclusive of all cultures in her classroom. Cleopatra empathized with her students' experiences as varied students of color after having had a deep experience interacting with active citizens from the civil rights movement in the U.S., in addition to her multinational awareness having been a student in three different counties. Each different experience resulted in a direct effect for each teacher in her classroom.

In conclusion, one could have assumed that because Priscilla, Anna Mae, and Cleopatra actually did have many things in common, that their practices would have also been similar, but this was not the case. All three of them had taught in early childhood grades K-3 in Meadowside and were mothers close in age. Priscilla and Anna Mae taught in the same school, but Cleopatra and Priscilla had worked together at some point within their years in the district. The culturally responsive self-selected lesson sets that they submitted for this study were completely different from each other. Priscilla chose her third grade South Africa social justice unit, Anna Mae chose a quilting lesson with her summer kindergarteners, and Cleopatra chose a year-long unit on celebrations with her first graders. Nevertheless, as selected by their principals, each teacher was, in fact, culturally responsive. The only broad differences are the paths and experiences that influenced these instructional practices.

There is so much information to discuss, explore, and recommend for further study. Each of my participants have so much in common but are so distinctly different from one another. In the next chapter, I discuss my conclusions, implications for practice, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

As I reflected at the beginning of this dissertation, "As a student of color, most of my teachers were White. As a teacher of color, most of my students have been of color, but most of my colleagues have been White" (Lobato-Creekmur, 2020, p. 4). In my introduction, I shared personal, narrative vignettes that highlight the background and purpose of this study. Historically in the U.S., due to systemic racism, students of color have been subjected the racist teaching of a Eurocentric model of curriculum, favoring White, middle-class culture (Gay, 2010; Nieto, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Lareau & Jo, 2017; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The growing change in demographics of students of color only exacerbates the need to address this urgent issue as soon as possible. Culturally responsive teaching with a deliberate focus on anti-racism could be a response to this issue of cultural mismatch between students and teachers (Bondy et al., 2007; Bui & Fagan, 2013; Culp, 2011; Gay, 2010; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 2017; Legaspi & Rickard, 2011; Nieto, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; West-Olatunji et al., 2008).

In order to explore this dilemma, I posed the following research questions:

- How is the cultural identity of K-8 teachers constructed from their life history?

- How do their life histories influence how they construct culturally responsive instructional practices and curriculum?

- How do they navigate race and racism in their professional lives?

Addressing the first and second research questions, I found that becoming a culturally responsive teacher involves difficult work, which does not necessarily begin during teacher preparation but rather during life experiences throughout childhood and adolescence, when a foundation of cultural consciousness is established. Addressing teachers' cultural identities

helped to shed light on their culturally responsive instructional cultural practices. Based on the

analysis of my findings, I drew the following conclusions:

1. Culturally responsive teaching involves making connections to build relationships and extend

bridges to the school curriculum;

2. A sociocultural consciousness is necessary to be culturally responsive;

3. Culturally responsive teaching includes an ethic of care; and

4. Culturally responsive teaching incorporates challenging the status quo through curriculum.

Finally, I also share conclusions that illustrate the interesting tensions that arose when examining

how culturally responsive teaching is explicitly anti-racist. Some conclusions about the

challenges of anti-racist teaching include: a) Teachers setting boundaries around anti-racist

education because of fear; b) Teachers feeling they lack support for this work in schools; and c)

Recognizing the absence of an explicit focus on race and racism in culturally responsive

teaching.

     I also draw conclusions from my experiences of using narrative inquiry as a research

methodology. Using narrative inquiry allowed me to examine the research through a personal

lens as well as a more ethnographic lens when interviewing my participants, analyzing my data,

and writing my findings. Narrative inquiry (Kim, 2015) allowed for an organic connection to the

theoretical and conceptual ideas in this study, namely culturally responsive teaching and critical

race theory, both of which are fluid (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2017). Narrative inquiry

permitted many stages in the analysis phase to be interwoven and shed light on the complexities

that exist.

Discussion of Findings

After a thorough narrative inquiry and qualitative methodological analysis, the findings addressed my research questions in different ways. This full discussion in my previous chapter detailed how my three participants, while completely diverse, individual, and unique within their life histories, when analyzed together, showed commonalities, themes, and patterns across data. Each of their life histories came through and informed who these women are as culturally responsive teachers. With regard to race and racism, each teacher's experiences also connected to who they are as teachers.

In this chapter, I focus on the larger picture based on the analysis of these findings in terms of what I concluded about culturally responsive teachers' instructional practices with attention to race and racism. In addition, I present implications for teacher education and teacher development, as well as for the field of narrative inquiry. I also make suggestions for future research and describe the limitations of my study.

