A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES BEFORE AND DURING A TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM THAT INFLUENCE PREK-4 TEACHER CANDIDATES' CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING SELF-EFFICACY

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A Phenomenological Study of the Experiences Before and During a Teacher Preparation Program that Influence PK-4 Teacher Candidates' Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy

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Dedication

James Baldwin (1963) states, “The paradox of education is precisely this – that as one begins to become conscious, one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated” (para. 2). When considering the seemingly insurmountable problems plaguing the American education system, it can feel like we, as individuals, are inconsequential. At times, the enormity of an education system with bigoted roots built largely by and for White, middle-class Americans feels indestructible. However, from a historical perspective, we inch our way closer to equity in all facets of society when we, the people, decide that inaction is unacceptable. Consequently, this dissertation is dedicated to the researchers, scholars, educators, activists, and others who have decided or will decide to take action, in ways big and small, leading to an education system that is truly equitable for *all*.

Acknowledgements

My journey as a doctoral candidate began in 2010 when I was accepted into the Leadership in Urban Schools (LIUS) doctoral program at the University of Massachusetts Boston (UMB). This acceptance letter came after being rejected from four other universities. Shortly after relocating from Pennsylvania to Massachusetts to begin coursework at UMB, I gave birth to my first child. In 2012, I moved back to Pennsylvania having completed all required coursework except those tied to the dissertation requirements of the UMB program. After a long pause and lots of life experiences, in the fall of 2019, I decided to again pursue doctoral work by joining the Educational Leadership program shared by Millersville and Shippensburg Universities. As a first-generation college graduate and as a doctoral program dropout, the odds were stacked against me in 2019. Nevertheless, I persisted. The knowledge that I've gained, not only about the field of education, but also about myself on this 11-year journey has shaped the person that I am today as a wife, mother, sister, friend, educator, and person. For that, I'd like to acknowledge the journey itself.

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I am humbled and deeply grateful for the number of sacrifices that each of these individuals endured so that I could successfully complete this journey. The amount of gratitude that I have for those that have supported, encouraged, guided, and provided opportunities on this voyage is immeasurable.

Abstract

Given the overwhelming presence of Whiteness in the teacher workforce combined with persistent inequitable educational outcomes for BIPOC communities, teacher preparation programs are obligated to equip educators with the competency and confidence to implement culturally responsive teaching practices (Siwatu, 2007). This study explored teacher candidates' insights on experiences prior to and during a teacher preparation program that influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. This phenomenological study was guided by a constructivist worldview employing critical race theory as the lens through which participants' insights were explored. Three semi-structured, confidential, in-depth interviews occurred with four teacher candidates from two universities in southern Pennsylvania. An iterative data analysis process was utilized. The findings of this research were teacher candidates' early perceptions of race and culture developed in predominantly White spaces with family members, their school community, and media. The experiences during a teacher preparation program that influenced teacher candidates' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy occurred in their coursework, fieldwork, and on-campus activities. Implications of the study illustrated that teacher preparation programs may serve as a mitigating force between teacher candidates' experiences prior to a teacher preparation program and the implementation of culturally responsive teaching. Finally, teacher preparation programs should consider a coherent race-centered approach to prepare educators who are equipped to disrupt the inequitable education system and improve outcomes for BIPOC communities.

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Chapter One

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2020), there were 3.3 million full-time and part-time public-school teachers during the 2017-2018 school year. Teachers certified in the United States (U.S.) generally hold a bachelor's degree, a state certificate, and possess content knowledge of the subject they are certified to teach. However, there is little required regarding the specific skills, knowledge, and dispositions needed for teaching racially diverse groups of students. Thus, teachers in the U.S. may successfully move through their teacher preparation program and meet state and national standards while potentially being ill-prepared to face the diverse nature of the school system in which they will teach. In addition to the lack of equity-focused requirements in teacher preparation, inequitable educational outcomes for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) communities occur partly because of an education system that was founded on a bigoted paradigm where White lives are valued more than others: a *value gap* (Glaude, 2020). The American education system has prejudiced notions about value and intellect deep in its soil (Nieto,1996). Furthermore, Delpit (1995) postulates that society's larger power imbalance reverberates in American classrooms, and racial tensions are manifested through curriculum, pedagogy, practices, and procedures.

The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) (2020) estimates that 56% of the student population in 2029 will belong to BIPOC communities. It is projected that by 2030, 40% of school-aged youth will speak English as their second language (Banks & McGee Banks, 2010). The typical school-aged student is multiracial, multiethnic, and varies greatly regarding religion, language, socioeconomic status, and ability (Ladson-Billings, 1995). However, 83% of the nation's teachers were White as of 2004 (Planty et

al., 2007). McFarland et. al. (2017) found the same to be true as of 2017. According to Lowenstein (2009), the typical teacher candidate is of middle to upper middle-class economic background, female, White, and monolingual. In Pennsylvania, specifically, 96% of teachers are White while nearly 33% of the student population belongs to BIPOC groups (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2020). Implications in school settings, such as higher dropout rates, paired with lower college enrollment for young people in BIPOC groups arise partly because of this cultural discontinuity between students and their teachers (Tyler et al., 2008). Cultural discontinuity occurs when the teacher belongs to the dominant culture and lacks understanding and knowledge of the cultural beliefs, language, and values of students in BIPOC groups (Tyler et al., 2008). With the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2002, individuals who have completed an approved teacher preparation program and passed state testing requirements receive a teaching certificate that deems them highly qualified to teach all children in America's school system. However, schools across the nation are not meeting the needs of children in BIPOC groups (Howard, 2006).

Research shows that White students are more likely to perform better on standardized tests, and have higher grades, higher college completion rates, and lower dropout rates than their BIPOC peers (Bohrnstedt et al., 2015). Educational outcomes for students in BIPOC communities can be attributed to unequal access to key educational resources, such as skilled teachers and quality curriculum, rather than race (Milner, 2010). Nationally, students in BIPOC communities trail behind their White peers on standardized assessments (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2020). In Pennsylvania, specifically, the visible inequity in educational outcomes is evidenced by

the 2019 standardized tests in both math and reading where BIPOC learners were behind at all grade levels, a finding which may be the result of biased standardized assessments (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2020). Graduation rates for Black and Hispanic students were considerably lower than their White peers during the 2016-2017 school year (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2020).

In addition to the discrepancies in educational outcomes, data indicate that students in BIPOC communities receive exclusionary discipline measures at higher rates than their White peers. According to NCES (2020), during the 2013-2014 school year, Black students received a higher number of out-of-school suspensions than any other group of students. Sleeter (2008) contends that White teachers are often unable to bridge the gap between students belonging to BIPOC communities and the curriculum but interpret the lack of engagement as disinterest in learning. Students who are members of BIPOC communities are overrepresented in special education programs across the nation while their White peers overpopulate gifted programs (Klingner et al., 2006). These statistics suggest that the educational needs of students in BIPOC communities throughout the nation are not being met by an inherently inequitable education system.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

Gay (2002), Ladson-Billings (1995), Lovelace and Wheeler (2006), and Villegas and Lucas (2002) argue that the increased cultural discontinuity in the classroom, along with the persistent inequitable education system, intensifies the need to train and prepare teachers who allow students' cultures, racial identities, and experiences to permeate the teaching and learning process. Darling-Hammond (1995) believes that the success of our schools, and society at large, is dependent upon our ability and willingness to train

teachers in a way that effectively prepares them to teach in a culturally responsive manner and provide an equitable education to all students. Roughly 80% of graduates from teacher preparation programs in the U.S. are White (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Teacher preparation programs face the challenge of preparing a largely White teacher candidate pool to work in increasingly diverse settings. Milner (2010) contends that addressing the inequitable outcomes that exist between BIPOC learners and their White peers relies on how teachers are prepared.

In a synthesis of research findings, Siwatu (2011) suggests that effective teachers infuse students' cultures into the teaching and learning process. Researchers such as Gay (2018), Ladson-Billings (1998), and Milner (2011) maintain that the implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices assists students in BIPOC communities by making teaching and learning more relevant and effective. Relatedly, an extensive body of research suggests that teachers' sense of self-efficacy impacts their ability to implement practices such as culturally responsive teaching (Loonstra et al., 2009; Fives et al., 2007). Siwatu (2011) argues that teacher preparation programs should support the development of teacher candidates' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. However, preparing culturally responsive teachers is a recent initiative in teacher preparation programs, and research is minimal regarding the phenomenon of culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy (Siwatu, 2008).

Therefore, the goal of this qualitative phenomenological study was to gain insights into the experiences that have influenced teacher candidates' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. The term *teacher candidate* is used to refer to an individual who is participating in a professional teacher preparation program and working

towards becoming a certified educator, but has not yet matriculated (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2020). Geneva Gay (2018) defines culturally responsive teaching as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them" (p. 29**).** Self-efficacy is defined as a belief in the personal ability to plan and execute processes to accomplish a task (Bandura, 1986). For the purposes of this study, culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy was defined as a teacher candidate's belief in their ability to execute the practices associated with culturally responsive teaching (Siwatu, 2011).

Adding teacher candidates' voices to the existing body of literature may support students in BIPOC communities by offering teacher preparation programs insight into the experiences teacher candidates perceive to have influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. Exploring teacher candidates' insights on this phenomenon provided an understanding of the experiences that may serve as a bridge for the racial and cultural mismatch between teachers and their students. Nieto (1996) maintains that the inequitable educational outcomes for students in BIPOC communities are a result of an education system that has policies and practices rooted in bigoted ideas about intelligence and worthiness. Thus, the need to prepare a predominantly White teacher workforce in a way that allows them to disrupt the current system is urgent.

Although there is a plethora of research on the ways in which teacher preparation programs strive to prepare teacher candidates to effectively implement culturally responsive teaching practices, few studies have sought to magnify the teacher candidates' voices. The literature exploring teacher candidates' experiences during their formative

years prior to entering a teacher preparation program is nearly nonexistent. Furthermore, little research has been done to examine teacher candidates' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy (Siwatu et al., 2017).

Methodology

This study was guided by a constructivist worldview while employing a phenomenological approach to research using critical race theory as the lens through which participants' insights were explored. The underlying assumption of constructivism is that human beings are making meaning of the world as they engage in it using their own historical and social perspectives (Lee, 2012). To gather teacher candidates' perceptions of the experiences influencing their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy, this study examined the following research questions:

1. What experiences prior to entering a teacher preparation program do teacher candidates perceive as influencing their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy?
2. What experiences during a teacher preparation program do teacher candidates perceive as influencing their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy?

To address these questions, this study used a phenomenological approach to examine teacher candidates' life experiences both prior to and during a teacher preparation program. Phenomenology focuses on the individuals' interpretations of shared experiences, perceptions, descriptions, and feelings, and provides insights from the first-person point of view (Patton, 2015). An emphasis is placed on the participants' experiences rather than fact gathering. Employing phenomenological research methods in this study allowed the researcher to learn more about the teacher candidates' perceptions

of the experiences that have influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. The use of a phenomenological methodology highlights the teacher candidates' experiences and adds to the existing literature.

Data collection occurred through a series of three in-depth, separate interviews with each study participant. Seidman (2006) posits that the core of an in-depth interview is an interest in understanding the lived experience of others and the significance of that experience from their perspective. The use of a three-step interview process allowed the researcher to ask participants to share their experiences prior to and during a teacher preparation program as they related to culturally responsive teaching practices. Through this study, the researcher gained insights into teacher candidates' perceptions of experiences that have influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy.

Setting

The state of Pennsylvania has 121 colleges, universities, and other alternative certification programs that offer teacher preparation programs approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2012). During the 2017-2018 school year, there were 13,214 individuals enrolled in teacher preparation programs across Pennsylvania (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2020)**.** Approved institutions are required to ensure that all individuals admitted to a teacher preparation program seeking an Instructional I certification at the bachelor's degree level pass a basic-skills test, along with a subject-area content exam in the area in which they wish to be certified. Teacher candidates must show evidence of meeting specific competencies outlined by PDE as well as engage in field experiences throughout their preparation program. Once a teacher candidate has successfully met all

the criteria set forth by PDE and their teacher preparation program (TPP), they are recommended for certification. At the end of the 2018-2019 academic year, there were 7,629 Instructional I certificates issued in the state of Pennsylvania. Of those, 2,521 were issued to individuals seeking certification for grades PreK through four (PDE, 2020).

The researcher obtained participation from two accredited four-year universities in southern Pennsylvania. For anonymity purposes, pseudonyms were assigned to both universities and study participants. Participants were enrolled at either Colvin University or Bridges University. During the Fall of 2020, Colvin University had a total approximate enrollment of 5,585 with 82.24% of the total student body identifying as White. Of those enrolled in the teacher preparation program, 91% identified as White and 84% as female. Bridges University had a total approximate enrollment of 6,794 undergraduate students with 75.3% of the total student body identifying as White. Of those enrolled in the teacher preparation program, 87% identified as White and 85% as female.

The number of teacher candidates enrolled in the teacher preparation programs at both Colvin and Bridges University ranges from 409 to 487 across all certification areas with 57 to 136 candidates specifically in the PreK-4 program. PDE (2012) states that the fundamental purpose of a teacher preparation program is to admit, prepare, and support teacher candidates who will enter the field with the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to assist students in the Commonwealth. To explore the experiences that have influenced the culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy of teacher candidates, this study sought to gather insight from individuals who were near the end of their teacher preparation program at either Colvin University or Bridges University.

Participants

Chapter 354 of the Pennsylvania School Code requires that teacher candidates experience a variety of field placements, one of which must include 12 full weeks of student teaching towards the end of their overall program (PDE, 2020). The possible participant pool in this study consisted of undergraduate teacher candidates seeking a PreK-4 certification at either Colvin University or Bridges University and who were actively engaged in the student teaching semester. There were 48 possible participants at Colvin University who were contacted by the researcher via email (Appendix A) while 40 possible participants at Bridges University were contacted by the university's clinical coordinator. Four participants, one from Colvin and three from Bridges, responded and volunteered to take part in the study. The researcher intentionally did not add criterion related to race or gender when determining the sample population. However, the four participants who volunteered for the study identified as White, with three of them identifying as female and one as male, making the sample population for this study 100% White and 75% female. The sample population aligned with Colvin and Bridges universities where approximately 90% of the teacher candidates were White and 85% were female.

By choosing study participants who were towards the end of their program, the researcher ensured that participants had experienced a full range of preparation offered by their program. Participants were actively working to make sense of the theory-practice nexus during their state-mandated student-teaching experience. Requiring that participants be enrolled in an undergraduate program seeking a PreK-4 certification provided a participant pool that had similar coursework and years of experience.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher's interest in preparing culturally responsive teachers came from both personal and professional experiences. The researcher identified as a White female who is the spouse of a Black man and the mother of biracial children. Personally, the researcher's passion for working towards a more equitable education system for those in underserved and often excluded groups is a result of growing up in abject poverty with close, personal relationships to individuals in the Black community. Due to the researcher's background as a member of an economically disadvantaged group along with the experience of raising biracial children, she is intimately aware of the challenges faced by some of the communities who are suffering from the inequities in education.

Professionally, the researcher completed a teacher preparation program, obtaining an elementary education degree, and served as an elementary teacher in an urban setting for several years. During the researcher's time as an elementary teacher, she obtained a principal's certificate and a degree in educational leadership. Presently, the researcher works as the field and clinical coordinator within a teacher preparation program at a university in central Pennsylvania. The professional relationships established during the researcher's time in the K-12 or university setting did not impact the study. However, the time spent in those settings served as further evidence that she is acutely aware of the needs of both students in BIPOC communities as well as the preparation and professional development of teacher candidates.

The researcher was cognizant of her racial positionality within the context of this study. As a White female, the researcher may have been afforded the opportunity to

explore personal subject matter with White teacher candidates more readily because of the racial congruence. However, the researcher did not seek out White teacher candidates exclusively, but recognized the possibility, and importance of exploring the experiences of White teacher candidates to consider the experiences that may influence their ability to implement practices associated with culturally responsive teaching. Lastly, the researcher acknowledged a concern for extending her privilege as a White person in implicit ways by conducting race-focused research. The researcher sought out BIPOC scholars to lay the foundation of a study that was steeped in the expertise and work of those who have experiential knowledge within those communities. The researcher intended to use any privileges bestowed upon her to improve outcomes for communities that have been marginalized, underserved, and excluded.

Limitations

This study explored the experiences that teacher candidates in a state-mandated student-teaching experience at two accredited, four-year university teacher preparation programs perceived to have influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. A phenomenological approach using an in-depth, three-step interview process was utilized to capture the lived experiences of teacher candidates of teacher candidates and explore the connections between those experiences and preparation for implementing culturally responsive teaching practices. The use of purposeful sampling in order to ensure participants were undergraduates seeking a PreK-4 certification limits the generalizability of the study (Terrell, 2016). The perspectives in this study were further limited to that of only White teacher candidates. The demographics of the participants in this study—100% White and 75% female—align with the demographics of teacher

candidates enrolled at both Colvin and Bridges universities, along with the largely White, female teacher workforce in Pennsylvania. Creswell (2009) notes that while phenomenology allows the researcher to gather rich contextual data, it is limited to the participants' perspectives at a point in time. Additionally, the topics of interests in this study, experiences as they relate to race and culture, are often ones that lead to varying degrees of discomfort. Participants may have been inclined to provide insights that were appeasing to the researcher. Furthermore, participants were self-reporting, which may have led to exaggerated or minimized information (Creswell, 2009).

The racial and cultural incongruence between a majority White teacher workforce and an increasingly diverse student body population requires that the current inequities in the American education system be viewed through a lens that problematizes the institutions themselves with a keen eye on the impact of race and racism.

Theoretical Framework

Due to the overwhelming presence of Whiteness in the teacher workforce, the researcher acknowledged the vital role that critical race theory played in examining the racial incongruence of teachers and BIPOC learners. Critical race theory provided the researcher with a necessary lens to view the structural inequalities that exist within the education system. This phenomenological study was grounded in critical race theory which offers a paradigm that places race at the center of the analysis of the education outcomes for BIPOC learners while looking critically at systems (Howard, 2006). From this theoretical foundation, and because of the varying definitions of what it means to be culturally responsive, the researcher used Geneva Gay's (2018) concept of culturally responsive teaching alongside critical race theory as a lens to view teacher candidates'

perceptions of experiences that have influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. The culturally responsive teaching framework illustrates teaching practices and traits that are used to enhance teaching and learning and help to ensure educational equity for students in BIPOC communities (Gay, 2018). Employing critical race theory as the theoretical lens, while using culturally responsive teaching as a framework, allowed the researcher to acknowledge the presence of racism in the education system alongside approaches to practice as a means to guide research questions, influence the methodology, and interpret findings.