Becoming A Culturally Responsive Teacher

As a result of this study, I realized that the notion of "being" culturally responsive is a misnomer because a culturally responsive teaching paradigm is an everchanging process for each individual teacher. Culturally responsive teaching is not a list of strategies to check off to then say, "I've succeeded in being culturally responsive because I completed numbers 1–3." Instead, "becoming" culturally responsive is more dynamic because it reflects the nature of culture and race in the US, concepts that are also ever evolving. Next, I discuss what I have concluded about becoming a culturally responsive teacher.

Connections: Building Relationships & Extending Bridges. All three participants demonstrated that being culturally responsive teachers involved forming relationships with

students' families in order to bridge the curriculum to the home. Priscilla's life history revealed

that her commitment to bringing her students' home and family lives into the classroom drew

from her own experiences of seeking connections with peers, as well as looked for connections

her teachers were not making across classes, subjects, and student experiences. Anna Mae's life

history explained why she included home and family life in her classroom. She valued building

relationships in her classroom because she grew up around a lot of diversity and was therefore

accepting of many people. She worked to lift up her students to achieve their highest potential.

Cleopatra also built relationships with her families having looped with her students for two

years, which fostered open continuous communication and participation in the classroom. Each

of the participants valued funds of knowledge and connected with families to invite and build

from the student's home and community life into their teaching (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Moll et

al., 1992; Llopart & Esteban-Guitart, 2016). My conclusion is that funds of knowledge are

necessary as a part of culturally responsive teaching, both because it emerged as a common

finding among all three participants, but also because the research confirms this is a fundamental

element of being culturally responsive (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 2017; Villegas &

Lucas, 2002).

      The Sociocultural Consciousness of the Teacher. The first part of the three-pronged

definition of culturally responsive teaching in this study is affirming students' cultures. To do

this, teachers must adhere to what Villegas and Lucas (2002) suggested: 1. a sociocultural

consciousness that recognizes how an individual's culture is influenced by various factors,

including race, social class, and gender; and 2. an affirming attitude toward students from

culturally diverse backgrounds. From this study, one major finding is that the sociocultural

consciousness of the teacher, as part of her cultural identity, influences how she is culturally

responsive in the classroom. For example, Priscilla used funds of knowledge to build relationships with her students' families. This practice used the student's home and family to make connections to the classroom. As a result, many families trusted Priscilla and were very open about issues such as deportation and immigration status.

Sociocultural consciousness is the beginning of becoming a culturally responsive teacher. To borrow from critical pedagogy, critical consciousness is a product of the human capacity for reflection (Freire, 1973). This means that in order to be critically conscious, one needs to be able to self-reflect. Along the same lines, to have sociocultural consciousness is to enact the practice of self-reflection about one's own culture, race, social class, gender, and consider how these lenses influence the self and the perception of others. By examining the life histories of my participants, I clearly understood the value of asking teachers to mine their own life experiences for insights into how to be culturally responsive. This deep and meaningful work is a necessary part of becoming a culturally responsive teacher.

Ethics of Care. Culturally responsive teaching requires ethics of care. Noddings (2012) explained that a teacher-student relationship is not one of mutuality, but that the teacher is the carer and the student is cared-for. The carer must be attentive, motivated to attend to the cared-for, and respond after listening and reflecting. Anna Mae clearly focused on caring for her students as a primary means of being a culturally responsive teaching. Noddings (2012) distinguished between the assumed needs and the expressed needs of students. Similarly, Anna Mae, for example, described her process of assessing her students' needs through first sitting back, observing, and listening to her students to gather information about their needs, instead of assuming she knew what they needed. In particular, she often described focusing on their socio-emotional needs, and not just their academic challenges. She saw being culturally responsive as

really valuing the whole student, a concept that Taylor (2007) explained as essential for teaching. Incorporating an ethic of care into culturally responsive teaching enables teaching *to* and *through* the student's culture (Bui & Fagan, 2013).

Challenging the Status Quo through Curriculum. Ware and Ware (1996) wrote, "The fundamental issue of how to transmit culture is, understandably, a matter of intense concern to those whose interests are served by the culture in its current state–individuals with vested interests in maintaining the status quo, as well as those who are subordinated in the existing order" (p. 1169). In other words, those with privilege are threatened when the culture changes and fear they may lose many of the privileges afforded to them naturally from this status quo structure. The Eurocentric curriculum has been in effect for over 100 years (Ware & Ware, 1996), and there is a need to change it. Some teachers are doing just that. In fact, all three of my participants did as part of their efforts to be culturally responsive teachers.

All three participants were committed to challenging the curriculum that perpetuates the status quo. As previously discussed in chapters one and two, the status quo curriculum reflects mainstream education, focused on Eurocentric, or White, middle-class expectations (Burkholder, 2011; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 2004; Nykiel-Herbert, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Wright et al., 2017). Challenging these curricula is a large undertaking but each of my participants made it possible within their classrooms by making choices that reflected their students of color. I conclude that incorporating this kind of critical thinking is pertinent to being a culturally responsive teacher.

Becoming an Anti-racist Teacher

In the same way that becoming a culturally responsive teacher is fluid and changing, so is being an anti-racist teacher. One point is clear from my study: being a culturally responsive

teacher and being an anti-racist teacher are not synonymous. As was evidenced by my findings,

all of my study's teachers enacted culturally responsive practices in the classroom but not all of

them conducted lessons that addressed race and racism. There are two conclusions that I drew

from this data. Supported by much of the research (Abril, 2006; Boyd et al., 2011; Clarkson &

Johnstone, 2011; Conrad et al., 2004; Copenhaver, 2001; Kleyn, 2008), many teachers are not

comfortable talking about race and racism in the classroom because they feel ill-prepared to do

so. Therefore, they set boundaries about how far they will go with their students due to fear, or

lack of support. Secondly, the lack of conversation about race and racism is evident from this

study as well as the literature.

Most importantly, however, is there is no single theory that is best to use above all others.

The problem lies in how theories are used, or the value of the praxis associated with these

theories, whether it is culturally responsive teaching, anti-racist teaching, or yet any other theory

that falls within addressing the needs of students of color. The goal is for teachers to continually

interrogate themselves about how to practice theory.

Setting Boundaries to Anti-racist Teaching. For the most part, the three teachers in my

study did not address race and racism as part of being culturally responsive. Priscilla attempted

to be anti-racist in her teaching with some limitations. In her social justice unit, she purposefully

drew comparisons with the character's life of racism and dangerous situations to that of her

students, but limited herself from diving deeper into conversations about race for various

reasons. First, she considered her students' ages. Second, she drew from her knowledge of how

they had already experienced traumatic events because of documentation status and entering the

U.S. Lastly, she considered how their parents chose to shield them from the current anti-

immigrant political climate. Cleopatra had an opportunity for anti-racist teaching when her

students chose specific colored crayons to represent their self-images in their drawings that did not match their actual skin color. However, beyond a personal one-on-one conversation, she did not engage in anti-racist teaching. Even though these same students began changing their color choices to those closer to their skin tones, she did not take this up as an explicit lesson, but rather addressed it through smaller, gradual conversations over time, which influenced their color decisions.

West-Olatunji et al. (2008) concluded that even though there is cultural congruence between teacher and students, teachers are still inclined to teach in ways that are Eurocentric. The analysis of my findings echoed the same principle: in theory, teachers recognized the need to be culturally responsive for themselves and their students of color, but being an anti-racist teacher was much more difficult to do in practice. In my study, this is exactly what happened. Although all three teachers showed evidence of being culturally responsive, no one addressed race and racism in a deep meaningful way.

My findings showed the very real tension for culturally responsive teachers of not being comfortable explicitly addressing anti-racism in their teaching. Priscilla presented viable opportunities for discussion on race, but made conscious decisions to stop after a certain point. Cleopatra asked students to create racial self-images but did not have an explicit conversation about the racial implications of color choices for skin. I conclude that being anti-racist is really difficult for teachers, and therefore there is a need to create spaces for them to develop these more explicit practices.

Linda Darling-Hammond (2017), after the 2016 election, cited over one dozen incidents that occurred in school settings, involving students, dealing with "racism, misogyny, anti-immigrant hatred, anti-Muslim hatred, and brutally hurtful and divisive rhetoric" (p. 133). She

called for "explicit anti-racist teaching and anti-racist action in all public spaces" (p. 134). These included making sure images and messages are multicultural and anti-racist, having teachers use resources that are anti-racist, ensuring time, attention, and school programs are equitable for all students, and changing the ways US history are presented from slavery, to redlining, as well as more current racist norms (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Much of this work is needed due to the evidence that discomfort still exists among teachers who may be willing to do this work but feel ill-prepared, or those who avoid it altogether for the same reason.

    Absence of Explicit Focus on Race and Racism. Answering the question about race and racism uprooted the biggest tension in this study in several ways. First, in the coding process, I had to shift how I used the words "race" and "racism" by looking for what I call "code words," such as diversity, that represented conversations about race and racism, without using the specific words. If I had not done that, this question could have dissipated as unanswered, but *because* I searched for "code words," I was able to uncover some meaningful conversations about race and racism but also deeper tensions that would not have otherwise arisen. Altering my coding was one tension but another tension was why my participants did not outwardly use the words "race" and "racism," but instead addressed the issues using "code words."