Definition of Terms

The key terms used in this study are defined below:

Attitudes: An individual's internal feelings and beliefs (Pickens, 2005).

BIPOC: Acronym standing for Black and Indigenous People of Color is used to distinguish between Black people, Indigenous people, and other individuals of color who face specific systems of interlocking oppression. The term highlights difference while honoring and emphasizing the struggles that unify these racial groups (BIPOC Project, 2021).

Black: Individuals having origins of the Black racial groups of Africa (US Census Bureau, 2020).

Culture: A dynamic system of social values, cognitive codes, behavioral standards, worldviews, and beliefs used to give order and meaning to our lives as well as the lives of others (Gay, 2010).

Culturally Competent Practitioners: Educators who value diversity, are culturally self-aware, understand the dynamics of differences, have knowledge of students'

cultures, and work towards institutionalizing this knowledge to better serve diverse groups of students (Moule, 2005).

Cultural Discontinuity: Cultural discontinuity occurs when the teacher belongs to the dominant culture and lacks an understanding and knowledge of the cultural beliefs, language, and values of students in minoritized groups (Tyler et al., 2008).

Culturally Responsive Teaching: Geneva Gay (2018) contends that culturally responsive teaching is "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them" (p. 29).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: A pedagogical practice that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Culturally Responsive Self-Efficacy: An individual's belief in their capabilities to execute the practices associated with culturally responsive teaching (Siwatu, 2007).

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: A pedagogical practice that seeks to maintain and grow students' linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the teaching and learning process in an effort to transform society (Paris & Alim, 2017).

Dominate Culture: Values, language, behaviors, and norms of those from a Eurocentric background (Oakes et. al., 2015).

Equitable Education: Defined as every student having access to the educational resources and rigor throughout their educational career across race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, sexual orientation, family background, and/or family income (PDE, 2020).

Historically Underrepresented: Refers to groups who have been deprived of access and/or have be subjected to historical systemic, institutional discrimination in the United States. According to federal measuring tools, this term often refers to individuals identifying as African America, Asian American, Hispanic, Chicano/Latino, and Native American (Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Emory University, 2021).

Interest Convergence: A notion that Whites will engage in equity work for BIPOC communities to the extent that there is something positive in it for them (Bell, 1992).

Mentor Teacher: Educators who have the knowledge and skills to effectively coach and support teacher candidates (PDE, 2020).

Opportunity Gap: Terminology used to describe the educational disparities that are present because of accumulated injustices, lack of access, lack of resources, racial discrimination, and denied opportunities rather than using effort, intellect, or ability to analyze underperforming students (Ladson-Billing, 2006).

PK-4 Certification: License issued to teachers in Pennsylvania providing the credential to teach preschool through fourth grade (PDE, 2020).

Reflexivity: This is a process of questioning your unexamined assumptions about a wide range of ideas. It demands the interrogation of implicit bias and actively countering those biases when and where they are identified (Creswell, 2009).

Self-Efficacy: A belief in personal ability to plan and execute processes to accomplish a task. (Bandura, 1986).

Teacher Candidate: An individual who is participating in a professional teacher preparation program working towards becoming a certified educator, but has not yet

matriculated (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2020).

Teacher Educator: An individual who is responsible for assisting teacher candidates in the development of the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to be an effective classroom teacher.

Teacher Preparation Program: The primary purpose of a teacher preparation program is to admit, prepare, and support individuals for the teaching profession who, upon graduation, have the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to enable PreK-12 students to achieve academic success (PDE, 2012).

Value Gap: A bigoted paradigm where White lives are valued more than others (Glaud, 2020).

White: Individuals having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. (US Census Bureau, 2020).

White Space: A colloquial term used to refer to neighborhoods, restaurants, schools, institutions, organizations, workplaces, churches, and other entities that are overwhelmingly occupied by White individuals and in which BIPOC individuals are typically absent, marginalized, or not expected (Anderson, 2015).

The terms outlined above serve as a basis for the following chapters which provide greater detail on existing research, methodology, data analysis, and interpretation of the data.

Summary and Organization of Paper

Teacher preparation programs are tasked with preparing educators to work within ever-changing, diverse settings where there is often a cultural incongruence between teacher and student. Research suggests that teachers who are effective in their work with

students belonging to BIPOC communities are confident, comfortable, and proficient in their ability to recognize, respect, and include students' culture in the teaching and learning process (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Siwatu (2011) argues that teacher preparation programs must nurture the development of teacher candidates' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. This study sought to amplify the voices of teacher candidates regarding the experiences that have influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy, and therefore, add to the limited body of knowledge and offer support for a more equitable education system meeting the needs of all students. While the purpose of this study and a sense of urgency were provided in the previous chapter, the remaining chapters will present a review of the literature and provide details on the overall research design.

Chapter Two

The population of students belonging to BIPOC communities has steadily risen in the United States over the last few decades (NCES, 2020). Students of color accounted for 30% of the population in 1990, 34% in 1994, and 40% in 2002, with increases expected throughout the 21st century (Howard, 2006). In contrast, the vast majority of the teaching force is White (Sleeter, 2017). With students in BIPOC communities being more susceptible to the impact of an inequitable education system, researchers have investigated a possible causal relationship between the disparities in educational outcomes for students in BIPOC communities and the over-representation of White teachers (Gay, 2002; Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Sleeter, 2011). Recognizing the cultural discontinuity between teacher and student, teacher preparation programs attempt to prepare their predominantly White teacher candidates to work with diverse groups of students through courses and field experiences (Gorski, 2009).

The inequitable outcomes for BIPOC learners, coupled with the increasing diversity in the student body population situated within the uniformity of the White teaching workforce, create challenges and opportunities for teacher education programs (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Several researchers have developed approaches to ways in which teachers can infuse students' culture, race, and background into the teaching and learning process to improve outcomes for individuals in BIPOC communities (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings,1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). With a mission of preparing teachers to work in diverse settings, teacher preparation programs often implement curriculum and courses that seek to assist teacher candidates in developing the knowledge and skills needed to engage in teaching practices that take students' cultures into account (Gay,

2002). Siwatu (2011) argues that teacher preparation programs must also consider teacher candidates' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy beliefs when preparing and training teachers. However, the body of literature on the phenomenon of culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy and the perspectives of teacher candidates is minimal (Siwatu, 2007).

Understanding the historical overview of culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy, experiences of teacher candidates, and practices in teacher preparation offers insight into current practices. This chapter provides a historical overview of culturally responsive teaching, outlines the theoretical framework of this qualitative phenomenological study, notes the lack of literature on teacher candidates' experiences, offers insights into ways in which teacher preparation programs attempt to develop culturally responsive teachers, and synthesizes expert perspectives on the phenomenon of culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy.

Historical Overview of Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culture is central to teaching and learning (Gay & Howard, 2000). Gay (1995) posits that education is a process that is social, political, and cultural. Sleeter and McLaren (1995) point out that it is not possible for educators to provide value-free pedagogical knowledge. The terminology used to describe the type of pedagogy associated with infusing students' culture and race into teaching and learning has varied and shifted within the American education system (Sleeter & Grant, 2007). Terms such as culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2002) culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2017) have been used in education for decades. The terms are used interchangeably across the studies reviewed,

but remain consistent, for the most part, within any one study. For this study, the term *culturally responsive teaching* was used and defined as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them" (Gay, 2002, p. 29). Despite the differences in semantics and slight variations in focus, the overarching goal of the studies reviewed in the literature was to prepare teacher candidates to engage in pedagogy and practice that lead to a more equitable education system.

Research shows that there is a need to prepare teachers to work in school systems that are rapidly becoming more diverse (Horton & Scott, 2004; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995; Sleeter, 2011; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). This phenomenological study focused on the culturally responsive teaching framework as it illustrates teaching practices that are used to enhance the learning experience for students in BIPOC communities with the hopes of assisting in the creation of a more equitable education system (Gay, 2018). However, insights into the historical evolution of culturally responsive teaching, along with a review of this study's theoretical framework, provide an understanding of the current context.

Multicultural Education

In the 1980's, James Banks, a pioneer in the field of multicultural education, examined schools as social systems (Banks & McGee Banks, 2010). Multicultural education has taken on a variety of meanings since the inception of the term in the 1960's, making its implementation in teacher preparation programs difficult (Sleeter & Grant, 2007). Banks (2010) defines multicultural education as an idea, a concept, and an educational reform movement which incorporates the notion that all students, regardless

of race, class, gender, disability, and/or social class, should be afforded equal learning opportunities in school. An underlying premise of multicultural education is that certain students have a better chance at succeeding in the current school structure than other students depending on their socially constructed categories such as race, class, and gender (Banks & McGee Banks, 2010). Multicultural education advocates strive to build relationships, enhance understanding, support self-concepts, develop multicultural climates of schools, and develop curricula that encourage multicultural awareness (Banks & McGee Banks, 2010).

Multicultural education laid the foundation for the development of a variety of approaches for teaching students in BIPOC communities. Stemming from a concern over the lack of academic advancement of students in BIPOC communities and using multicultural education as a foundation, scholars began advocating for the implementation of culturally sensitive instructional practices (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Mohatt & Erickson, 1981). While multicultural education laid a foundation, the approaches described in the next section outline specific skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for effectively teaching diverse groups of students.