    According to Khoo (2017), the use of code words in political discourse is purposeful in order to *not* be labeled racist. In other words, if you speak implicitly, then your words need to be interpreted, therefore it is easier to be denied as negative or racist. He used several examples of the current political administration to demonstrate this point. As code words relate to my study, my participants did not seem like they were purposefully hiding or shamefully suppressing racist views. In fact, they were culturally responsive teachers actually attempting to enact such practices in their classroom. However, the mystery of why they did not explicitly use the words

race or racism to describe their own or their students' experiences lies in a similar realm to the

political discourse explanation. There exists some level of negative connotation when using these

words, even if you are trying to combat it in some way. There is a perception that if you share a

racist view, you will be labeled in some derogatory way and no one wants to be called racist. In a

similar way, if you speak up about an anti-racist view, you are perceived as "a loud kind of

activist." So, my conclusion is that the words like race and racism can elicit extreme reactions on

both ends of the continuum from which most people want to disassociate. For teachers in the

classroom, with the urgency that is needed for anti-racist work, there is an implication here for

practicing teachers.

Furthermore, this kind of work is challenging because it is very complex. There is no one

correct way to teach anti-racism. As the evidence showed through Priscilla's experiences with

her undocumented students, culturally responsive teaching can even be dangerous. To teach

about racism is ongoing, and dynamic, and often utopian in nature in the sense that it can never

be fully actualized. As stated above, anti-racist teaching is always in the process of becoming.

Narrative Inquiry: Life History and Voice

Kim (2015) wrote, "Narrative inquiry is about what it means to be human. It is a journey

of becoming" (p. 299). One of the driving forces for selecting narrative inquiry as my

methodology was because voice was such a prevalent tenet of CRT in my literature reviewing,

having appeared in seventeen of the studies (Abril, 2009; Adkins, 2012; Boyd et al., 2011;

Camangian, 2010; Conrad et al., 2004; Copenhaver, 2001; Culp, & Chepyator-Thomson, 2011;

Epstein et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2010; Nykiel-Herbert, 2010; Roberts, 2010; Sampson, &

Garrison-Wade, 2011; Sheets, 1995; Souto-Manning & Mitchell, 2010; Wallace, & Brand, 2012;

Ware, 2006; West-Olatunji, 2008). Giving priority to the teacher's voices in my study was

important in the transformative research process. My study mirrored the value of voice in the classroom, and in particular because of the way the study was designed, the voices of the teachers in their classrooms. The larger importance of this was that teachers' voices are highly valuable and should not be silenced. Often policy and decisions are enacted affecting teachers directly, without regard to their input and expertise. However, research shows a teacher is the important factor in the educational journey of a student. Because "nothing is as important as the teacher and what that person knows, believes, and can do" (Saphier, Halley-Speca, & Gower, 2008, p. v), teachers' voices need to be treated as such. They need to be listened to and studied in order to find answers that address the struggles that exist in education. Using life history and providing a platform for teachers' voices is important means to demonstrate best practices and impact learning for students.

Implications

Next I describe the implications of my study for both preservice teachers as well as inservice teachers in terms of improving teaching and learning experiences for students of color. I purposely chose teachers for my study who are already in the field, as opposed to preservice teachers. However, as a result of this study, there are implications for both. I also discuss my insights into narrative inquiry.

Implications for Preservice and Inservice Teacher Education

One of the important implications of my study is the necessity of developing components of preservice teacher education that focus on increasing teachers' comfort levels around teaching about race and racism. One strategy for addressing this is to increase knowledge about racism through specific re-learning U.S. history that is not presented through the traditional Eurocentric lens. Darling-Hammond (2017) outlined a detailed list of how to do this:

to proactively ensure that the images and messages on the walls and in textbooks are

multicultural and anti-racist; to get every teacher and administrator reading and

using Teaching for Tolerance, Facing History, and other resources for equitable,

anti-racist teaching; to ensure that the allocation of time, attention, and resources in

schools attend equitably to all children—and that the divisions and segregation

created by tracking and similar practices are challenged; to mobilize the resources of

foundations and people of good will to tackle the festering issues that America has

been dealing with since its inception—when slavery was legalized, African Americans

were defined as three-fifths of a person, Native Americans were massacred and

driven at gunpoint across the country in the Trail of Tears, and students of color were

segregated by law—and later by redlining and other racist customs. (p. 135)

Revisiting and revising diversity classes and training for culturally responsive teaching

would also benefit students of color. Teacher educators should use the most updated theoretical

perspectives based on research, such as, but not limited to, *How to Be an Antiracist* by Ibram X.

Kendi and *We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of*

Educational Freedom by Bettina Love, to inform their reading assignments, the projects devised,

and the authentic experiences students have. For example, if an incident happens in the world

that is related to the diversity course, then the issue should be problematized and addressed in the

class or workshop.