Approaches to Preparing Culturally Responsive Teachers

An interest in preparing teachers to implement culturally responsive teaching practices continued to grow in the 1990s and 2000s as inequitable outcomes for BIPOC learners remained despite years of education reform (Howard, 2006). Many scholars have outlined skills and traits that are believed to be required for effectively teaching diverse groups of students (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billing, 1992, Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Ladson-

Billings (1995) coined the term *culturally relevant pedagogy* as a means of working towards collective and individual empowerment for Black students. Culturally relevant teaching is a pedagogical practice that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billings,1994). The three main tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy are academic success, cultural competence, and the development of a critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Culturally sustaining pedagogy seeks to maintain and grow students' linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the teaching and learning process in an effort to transform society (Paris & Alim, 2017). Paris and Alim (2017) build upon the seminal work of Ladson-Billings (1994) and others to contribute to the ongoing work of educational justice in the United States.

Moule (2005) outline five basic skill areas that culturally competent teachers possess: valuing diversity, being culturally self-aware, understanding the dynamics of differences, having knowledge of students' cultures, and working towards institutionalizing this knowledge to better serve diverse groups of students. Villegas and Lucas (2002) offer a six-strand approach for teachers to work effectively in diverse settings. According to Villegas and Lucas (2002), teachers must have a socio-cultural awareness, view diversity in a positive manner, recognize themselves as cultural brokers, embrace a constructivist worldview, learn about students' lives, and design teaching and learning by drawing on students' strengths.

A review of the approaches suggests a general agreement that teaching and learning should involve the use of students' cultural knowledge in both instruction and classroom environment, provide students an opportunity to demonstrate knowledge in a

variety of ways, and afford students the opportunity to maintain their own cultural identity while learning ways to engage in the dominant culture. The framework that most closely encapsulates each of these principles is culturally responsive teaching. Culturally responsive teaching is defined as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them" (Gay, 2018 p.29). In addition, while several researchers have offered suggestions on the knowledge and qualities that teachers should possess to work effectively with diverse groups of students, a synthesis of the literature suggests that culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2018) is the most prominent and widely used framework (Siwatu, 2007). Thus, culturally responsive teaching is the framework that guided the data analysis in this study.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Geneva Gay (2000) defines culturally responsive teaching as using the cultural knowledge and prior experiences of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them. Students' culture should be used as a vehicle to enhance learning within the education system. Gay (2002) contends that there are five tenants to preparing culturally responsive teachers: developing a knowledge base around cultural diversity, designing culturally responsive curriculum, building a culturally caring learning community, taking part in cross-cultural communications, and embedding cultural congruence into teaching and learning. Culturally responsive teaching is characterized by teachers who communicate high expectations, use a culturally responsive curriculum, facilitate learning within the context of culture, develop student-centered learning opportunities, and take on a strength-based perspective (Gay, 2018). Richards et al.

(2004) assert that culturally responsive teaching supports the achievement of all students by implementing effective teaching and learning in a culturally supported, learner-centered context with students' strengths being used to promote achievement.

A limitation to the use of an approach such as culturally responsive teaching is the absence of a critical examination of the oppressive structures that exist within society. While an approach such as culturally responsive teaching embeds culture into each of the tenets, it does not place race or racism at its center. For this reason, critical race theory was employed as the theoretical lens through which this study was conducted. The fundamental aim of critical race theory is to bring race and racism to the forefront in order to underscore and interrogate how race and racism are embedded and maintained in our institutions (Sleeter, 2017). Given the percentage of representation that White teachers hold in education, along with the inequitable educational outcomes for students in BIPOC communities, individuals in teacher preparation programs must be prepared in a way that provides them with the tools necessary to critically examine the inequitable outcomes that are persistent for BIPOC learners and commit to moving towards a more equitable education system for all.

Theoretical Framework

This qualitative phenomenological study used critical race theory as the lens through which data were analyzed. Critical race theory, which emerged from legal studies in the 1970s and 1980s, draws from and extends across various fields. The theory evolved into a movement interested primarily in the relationship between race, racism, and power (Yosso, 2005). Law professors Derrik Bell and Allen Freeman developed critical race theory to address implicit forms of racism in the legal system (Ladson-Billing, 1998).

Critical race theory acknowledges that racism is institutional and is weaved into the American society in such a way that it is perceived as normal and natural (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Critical Race Theory in Education

Ladson-Billings (1998) and others expanded critical race theory into education by connecting the significance of school curriculum, instruction models, evaluations, and budgeting to the dominant race in the early 1990s. Critical race theory in education provides a lens through which the presence of racism in the education system is placed at the center of the discussion (Howard, 2006). Solorzano et al. (2000) state,

> The critical race theory framework for education is different from other CRT frameworks because it simultaneously attempts to foreground race and racism in the research as well as challenge the traditional paradigms, methods, texts, and separate discourse on race, gender, and class by showing how these social constructs intersect to impact communities of color. (p. 63)

Critical race theory's main tenants establish the role of race in social structures such as the education system (Ladson-Billings, 1998). The five tenets of critical race theory are "(a) the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination, (b) the challenge to dominant ideology, (c) the commitment to social justice, (d) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (e) the transdisciplinary perspective" (Solórzano, et al., 2000, p. 63). The first tenant of critical race theory declares that race is an ordinary part of society. As a critical race theorist, Ladson-Billings (1998) asserts that race and racism are a ubiquitous part of the American education system, permeating every fiber of the society and intersecting with other forms

of oppression. The second tenet attempts to deconstruct existing assumptions and rejects notions such as meritocracy, colorblindness, and neutrality (Walls, 2016). The dominant ideology claims that an individual's success or failure within a system is based on effort (Tate, 1997). Critical race theory, in contrast, maintains that assertions of neutrality and colorblindness mask White privilege and power (Sleeter, 2017). The third tenet of critical race theory implores institutions to question whose knowledge and values are represented. In educational entities, individuals are tasked with looking critically at existing policies and practices to determine who benefits the most. The fourth tenet calls for the use of counter narratives and storytelling as a means of amplifying the voices of BIPOC communities. The fifth, and final, tenet of critical race theory explains that oppression is often intersectional (Solórzano, et al., 2000). An additional core premise of critical race theory is the notion of interest convergence (Bell, 1980). Interest convergence is the idea that Whites will engage in equity work for BIPOC communities to the extent that there is something positive in it for them (Bell, 1992).

An examination of relationships between race and power, such as those that exist because of the cultural discontinuity between the typical teacher and student, is essential to educational equity (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Employing critical race theory as the theoretical framework allowed the researcher to acknowledge the presence of race and racism in the education system alongside the culturally responsive teaching framework. Together, critical race theory and culturally responsive teaching guided the research questions, influenced the methodology, and informed the interpretation of findings (Howard, 2006). While multicultural education purports the notion that all students should receive an equitable education, approaches such as culturally responsive teaching

provide tools to move from theory to practice. The addition of critical race theory in this study provided the researcher with a theoretical framework that banded together the notion of an equitable education system and the pervasive nature of racism in education. The overwhelmingly White teacher workforce paired with the longstanding inequitable outcomes between BIPOC learners and their White peers made critical race theory an appropriate lens through which to explore teacher candidates' perceptions of the experiences that have influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy.

Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy

Pyle and Alaca (2018) argue that self-efficacy beliefs are crucial in the implementation of effective culturally responsive teaching. Korkmaz & Unsal. (2016) posit that an educator's perception of their personal competence is closely associated to their teaching performance. Self-efficacy impacts the activities a teacher chooses for students to engage in within the classroom. Siwatu et. al. (2017) contend that a synthesis of the research supports a positive relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and teacher quality. Self-efficacy is the belief in the personal ability to plan and execute processes to accomplish a task, with efficacious beliefs influencing thought patterns affecting confidence in abilities (Bandura, 1986). Bandura (1986) notes that mastery experiences which require the application of a specific task are the most impactful experiences in developing self-efficacy. Highly efficacious teachers develop innovative strategies for teaching and learning while teachers with a low self-efficacy opt for direct instruction activities (Siwatu, 2011). Cankaya (2018) and Serzgin and Erdogan (2018) noted that teachers with low self-efficacy beliefs are less likely to create rigorous learning environments, implement effective classroom management, or provide effective

instruction.

Self-efficacy, as related to culturally responsive teaching, is not only about the knowledge and skills needed to complete a task, but also the belief in the ability to use the knowledge and skills (Siwatu et al., 2017). Siwatu (2007) defines culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy as an individual's belief in their capabilities to execute the practices associated with culturally responsive teaching. Siwatu et al. (2017) found teacher candidates reported high self-efficacy in helping their students become integral members of the classroom and develop positive personal relationships. However, teacher candidates were less efficacious when required to implement more challenging tenants of culturally responsive teaching, such as integrating race and culture into teaching and learning (Siwatu et al., 2017). Additionally, Siwatu (2007) determined that teacher candidates were less efficacious in their ability to interact and communicate with English language learners. Siwatu et al., (2017) reported that teacher candidates attributed doubts about culturally responsive self-efficacy to ineffective field experiences, lack of knowledge regarding student diversity, limited understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy, inadequate exposure to culturally responsive teaching examples, and a general lack of preparedness. This serves as evidence that teacher candidates' experiences are crucial in the development of their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy.

Experiences of Teacher Candidates

Pennsylvania currently has a teacher workforce that is 96% White, whereas students of color make up approximately 33% of the student body (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2020). In the foreseeable future, the majority of teachers will be White while the student body population continues to diversify (Howard, 2006). Nieto

(1996) contends that White teacher candidates are products of predominantly White neighborhoods and schools, making their life experiences racially and culturally isolated. The sample population of this phenomenological study aligns with the racial demographics of the teacher workforce in Pennsylvania. In an effort to add to the existing body of literature on culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy, this study sought to explore the experiences that teacher candidates perceive to have influenced their comfort with and confidence in implementing the practices associated with culturally responsive teaching. Ultimately, gathering teacher candidates' insights on culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy will help to advance teacher preparation in developing teachers who are prepared to support all students, but specifically students belonging to BIPOC communities, by implementing culturally responsive teaching practices.

Teacher Candidates Experiences Prior to a Teacher Preparation Program

A review of the literature regarding the experiences teacher candidates had in their formative years, as they relate to culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy, is minimal. The lack of research regarding experiences that teacher candidates had prior to entering a teacher preparation program indicated the crucial need for this phenomenological study focusing on teacher candidates' experiences prior to a teacher preparation program. While there is a plethora of research on teacher preparation programs' efforts to prepare teacher candidates to work in diverse settings, very few studies have explored the experiences teacher candidates themselves perceive to have impacted their overall development. However, research suggests that teacher candidates come into the profession from predominately White homogenous neighborhoods and schools (Nieto, 1996, Sleeter, 2008). Anderson (2015) defines these overwhelmingly

White homogenous spaces as the *White space*, citing it as neighborhoods, restaurants, schools, institutions, organizations, workplaces, churches, and other entities that are overwhelmingly occupied by White individuals and in which BIPOC individuals are typically absent, marginalized, or not expected.

The current body of literature on teacher candidates' experiences in a teacher preparation program as they relate to culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy is extremely limited (Siwatu et al., 2017). There are no qualitative studies exploring the influences of experiences teacher candidates' have had prior to entering a teacher preparation program as they relate to culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. Furthermore, there is minimal qualitative research that seeks to augment the teacher candidates' voices. This phenomenological study adds to the body of literature by not only offering perspectives provided by teacher candidates themselves but also insight into experiences prior to and during a teacher preparation program that teacher candidates perceive to have influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy.

Teacher Candidates' Experiences During a Teacher Preparation Program

The existing research on teacher candidates' experiences while in a teacher preparation program is largely from the perspective of the teacher educator. Capella-Santana (2003) notes that when teacher educators provide an experience that pairs a diverse field setting along with a safe space to discuss issues, teacher candidates are more open to culturally responsive teaching. Several researchers suggest the use of a writing experience to develop White teacher candidates who are prepared to work in diverse settings (Colon-Muniz et al., 2010; Cruz-Janzen & Taylor, 2004; Fernandez, 2003; Genor & Goodwin, 2005; Horton & Scott, 2004). Sherfinski et al. (2019) provide teacher

candidates with an experience where they work directly with their teacher educators to develop and reflect on assignments related to culturally responsive teaching. Teacher educators offer experiences with reflections, journaling, and surveys as a means to prepare teacher candidates to teach in culturally responsive ways (Ahmed, 2019; Asher, 2007). These experiences are offered as part of a teacher preparation program whose mission is to prepare majority White teacher candidates to work in diverse classrooms. Researchers such as Gay (2000) advocate that teacher preparation programs must prepare teacher candidates to implement practices associated with culturally responsive teaching.

Culturally Responsive Teacher Preparation

An educator's beliefs impact teaching and learning (Delpit, 1995). Although biases are inherent in all individuals, teacher preparation programs can mitigate those biases and prepare teacher candidates to support diverse learners (Delpit, 1995). Researchers and scholars agree that teachers in American classrooms must be prepared in a way that allows them to develop the knowledge and skills needed to work with culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students (Gay, 2002; McIntosh & Green, 2004; Richards et al., 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002;). Gay (2000) contends that culturally responsive teaching is "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them" (p.29). The major themes that emerged from research on culturally responsive teacher preparation were shifting teacher candidates' beliefs, the notion that culture is something those from BIPOC communities possess, the importance of field experiences, and programmatic implementation.

Due to the overwhelming presence of Whiteness in teacher preparation programs,

many of the studies reviewed focused on White teacher candidates who were not seeking to work with that specific demographic. The studies presented in this section examined strategies teacher preparation programs use to encourage culturally responsive teaching in teacher preparation programs with majority White teacher candidates.

Shifting Beliefs and Notion of Other

According to research, White teacher candidates commonly lack awareness of themselves as cultural beings (Delpit, 1995; Nieto, 1996; Schmidt, 1999; Sleeter, 2017). Many times, educators, and others resist anti-oppressive change without realizing it because it challenges existing ways of thinking (Delpit, 1995). Despite the increasing presence of BIPOC learners in schools, educators are predominantly White and middle-class (Nieto, 1996). Sleeter and McClaren (1995) posit that by keeping the focus of study on those in BIPOC communities, White individuals are able to preserve the ideas and beliefs held about existing social systems. Delpit (1995) articulates a concern with teachers who do not accept the political and historical context of education, simply tolerate diversity rather than embrace it, and consider students in BIPOC communities as other people's children.

As an instructor in a teacher preparation course, Goodwin et al. (1997) observed differences in how White teacher candidates perceived multicultural education versus how students of color viewed the concept. White teacher candidates believed multicultural education was for the benefit of others while the teacher candidates of color responded in ways that indicated they viewed multicultural education as something all individuals needed to engage in. Similarly, Horton and Scott (2004) note that White teacher candidates in their study believed the purpose of multicultural education to be the

education of BIPOC individuals. Schmidt (1999) found that White teacher candidates lack awareness of themselves as cultural beings and assumed that their own way of being was the norm to which others aspire.

The use of dialog driven by the course texts, reflective journaling, narrative portfolios, and a field placement experience are common among the literature on multicultural coursework (Colon-Muniz et al., 2010; Fernandez, 2003; Genor & Goodwin, 2005; Goodwin et al., 1997; Horton & Scott, 2004). Several of the researchers in the literature reviewed were teacher educators who noted having teacher candidates reflect through writing, dialog, or survey on the notion of other and self (Colon-Muniz et al., 2010; Cruz-Janzen & Taylor, 2004; Gorski, 2009; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995). Cruz-Janzen & Taylor (2004) described an experience with having teacher education faculty guide teacher candidates through a critical written analysis to explore the socialization process they went through regarding their own race, class, gender, disabilities, etc. Sherfinski et al. (2019) looked at the narrative portfolio assignment across four cohorts to determine the extent to which this assignment helped to grow teacher candidates' understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy. The authors found that creating assignments that encompass co-creation between teacher candidates and teacher educators is likely to be a key factor in continuing to grow teacher candidates' abilities to reflect on and practice culturally relevant pedagogy.

Cockrell et.al (1999) discussed the use of a demographic questionnaire, initial position paper, journaling, and a capstone assignment in a study of teacher educators teaching the foundations of education. Asher (2007) described the use of a course text and reflections to engage students in praxis by merging theory and practice while creating

a space for dialog to occur rather than ignoring the issues. Ahmed (2019) studied a literacy teacher educator's effort with three teacher candidates to bridge the divide between the culturally responsive strategies suggested in coursework and the realities of teaching in a K-12 setting. The author found that teacher candidates appreciated but did not replicate the culturally responsive strategies taught by the teacher educator.

Although the methods used in single courses may have impacted shifting teacher candidates' beliefs, Sleeter and Grant (2007) posit that there is a need for both immediate concrete proposals in the coursework and strategies for long-term paradigm shifts with programmatic changes in order to see any type of significant change. Sleeter (1995) explicitly points out that the field experience in which teacher candidates engage during a single course is a bounded experience with little assurance that it will be used in the future. Thus, to effectively prepare teachers to implement culturally responsive teaching practices, there is a need for the long-term, programmatic implementation of culturally responsive teaching in teacher preparation programs.

Importance of Field Experience and Programmatic Implementation

Several of the studies reviewed in this set of literature discussed methods for redesigning coursework to expose teacher candidates to inequalities of society**.** Many of these studies also noted that although they focused on shifting teacher candidates' perspectives on students in BIPOC learners through coursework, it would take much more to create change at a systemic level (Capella-Santana, 2003; Cruz-Janzen & Taylor, 2004). The research pointed to the importance of a field experience within the overall program design to expose teacher candidates to the inequalities in society (Assaf et al., 2010; Colon-Muniz et al., 2010; Cruz-Janzen & Taylor, 2004; Grant, 1981; McKinney et

al., 2008; Sleeter, 2011). Two studies in this review used ethnographic methods with teacher candidates to positively impact perceptions about diversity (Capella-Santana, 2003; Duarte & Reed, 2004). Sleeter (2008) argues that field experiences should be cross-cultural in school and community-based settings. Effective instructional practices in conjunction with a quality field experience to shift the attitudes and beliefs of teacher candidates are noted in several studies (Horton & Scott, 2004; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995; Sleeter, 2011; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). In addition, Capella-Santana (2003) noted that teacher educators who created an environment where teacher candidates felt safe to discuss issues while engaged in a diverse field experience were more likely to see a positive shift in beliefs.