To make connections to build relationships and extend bridges, a preservice or inservice

teacher needs to have experience in diverse communities working with families to bridge funds

of knowledge. Veteran teachers already in the field have access to this by reaching out to and

involving their students' families. For preservice teachers, who often lack classroom experience

and access to students and families, part of their coursework should involve opportunities to get to know and connect with the families and communities of the schools where they are placed.

To foster a sociocultural consciousness, one beginning step would be to invite preservice and inservice teachers to engage in deep reflection on their life experiences around race and racism. Examining the self is the basic foundation for culturally responsive or anti-racist work. Teacher education students need time and space to explore how the issues of race have played out in their own lives and teacher educators need to understand where their students stand as well. One essential question to ponder is: what sorts of life experiences do teacher education students need to be able develop their sociocultural consciousness? I use myself as an example: When I graduated with my teaching license as a result of my bachelor's degree, I only knew that I wanted to teach in an urban setting, not because I was a culturally responsive or anti-racist guru, but because that was from where I came. When deciding the field in which to specialize for my master's, at first, I was adamantly against getting specialized in ESL/bilingual education, but that ultimately became my goal because at the time, I was experiencing a sociocultural awareness that made me gravitate toward becoming an ESL/bilingual teacher. These experiences were happening simultaneously in my personal and professional lives. To construct experiences within a workshop or college course would require extensive research on similar existing programs but it is doable. Jane Elliot's blue eyes/brown eyes experiment comes to mind a seminal work in this area. She divides the group by a defining physical characteristic and provides instructions for one group to feel and act superior to the other, thus creating a power hierarchy, which leads to her discussion on race and discrimination but through an experiential method for the participants. The basis of this kind of work is to ensure that the participants have a deeply impactful experience to ignite self-reflection that will result in changed behavior. The

point of this kind of work is based on the finding that the life history of the teacher directly

informs their work in the classroom. Therefore, any authentic experience in the realm of race and

racism can only benefit that teacher's sociocultural consciousness and will transfer into who they

are as a teacher.

To develop an ethic of care, similar experiential methods would need to be used with

preservice and inservice teachers. One important way to help teachers value care is to model

what caring pedagogy looks like, similar to the race and racism work, where authentic

experiences need to be developed for teacher education students. Teacher educators need to

develop caring relationships with teachers and prioritize the socio-emotional and their everyday

lives (Bohny, Taylor, Clark, D'Elia, Lobato-Creekmur, Tarnowski & Wasserman 2016; Taylor

& Klein, 2020). As Noddings (2012) wrote, "A truly educational experience must be connected

to past and future educational experiences and to other on-going life experiences" (p. 776). These

teacher-student relationships need to be carefully curated because in the span of a semester of a

course or a professional development series, waiting for organic relationships to be established

and fostered could take longer than the time that is given.

To challenge the status quo through curriculum, a teacher must first possess knowledge

that the curriculum is in fact, status quo, or favors a certain group and is backed by decades,

maybe centuries of ingrained importance. However, to challenge this, a teacher must next

possess a willingness to "break or bend the rules." My participants were chosen by their

principals, yet they bent or broke the rules of their prescribed curricula often. Therefore, as Anna

Mae stated in one of her interviews, "What I've learned and what continues to happen is if you

show growth within your classroom, and if your administrator sees that they're learning, I kind of

get away with it" (Int. 2, p. 8). She was referring to modifying how she administers lessons to the

students and that she "goes off the grid" in order to be culturally responsive to her students. Once there is a comfort level in bending or breaking these rules, you make yourself an expert on the materials and methods needed to challenge the status quo curriculum. Being a critical thinker and fostering critical thinking among teachers can strengthen this practice.

To develop an anti-racist teaching identity, teachers need to become comfortable facilitating difficult conversations with students. They need to practice what it sounds and feels like to be anti-racist with children. Developing an anti-racist vocabulary would help lessen the discomfort too. Having a stronger repertoire would alleviate some of the fear. Additionally, practicing anti-racist teaching requires resources as well as transparent support from the administration. School leaders and communities need to commit to explicit continuous anti-racist training through such resources as Teaching Tolerance and the Undoing Racism Workshop.

One very important caveat for preservice education and teacher practice or professional development is that becoming a culturally responsive anti-racist teacher can happen at any time in a teacher's career. For example, a veteran teacher of twenty-five years might require foundational sociocultural consciousness work, whereas a preservice or novice teacher may not because of the up-to-date coursework she received from her teacher education program. The most difficult work for the person creating this kind of coursework or professional development is how to assess a teacher's dispositions and knowledge of culturally responsive teaching and anti-racist teaching. I recommend a scaffolded continuum of courses or training that addresses culturally responsive teaching work and anti-racist work, not based on years of experience, but based on where the teacher may identify on the continuum of this kind of work.