Cruz-Janzen and Taylor's (2004) study suggests that an introductory course in conjunction with a field experience focused on diversity issues provides a foundation for the implementation of multicultural education in practicing teachers. Sleeter (2001) postulates from her analysis that field placements are not only effective, but community-based placements will provide teacher candidates with a higher rate of implementation. However, McKinney et al.'s (2008) study indicated that while some type of internship is viewed as a crucial experience within the education of a teacher, short-term experiences do not prepare teachers for teaching in diverse settings. Placements must be high quality, long-term, cross-cultural, and should be paired with essential coursework as part of an integral overall program that focuses on diversity (Sleeter, 2001).

Gay (1995) argues that anything less than a comprehensive, pervasive, and systemic reform is inadequate to effectively prepare teachers to work in diverse settings.

To this effect, Assaf et al. (2010) examined teacher perceptions and overall program practices in one teacher preparation program. These researchers recommend that in order for lasting change to occur within the education system, teacher preparation must include an overall coherent program focused on culturally responsive teaching. Causey et al. (2000) and Grant (1981) similarly recommended that a well-articulated program with long-term attention to diversity, more experiences, and increased follow-up would lead to teacher candidates being prepared to work in diverse settings.

Gorski (2009) conducted an analysis of program content rather than focusing on beliefs of teacher candidates by analyzing the course descriptions, goals, objectives, and other text in 45 syllabi from various sociocultural classes in a teacher preparation program. His study attempted to gather information on what syllabi show as approaches to multicultural teacher preparation within an institution. The analysis revealed that most of the courses were designed to provide teachers with practical skills and personal awareness, but did not prepare them to implement culturally responsive practices. Of the syllabi, 71% showed evidence of multicultural education courses that are inconsistent with fundamental, key principles of frameworks designed to prepare teacher candidates to work in diverse settings.

While the studies suggested a variety of methods used in teacher preparation programs, the overarching goal remained to prepare teacher candidates in a way that provides them with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively engage in the teaching and learning process with BIPOC learners. Culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2002), an approach that uses students' cultural knowledge, experiences, and strengths, provided teachers with pedagogy and practices to take with them into diverse classrooms. Teacher

preparation programs have a responsibility to train educators to work in school systems that are becoming progressively more diverse (Sleeter & McLaren, 1995).

Summary

As educators, choices regarding curriculum, content, and pedagogy have implications for an equitable education system (Howard, 2006). Culturally responsive teaching provides teacher candidates with the skills and knowledge needed to effectively teach diverse groups of students (Martin & Strom, 2016). Critical race theory is a theoretical framework that places race at the center of the analysis of providing an equitable education for BIPOC learners. Teachers who engage in culturally responsive teaching can more effectively engage in the teaching and learning process with all students, but specifically with those from BIPOC communities (Milner, 2011). However, efforts to prepare teacher candidates with the skills and knowledge to implement culturally responsive teaching are still in the infancy stage (Siwatu, 2011). In addition, teacher candidates are reporting a lack of preparedness to implement practices of culturally responsive teaching (Siwatu et al., 2017).

While the literature supports a positive relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and teacher quality (Siwatu et. al., 2011), there is limited research on teacher candidates' self-efficacy beliefs as they relate to culturally responsive teaching (Siwatu, 2011). Teacher candidates' experiences are often reported from the perspective of teacher educators. Furthermore, the literature addressing teacher candidates' experiences prior to entering a teacher preparation program as they relate to culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy is nonexistent. To address the gaps in the literature, this qualitative phenomenological study drew out the voices of teacher candidates by exploring their

perceptions of the experiences prior to and during a teacher preparation program that have influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. This focus on teacher candidates' perceptions using an in-depth interview process adds to the limited body of literature on teacher candidates' culturally responsive self-efficacy while also providing insight that may help to meet the needs of students in BIPOC communities. Following this review of the literature, Chapter Three will address the overall research design and methodology.

Chapter Three

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore experiences teacher candidates believe to have influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. To accomplish the stated goal, this study addressed two research questions:

1. What experiences prior to entering a teacher preparation program do teacher candidates perceive as influencing their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy?
2. What experiences during a teacher preparation program do teacher candidates perceive as influencing their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy?

This study used a phenomenological approach to examine teacher candidates' life experiences both prior to and during a teacher preparation program. The study highlights teacher candidates' stories about their experiences and how those experiences influence their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. This chapter describes the methodological approach that framed the study and includes discussions pertaining to the research design, instrumentation, trustworthiness, data collection procedures, data analysis collection, limitations and delimitations, and ethical considerations.

Research Design

Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, this study gained insight into the phenomenon of teacher candidates' experiences that influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. Phenomenology is a means to understand the lived experiences from the perspective of an individual or small group (Terrell, 2016).

Phenomenology provides for the exploration of experiences where knowledge of a phenomenon is limited, and participants' perspectives provide insight into the topic (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A phenomenological research design was appropriate for exploring teacher candidates' experiences and how those experiences influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy to ensure that participants' voices were heard. It allowed for a description of individual experiences to emerge (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A phenomenological design is an effective means to understand the essence of participants' perspectives and experiences (Creswell, 2009).

Setting

Participation was obtained from two accredited universities in southern Pennsylvania, Colvin University and Bridges University. Colvin University had a total approximate enrollment of 5,585 with 17.76% of students identifying as members of BIPOC communities (NCES, 2020). Of the total enrollment, there were 487 teacher candidates enrolled in the teacher preparation program across varying certification areas. Of the 487 teacher candidates enrolled in Colvin University in 2019, 409 were female and 446 of them identified as White. Thus, 91% of the teacher candidates enrolled in Colvin University in 2019 were White and 84% identified as female. Colvin University recommended 57 teacher candidates for the PreK-4 certification in 2019.

Bridges University had a total approximate enrollment of 6,794 undergraduate students with 24.7% of students identifying as members of BIPOC communities (NCES, 2020). Of the total enrollment, 409 teacher candidates were enrolled in their teacher preparation program. Of the 409 teacher candidates enrolled in Bridges University in 2019, 347 were female and 357 of them identified as White. Thus, 87% of the teacher

candidates enrolled in Bridges University in 2019 were White and 85% identified as female. The overall enrollment trends at both Colvin University and Bridges University align with the national averages for the demographics of the teacher workforce in the United States being overwhelmingly White and female. Bridges University recommended 136 teacher candidates for the PreK-4 certificate in 2019.

Participants

This qualitative phenomenological study gathered insights from four teacher candidates at two different universities in southern Pennsylvania. Qualitative research relies on making meaning from descriptions provided by a few people who have experienced a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants in this study were identified using purposeful sampling in order to gain a better understanding of their perspectives and experiences (Terrell, 2016). Purposeful sampling allowed the researcher to identify a small, specific group who were able to describe the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2009) which, for this study, is the experiences teacher candidates perceive to have influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. The possible participant pool consisted of undergraduate teacher candidates seeking a PreK-4 certification at either Colvin University or Bridges University and who were actively engaged in the student-teaching semester. Forty-eight possible participants at Colvin University were contacted by the researcher via email (Appendix A), while 40 possible participants at Bridges University were contacted by the university's clinical coordinator.

Four teacher candidates, one from Colvin University and three from Bridges University, volunteered to take part in this study. Each of the four participants engaged in three separate hour-long, semi-structured interviews. This allowed the researcher to

achieve a point of saturation in the depth and richness of the time spent with each participant. Creswell (2014) suggests between three and ten participants for a phenomenological study. Furthermore, Seidman (2006) posits that using a three-step, in-depth interview process with a sample of participants who experienced comparable structural and social conditions provides power to the insights shared by a relatively small number of participants.

All four of the participants identified themselves as White. Three participants identified as female, while one participant identified as a male. The teacher workforce in Pennsylvania is 96% White and 73% female (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2020). Both the race and gender of the participants, who were 100% White and 75% female, closely aligned with the total enrollment at both Colvin and Bridges universities as well the demographics of the overall teacher workforce in Pennsylvania.

Data Collection

In-depth interviewing was used for data collection in this qualitative study. Using a three-step interview process allowed the researcher to gather insight into the life history of participants while placing it alongside their contemporary lived experiences (Seidman, 2006). Semi-structured interviews allow for follow-up questions to gain a more in-depth understanding of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). Interviewing as a data collection method was essential for amplifying the voices of teacher candidates as they offered insight into the experiences that have influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy.

Data collection occurred through a series of three in-depth, confidential interviews with each study participant. Seidman (2006) posits that the core of an in-depth

interview is an interest in understanding the lived experience of others and the significance of those experiences from their perspective. The first set of interview questions focused on the teacher candidates' life stories from birth through 12th grade. Teacher candidates reflected on experiences they had as students themselves in elementary, middle, and high school. They shared experiences related to their friends, teachers, curriculum, family, neighborhood, and childhood as their experiences related to race and culture. In the second round of interviews, participants discussed experiences during their teacher preparation program including relationships with mentors and faculty, field experiences, and notable assignments from coursework related to culturally responsive teaching. In the third and final round of interviews, teacher candidates made predications about the implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices in their future classrooms. The use of an in-depth, three-step interview process provided participants with time to process and reflect between interviews while also deepening their own understanding of their experiences. The researcher spent approximately three hours with each candidate allowing her to build trust with the participants and develop a deep understanding of their experiences.