Implications for Narrative Inquiry

I began my study by wondering if narrative inquiry would result in a description of what is occurring in the field, or serve as an intervention for future practice, or both. I have to say that narrative inquiry served as a very appropriate methodology to collect and analyze data, while telling the stories of three human beings. Using this methodology allowed for my study to be research-based, with a human quality to the teachers and their stories. The participants in my study are not simply data, but women in the field, doing what they love and being enthusiastic about contributing to research. For this particular examination of culturally responsive instructional practice with attention to race and racism, narrative inquiry allowed for analysis to emerge that may not have if a different methodology was used, such as a quantitative analysis, which would not have provided the human element that narrative inquiry provided. To answer the original question posed, I believe narrative inquiry most certainly described what was occurring in the field, but it also served to shed light for future practice. The conclusions outlined and discussed above emerged as a direct result of using narrative inquiry methodology. For example, the tensions from my third research question regarding race and racism only emerged because I engaged in re-living and re-telling my participants' stories using narrative inquiry methods. I relistened to and revisited my interview and that was when I heard the tensions, through voice intonations. I am unaware of another methodology through which this is possible. So, these tensions are from where my coda, or signature was revealed. The most salient findings in this study would not have been found were it not for narrative inquiry.

If a narrative inquiry researcher were to ask me how they should tackle their study using this same methodology, I would suggest to do it delicately and responsibly. By this, I mean that through this study, I concluded that every narrative inquiry research study is going to be carried out differently because that is the nature of narrative inquiry, however, what binds everything

together is the search for the tensions, which include the role of the researcher, as well as time, space, people, and context (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kim, 2015). Narrative inquiry is like a blueprint or a map along the way with set guidelines to follow, yet the finished product will never look the same for different architects or explorers. As a scholarly documentarian, I was unaware of what the findings would be until I found them through my relistening and the tensions emerging. There were set guidelines for me to follow as a methodology, but my relationship with the data was unique to me as the researcher. The simple choice to relisten for tensions was a decision I made as the researcher. This is crucial for narrative inquirers because as Clandinin & Connelly (2000) explained throughout their book, every narrative inquiry study looks different. They specifically stated, "Our approach is not so much to tell you what narrative inquiry is but rather to show you what it is by creating a definition contextually by recounting what narrative inquirers do" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xiii). As a scholarly documentarian, I was able to show a narrative inquiry researcher what I did, with the purpose of having them see one way to use narrative research inquiry. The title of scholarly documentarian developed as I sifted through the data I collected, I was able to piece the narratives together into a thematic perspective, with viable findings through my analysis. Some findings proved more viable so than others, thus I made those the coda/signature of my study.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Some common limitations for a study like mine would include sample size and subjectivity of the researcher. My sample size consisted of three participants and my role of the researcher was very personal, where the teachers and I had a relationship that was deeper than an acquaintance, but not as meaningful as a friendship. My subjectivity was intertwined with my relationships with the teachers because I could safely say that we spent enough quality interview

time together for us to feel comfortable working on a professional project together. This means that I was invested personally in my participants. However, building trust and rapport like this was part of the criteria I set forth as the researcher. Bell (2002) explained that it is up to the narrative inquirer to establish a set of criteria for the assessment of their research. Another criterion I used was focusing on the quality of the interviews, rather than the quantity (Kim, 2015). Even though I spent approximately three hours with each teacher face to face and several more over text message and email, it was not about the total amount of time we spent together, but how deep the conversations were during this time.

One suggestion for future research could be to enlarge my study to include more participants in a variety of diverse contexts in the US. However, because of the ways narrative inquiry values the complex individualized stories of my participants, the more appropriate avenue to take would be to conduct a more in depth, longitudinal study. As for the research from the literature, a study like this should be conducted every ten years in order to continually catch the changing nature of anti-racist work in the field. Examining the empirical data every ten years could expose a plethora of information regarding race and racism in the classroom and deeper implications could emerge, specifically for teacher education and teacher development. A tandem action item for this kind of research would be to partner with a state department of education or the federal department to inform policy. As a result of policy changes, funding needs can be addressed and resolved for university and school districts. In addition, grants for research can also result from this level of state and federal partnership. This kind of research could revolutionize teaching and schools. Once policy is enacted and the funding follows, the possibilities of real change begin to come to fruition.

Conclusions

I conducted this study for three very specific reasons. I am concerned about the implicit bias and racism that are putting lives at risk across the U.S. Also, I am a mother and a teacher of color, raising and teaching students of color. Finally, a change has been long overdue for equitable practices for all students of color and as the new majority, we all deserve better.

Currently in the U.S., lives are at risk because people in positions of authority hold implicit biases toward people of color. This is happening in several institutions in society, namely with the police force and in the judicial system. My contribution to this urgent matter that is literally affecting whether someone lives or dies, is to use education as a weapon against this violence. Teachers with a sociocultural consciousness can affirm their students' cultures and practice anti-racism in their classrooms. I believe that these stances can be a way to save lives. The exponential effect that a teacher can have on their students is a possible solution to avoid deaths that happen as a result of a person feeling threatened by another person who is of color. Most people who choose careers in positions of power will be influenced by a teacher along the way. My hope is that the teachers doing the difficult work of evolving to choose to be anti-racist in their daily lives will eliminate their students' racist thoughts and actions when they join the professional world as adults.

My intention was to uncover habits, characteristics, and descriptions that define culturally responsive teachers through examining their life histories in order to address the educational needs of the new majority: students of color. What I discovered is that teaching in a culturally responsive way needs to be authentic as well as informed, not a superficial list of prescribed strategies to check off. A teacher's experiences and beliefs directly impact the success, or lack thereof, of being a culturally responsive teacher. In particular, race and racism are often missing in culturally responsive teaching.

This work is not simply to fill gaps in the literature but to also fill voids that have existed for students like me, past, present and future students, and my own children. My hope is that these voids will cease to exist or improve as my children and future students grow through an educational system that is struggling to best serve them. This work is complex but not insurmountable. The literature showed how teachers have already begun to address these issues through their culturally responsive practices with attention to race and racism. This study drew out complexities but demonstrated hope that teachers may be willing to do the difficult work to deconstruct these complexities and change practices to better serve students of color. The U.S. demographics are changing, not just in the classrooms, but all around us. This is a pivotal time for people of color in many facets of institutions, not only educational. I plan to continue this work with the goal of creating change in the educational system, and beyond.

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Appendix

A.

College of Education and Human Services   Department of Teacher Education and Teacher Development   Voice: 973-655-7332

Dear Principal,

I am writing to let you know about an opportunity to recommend teachers to participate in a research study about addressing race and racism through culturally responsive teaching. This study is being conducted by Graziela Lobato-Creekmur from the Teacher Education and Teacher Development PhD Program at Montclair State University. This study will involve a close look at teachers' culturally responsive practices through interviews, a focus group, self-recorded lessons, student samples, journaling, and lesson plans.

It will take approximately 10 minutes of your time to recommend teachers in K-8 classrooms who fit the definition below. There are no other criteria to be used for recommendation. This is non-evaluative and teacher performance is not a factor in your recommendation. The only criteria being requested is adhering to the definition below.

culturally responsive teaching must include all 3 levels:

1. *individual - where there is a two-way process of sociocultural consciousness. The teacher is aware of their cultural identity, their students' cultural identity, AND the relationship between both cultures.*
2. *instructional - where there is a high level of expectations for the students on the part of teachers along with an inclusive curriculum. The teacher sets high expectations of their students while using a curriculum that includes the cultures of their students.*
3. *institutional - where students are affected by racism and disproportionate actions on a sociopolitical level. The teacher does not shy away from including societal and political issues in their lessons that may affect their students because of race or class.*

If you have any questions, please contact Graziela Lobato-Creekmur at lobatog1@mail.montclair.edu. Please use this same contact to submit names of teachers to be contacted. Then, they will be asked if they would like to participate in the study. I appreciate your time in participating in this study.

Thank you for considering participation in this study. This study has been approved by the Montclair State University Institutional Review Board, Study no. FY18-19-1340.

Sincerely,

Graziela Lobato-Creekmur, Doctoral Candidate

Teacher Education and Teacher Development, Montclair State University

B.

https://surveys.montclair.edu/survey/preview.jsp?surveyId=1549508750219&url=https://surveys.montclair.edu/survey/entry.jsp?id=1549508750219

Culturally Responsive Teachers

Why are you interested in participating in this study?

How many years have you been teaching?

What grade levels have you taught/currently teach?

What certifications do you currently hold?

Have you had training and/or professional development on culturally responsive teaching? If so, please explain.

What is your name and contact information so we can move forward with the study?

C.

YouTube link for video to principals:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XyGEOgJ9pcA

D.

May 2019

Dear Principal,

I'm interested in conducting my research with Plainfield K-8 teachers and have attached a more detailed letter for your review. The most recent email you received from me was on March 5th wherein I explained that this is for my dissertation on culturally responsive teaching and Dr. Bolandi has already granted me permission to conduct my study in the district. I emailed you from grazie0110@gmail.com. You can also reach me at 973-723-1596. I am still in need of teacher participants for my study. I appreciate you taking what little time you have to read this request and recommend any teachers you think would fit my study.