The use of interviews as a qualitative data collection measure afforded the researcher the opportunity to gain insights that exposed their experiences, perceptions, and the way in which participants have organized the world (Patton, 1987). Semi-structured, confidential interviews were used to gather insights from teacher candidates regarding how their experiences influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. Three in-depth interviews were conducted with each study participant. In-depth interviewing, the method used in this study, allowed for the exploration of individuals'

experiences from their points of view, noting how those experiences interact with social and organizational forces (Seidman, 2006). Through this study, the researcher hoped to gain insight into the experiences teacher candidates perceive to have influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy.

Data Collection Procedures

Study participants were purposefully chosen to describe the phenomenon of teacher candidates' experiences leading to the development of culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. For this study, participants were undergraduate teacher candidates seeking to obtain an initial PreK-4 certification while engaging in a state-mandated student-teaching experience as part of the teacher preparation program at either Colvin University or Bridges University. An interview protocol (Appendix C) was utilized to ensure a level of consistency during interviews. The researcher created a handout (Appendix D) consisting of practices associated with culturally responsive teaching for participants use during the interview. The handout was based on practices identified in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale (Siwatu, 2007). Two pilot interviews were conducted to assist the researcher with question wording and order, and to provide general feedback on questions and the interview process. The pilot interviews were conducted with first year elementary teachers as they were not considered for the study. The researcher modified the wording and order of the interview questions following each of the pilot interviews. The results of the pilot interviews were used to inform the overall interview process but were not included in the findings.

Upon approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Shippensburg University and permission from the Colleges of Education at the universities where

participants attend, contact was made with possible participants at both institutions. In order to honor the universities' processes, the researcher asked the coordinator of each program their preferred method for contacting possible participants. The universities chose different paths for initial communication with the participant pool. Thus, the researcher directly contacted the participant pool at Colvin University while a representative from Bridges University sent out an invitation to participate in the study to the participant pool. Participants were asked to engage in virtual, confidential, one-on-one interviews designed to explore their perceptions of the experiences that have influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. Interested candidates responded directly to the researcher expressing interest. Informed consent documents were sent to the researcher by email. The researcher contacted the participant pool at Colvin University through email three times over the course of two weeks and asked the representative at Bridges University to do two follow ups with possible participants there.

The researcher contacted each of the four participants by email to secure informed consent and arrange interview times that were convenient for participants. Interviews occurred over a three-week period with one interview each week. The spacing of the three semi-structured interviews was done in this manner to allow participants sufficient time to process their insights from the first interview but not enough time to lose connection with the phenomenon (Seidman, 2006). The use of semi-structured interviews afforded the researcher the opportunity to have control over the questions, possibly leading to richer data (Creswell, 2014).

Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. Interviews began with a verbal and visual review of the informed consent document and participants were asked to

confirm their willingness to take part in the study. The researcher adhered to an interview guide asking participants open-ended questions regarding their life experiences both prior to and during a teacher preparation program as they related to culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. Interviews took place on and were recorded using the online platform Zoom. After each session, the Zoom video recordings were first extracted and saved to a password-protected computer stored in a locked office, then uploaded to the researcher's secure cloud. The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim using the transcription service Scribie.com. Participants' personal information was kept confidential using pseudonyms. Zoom recordings were deleted from the researcher's Zoom account, password-protected computer, and secure cloud upon completion of the study; only transcriptions with pseudonyms were saved. These data were explored using inductive and deductive approaches which will be described in more detail in the next section.

Data Analysis

In this phenomenological study, data analysis was done through both inductive and deductive approaches while using bracketing and reflexivity to ensure trustworthiness during the process. Creswell (2009) suggests that data analysis requires collecting data gathered by asking open-ended questions followed by the development of analysis from the insights provided by participants. Upon transcription of participants' interviews, coding of the data began. Coding is the process of noting emerging themes, labeling them, and filing them appropriately (Seidman, 2006). According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), inductive analysis refers to approaches that use detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes or a model through interpretations made by the

researcher. Using the transcription of individual participants' interviews, a two-cycle coding process was followed during inductive analysis. In vivo coding was first used to draw out emergent themes. This type of coding method extracted participants' own language when developing codes (Saldana, 2016). In vivo coding allowed the teacher candidates' voices to emerge and centered the analysis on the perspective of the teacher candidates (Saldana, 2016). The researcher read through each transcript underlining words, phrases, and sentences that were significant (Saldana, 2016). The researcher kept track of codes that were inspired by the participants' voices by first working within the transcripts themselves. Coding was first done by reading the transcripts of all three interviews for each participant. The researcher then went on to code the transcripts per interview round. During this second cycle of the inductive analysis, axial coding was utilized. Axial coding allowed the researcher to reassemble the data that were disassembled during the initial cycle of coding (Saldaña, 2016). The purpose of axial coding was to ascertain which codes from the first cycle of coding were significant, frequent, or redundant in order to develop themes and sub-themes that best represented the participants' experiences. Once axial codes were developed, the researcher moved the axial codes along with participants quotes into a spreadsheet to allow for sorting and categorizing. The researcher went back through the in vivo and axial codes to ensure the codes were represented in a manner that reflected participants' voice. The careful exploration of data allowed the relevant themes of each interview to come through and patterns to emerge. Saldaña (2016) posits that discovering patterns in qualitative data serve as evidence of human habits which strengthen the trustworthiness of the study.

According to Saldaña (2016), coding is a cyclical process. In this study, once

patterns were identified using inductive coding, the researcher returned to the raw data to begin the process of deductive coding. Deductive analysis refers to an approach that seeks to assess whether data are consistent with established assumptions and theories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Using the study's theoretical framework, critical race theory, along with existing research on the phenomenon, the researcher again identified patterns. The researcher interpreted the participant's insights against six major tenets associated with critical race theory. The six premises used were the centrality of race and racism, challenging dominant ideology, commitment to social justice, centrality of experiential knowledge, intersectionality, and interest convergence. The researcher referred to the interview transcripts in search of evidence of the tenets of critical race theory. This careful examination of data using a deductive approach revealed evidence of alignment or gaps between participants' insights and the theoretical lens. Using the themes gathered from both the inductive and deductive approaches, implications were noted.

Throughout the data analysis process, the researcher used bracketing and a researcher's journal to help lessen the impact of personal experiences on the analysis of insights provided by participants. Bracketing is the process whereby the researcher lessens the impact of their own biases throughout the research process (Creswell, 2009). The use of reflexivity and bracketing allowed the researcher to be conscious of the values, perceptions, and experiences that are an inherent part of the data analysis process. This systemic analysis of the data led to the development of themes and implications that were as unbiased as possible.

Trustworthiness

Cohen and Crabtree (Cohen & Crabtree, 2008 as cited in Terrell, 2016) contend

that there are four factors that contribute to the overall trustworthiness of a qualitative study: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The researcher ensured trustworthiness through the use of reflexivity, bracketing, member checking, and intercoder reliability throughout the entire study.

The establishment of credibility in qualitative research is critical to the trustworthiness of a study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Credibility ensures that the results of the study are believable from the perspective of the participants (Terrell, 2016). Credibility in this study was established through the researcher's prolonged engagement as a faculty member in a teacher preparation program. Member checking was also used. Following the transcription of the recorded interviews, the researcher shared the transcripts with each participant to determine if the transcript accurately represented their insights and perceptions.

Terrel (2006) defines transferability as the ability for research findings to be applied in other contexts. While this study has a small sample size, the thick description of the participant responses and detailed information provided may be useful for other teacher preparation programs similar to Colvin and Bridges Universities. Dependability is the consistency of replicability of the results while confirmability is the demonstration that neutrality has been maintained (Terrell, 2016). Phenomenological reduction, epoche, and bracketing are terms often used interchangeably in research (Gearing, 2004). While there are philosophical differences among the terms, at their core, each involves the researcher making an effort to suspend judgment, perceptions, and biases to the extent possible to examine insights provided by the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The rich and thorough descriptions provided by the participants were analyzed in

juxtaposition to the development of a lengthy researcher's journal. Additionally, a second coder engaged in the data analysis process alongside the researcher to ensure intercoder reliability. The second coder is certified in the Collaborative IRB Training Initiative, experienced in teacher education, and is familiar with qualitative research methods. The use of reflexivity, bracketing, member checking, and intercoder reliability established trustworthiness throughout the study.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher is a key instrument in exploring the phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). In qualitative research, the researcher must reflect on their life experiences and how those experiences have shaped their beliefs on the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2009). In this study, the researcher, a White female, was closely aligned demographically to the participants which may have resulted in participants being more open in sharing personal details and experiences regarding topics related to race and culture. Furthermore, although the researcher did not play a supervisory role to the specific study participants, a possible conflict of interest and potential for bias exists due to the researcher's professional position in a teacher preparation program. The lack of a supervisory connection to study participants along with the use of bracketing and reflexivity served as the foundation for the attempt to suspend judgement and biases during data collection and analysis.

Participants were provided with a written agreement and informed consent which stated that participating is voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without fear of any negative consequence or penalty. As part of the informed consent, the researcher shared their current role in a teacher preparation program, as well

as their role as a doctoral candidate investigating teacher candidates' experiences as they relate to culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. An electronic copy of the informed consent (Appendix B) was emailed to participants to obtain signatures prior to interviewing. Signed electronic copies were placed in a password-protected computer and deleted from email upon receipt. A verbal and visual review of the informed consent occurred at the beginning of each interview. Interview data that were captured using Zoom, along with the researcher's journal, were saved on a password-protected computer as well as the researcher's secure cloud. Consent forms including any backup files will be preserved for three years and then appropriately discarded.