Thank you in advance,
Graziela Lobato-Creekmur

PS. In the email, I also included a 1-minute video introduction of myself and the study.

E.

Dear Teacher,

Please complete the questions below.

1. Please check any of the following that you identify with? **
    - ❏ Black or African American
    - ❏ White
    - ❏ American Indian or Alaska Native
    - ❏ Asian
    - ❏ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
    - ❏ Hispanic or Latinx

2. On the online survey, you indicated you have been teaching for __ years. Please give a more detailed explanation of years in specific districts and describe the school settings. (E.g., I taught in 2 charter schools in Newark, NJ for a total of 9 years and one school was 5-8, the other grades 2-8. Then I taught in Summit for 7 years, first as a 5th grade teacher in a K-5 school and then as an ESL teacher in the same school)

3. Does gender play a factor in your role as a K-8 teacher? For example, have you had any interactions with colleagues, students, parents, or supervisors where your gender was considered a factor in a specific situation?

4. Have you ever or do you currently live in the community where you teach?

** *For more explanation: A person having origins in... **Black or African American**: ...any of the Black racial groups of Africa; **White**: ...any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa; **American Indian or Alaska Native**: ...any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment; **Asian**: ...any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam; **Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander**: any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands; **Hispanic, Latinx:** may be of any race. (U.S. Census, 2018)*

F.

Interview Script/Questions

Open-ended/unstructured

1. How would you describe your personal school experience?

2. How would you describe your professional school experience?

Conversation/Semi-structured

1. *We've talked a while about your experiences in school as a child/teenager. Can you tell me any of your practices as a teacher that reflect any of these experiences?*

2. *We've talked a while about your experiences as a teacher. What do you do to incorporate culturally responsive teaching?*

G.

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

College of Education and Human Services   Department of Teacher Education and Teacher Development   Voice: 973-655-7332

Dear _____,

You are invited to participate in a study of **Teaching the New Majority: Addressing Race and Racism through Culturally Responsive Teaching**. I hope to learn how teachers can be more culturally responsive by addressing race and racism and examining the life histories and practices of culturally responsive teachers in the field. The study is designed to discover how the cultural identity of K-8 teachers is constructed from their life histories, how their life stories influence how they are culturally responsive, and how they navigate race and racism in their personal lives. You were recommended to participate in this study because you fit the definition of a culturally responsive teacher as explained in this study.

Definition of culturally responsive teaching must include all 3 levels:
1. *individual - where there is a two-way process of sociocultural consciousness. The teacher is aware of their cultural identity, their students' cultural identity, AND the relationship between both cultures.*
2. *instructional - where there is a high level of expectations for the students on the part of teachers along with an inclusive curriculum. The teacher sets high expectations of their students while using a curriculum that includes the cultures of their students.*
3. *institutional - where students are affected by racism and disproportionate actions on a sociopolitical level. The teacher does not shy away from including societal and political issues in their lessons that may affect their students because of race or class.*

If you decide to participate, please follow the link for an online survey to answer a set of questions. The survey is designed to collect information because you are deciding to participate in the study. It will take less than 10 minutes to complete. You will be asked to answer questions about you, your teaching, and culturally responsive teaching. We hope this research will result in more information for teachers who want to address race and racism in culturally responsive teaching.

Any discomfort or inconvenience to you may include from recalling memories of racial interactions and relationships you or someone you know may have had. Data will be collected using the Internet. There are no guarantees on the security of data sent on the Internet. Confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology used. We strongly advise that you do not use an employer issued electronic device, laptop, phone or WIFI to respond to this survey, as many employers monitor use of all devices.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationships with the Plainfield Public Schools.

If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time. You may skip questions you do not want to answer.

Please feel free to ask questions regarding this study. You may contact me, *or my Faculty Advisor*, if you have additional questions at:

Graziela Lobato-Creekmur 973-723-1596 lobatog1@mail.montclair.edu
Monica Taylor 973-655-6952 taylorm@mail.montclair.edu

Any questions about your rights may be directed to Dr. Dana Levitt, Chair of the Institutional Review Board at Montclair State University at reviewboard@mail.montclair.edu or 973-655-2907.

Thank you for your time.
Sincerely,
Graziela Lobato-Creekmur
Teacher Education and Teacher Development

By clicking the link below, I confirm that I have read this form and will participate in the project described. Its general purposes, the particulars of involvement, and possible risks and inconveniences have been explained to my satisfaction. I understand that I can discontinue participation at any time. My consent also indicates that I am 18 years of age.

☐ I agree to participate.
https://surveys.montclair.edu/survey/preview.jsp?surveyId=1549508750219&url=https://surveys.montclair.edu/survey/entry.jsp?id=1549508750219

☐ I decline.

The study has been approved by the Montclair State University Institutional Review Board.