Confidentiality was prioritized by assigning each participant, as well as both universities, a pseudonym to protect personal information. The researcher and the administration within each respective university were the only individuals with access to participants' names. University administration did not, however, have access to participants' responses. While the researcher made every effort to protect the participants and limit bias, limitations are inherent within this study and must be acknowledged.

Limitations

Limitations are constraints outside the control of the researcher as well as those things inherent to research (Terrell, 2016). This study was limited to two teacher preparation programs housed within their respective four-year universities. The perspectives in this study are those of White teacher candidates seeking a PreK-4 certificate from the state of Pennsylvania. As a result of using purposeful sampling and phenomenological methods, the data are not representative of the broader teacher candidate demographic and may have resulted in misleading findings (Creswell, 2009).

In addition, the use of interviews could have yielded researcher bias, information that is filtered through the views of the participants, and a lack of the natural field setting (Creswell, 2009). Discussing topics of culture and race are difficult and often avoided. The interview responses are reliant on the participants being truthful and open. Additional limitations that are specific to this time are the Covid-19 pandemic as well as social unrest that existed within society. Covid-19 has complicated teacher candidates' time in the field and shifted the mode of teaching and learning from in-person to virtual. The current political climate and the Black Lives Matter movement have highlighted the racial injustices in America. Participants in this study, teacher candidates on the brink of beginning their careers, may have been hesitant to share honest opinions on race-related topics for fear of misspeaking or offending the researcher.

Finally, while not a limitation, the researcher recognized the role her own personal and professional lived experiences played in the study as the researcher is a significant instrument in the research process (Creswell, 2009). The researcher is a White woman who grew up in extreme poverty and is now the spouse to a Black man and a mother to biracial children. Professionally, the researcher serves as a member of a teacher preparation program. The researcher made every effort to remain aware of biases through member checking, bracketing, and the use of a researcher's journal. In addition, the researcher put conditions in place in order to focus on the specific phenomenon (Terrell, 2016) which will be described in the next section.

Delimitations

Delimitations are boundaries purposefully put into place by the researcher to control for factors that may impact the results (Terrell, 2016). The researcher sought

participants who were undergraduate teacher candidates seeking to obtain an initial PreK-4 certification while engaging in a state-mandated student-teaching experience. A nonrandom selection of participants implies bias which may have impacted the lens through which data are viewed. Lastly, data collection was confined to a three-week period with three to seven days between the first and second interview. The researcher hoped that by adding delimitations to the study, an understanding of the insights of a particular group would emerge.

Summary

To further understand the experiences that teacher candidates perceive to have influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy, a qualitative phenomenological study was conducted. This study was guided by a constructivist worldview while grounded in critical race theory. Chapters One and Two laid the foundation for the study by outlining the significance and purpose of the study along with themes in the current literature. Chapter Three provided details on the methodology and overall research design. The insights gathered from this study are useful in understanding the experiences that teacher candidates perceive to have influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. Ultimately, adding teacher candidates' voices to the existing body of literature on culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy provides an understanding of the experiences that may serve as a bridge for cultural discontinuity between teachers and their students, leading to improved outcomes for communities that have been historically underrepresented.

Chapter Four

This phenomenological study was conducted using a constructivist worldview guided by critical race theory as the lens through which teacher candidates' insights were explored. Due to a largely White teacher workforce, 96% in Pennsylvania specifically, combined with consistent inequitable outcomes for BIPOC learners and their White peers, it is vital to the education system that teacher candidates are prepared to implement practices associated with culturally responsive teaching. Gathering insights into the experiences that teacher candidates perceive to have influenced their ability to implement culturally responsive teaching practices provides insight into what experiences may serve as a bridge for the racial incongruence between teachers and their students.

This study examined the following research questions:

1. What experiences prior to entering a teacher preparation program do teacher candidates perceive as influencing their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy?
2. What experiences during a teacher preparation program do teacher candidates perceive as influencing their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy?

To address these questions, this study used a phenomenological approach to examine teacher candidates' life experiences, both prior to and during a teacher preparation program, through the use of three confidential, in-depth, and semi-structured interviews. Through this study, the researcher gained insights into teacher candidates' perceptions of experiences that influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy.

Participants were chosen using purposeful sampling. The individuals were undergraduate teacher candidates seeking to obtain an initial PreK-4 certification while engaging in a state-mandated student-teaching experience as part of the teacher preparation program at two different accredited, four-year universities in southern Pennsylvania. The two universities, along with the participants, were given pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality and protect participant identity. The four participants, Chloe, Sarah, Tyler, and Elizabeth, attended either Colvin or Bridges university. All four identified as White with three of them identifying as female and one as male. The sample population of this study aligned with both demographics of the teacher workforce in Pennsylvania, where 96% of teachers were White and 73% were female, and the study sites where approximately 90% of the teacher candidates were White and 85% were female.

Data collection took place through a sequence of three, in-depth, semi-structured, hour-long interviews with each individual participant. The first and second round of interview questions focused on teacher candidates' experiences prior to and during a teacher preparation program respectively. The third interview concentrated on participants making meaning of their experiences as they imagined implementing culturally responsive teaching practices in a classroom of their own. Data analysis involved both inductive and deductive processes. The researcher began data analysis using in vivo and axial coding cycles followed by the deductive process of interpreting participants' insights alongside the theoretical framework, critical race theory. The use of bracketing, reflexivity, intercoder reliability, and member checking were employed throughout the duration of data analysis to ensure trustworthiness. Both the inductive and

deductive analysis presented emergent themes. A description of the themes from the inductive analysis is outlined in this chapter.

While examining the data using an inductive process, the researcher focused on participants' insights regarding their lived experiences as they related to their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. Analyzing the experiences shared by participants using two cycles of inductive coding allowed for three themes to emerge. Using participant language, the researcher identified the follow themes: early perceptions, classroom environment, and preparing to be a teacher. This chapter further outlines the themes and subsequent sub-themes that emerged from the data to better understand the experiences prior to and during a teacher preparation program influencing teacher candidates' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy.

Early Perceptions

All four participants identified as White and are products of a nuclear family consisting of a mother, father, and siblings, all of whom also identified as White. All four participants attended majority White schools during their elementary, middle, and high school years with little to no diversity in the student body or teaching staff. Participants expressed that they were seemingly unaware of race and culture prior to entering a teacher preparation program. However, during the time of the interviews, they were able to more readily identify the impact that being members of the dominant culture had on their perceptions of BIPOC communities.

During Tyler's first interview he shared that as a child he would often think, "Oh if someone is different than me, that's not good." Each participant shared how their

experiences during childhood influenced their perceptions of BIPOC individuals. Chloe described an experience she remembered from her early elementary years regarding her peers who belonged to BIPOC communities:

> I remember there being maybe one colored student in my class. And then in my neighborhood, there was, I wanna say, maybe again, one or two colored . . . children in my neighborhood. I remember feeling, I wouldn't say frightened, but kind of, "They're different than me." So, I was scared to approach them or maybe play with them. (Chloe, Interview 1)

Chloe added, "All of my friends were White, so if we played with those children, it [time spent playing] was very, very short." Tyler discussed that while his neighborhood growing up was majority White, he does remember Latino and Black families living nearby. He recalled that when he was "super young," he thought, "The people right next to me are White, but the people down [the street], I know that they're not like me, in a sense." Similarly, both Sarah and Elizabeth expressed that they grew up in spaces that were overwhelmingly White. Sarah shared, "The most diversity I got was from television." Elizabeth mentioned that "the townhouses around me are definitely predominantly White" when describing her childhood home where she still resided. Additionally, all four participants engaged in extra-curricular activities where they participated in sports, music, and other activities alongside majority White peers and White coaches.

While all participants reflected back on their childhoods, noting that they were constantly surrounded by individuals with whom they shared the same racial, cultural, and ethnic background, they also divulged that they did not notice or discuss the race and

culture of others. Furthermore, participants revealed that when they did notice race or culture, it was often tied to negativity and confusion. Thus, the following sub-themes emerged from a deep examination of the four participants' responses regarding their lived experiences prior to entering a teacher preparation program: *colorblindness*, *White culture*, and *confusion*. These sub-themes are discussed in detail in the following sections.

Colorblindness

All participants stated that they did not think about race or culture when deciding to enter a teacher preparation program. Chloe noted that she "should have probably thought about culture" when choosing where to attend college, while the three other participants mentioned that they did not really begin to think about race and culture until they entered their teacher preparation program. Elizabeth discussed being raised to be "colorblind," noting that she did not think about race or culture until college:

> I feel like it really wasn't until college that I thought about it. I don't know if I asked my parents what they would say, but I definitely feel like I was raised in that colorblind. If you pointed out race, it was racist to point out race when that's not how it works. And so I feel like I wouldn't talk about it, and I don't know if I thought it was wrong or like I don't think I thought one way or another, I just didn't. (Elizabeth, Interview 1)

Elizabeth explained that it was only in the last two years of her teacher preparation program that she "had this kind of more in-tune focus to race and culture and how it impacts your interactions." Sarah said that as a child, she did not "really realize when people were different colors or different races than me." She shared that during her

college campus visits she didn't remember "seeing people that were a different race than me, but that could have just been me not paying attention." Likewise, Tyler realized that he did not consider race and culture when he made his decision to enter a teacher preparation program:

> I didn't really think about it when I was entering it, but if I think about it now, I would say . . . I don't know if it had a huge impact on my decision to go into it, but I would say, as I started, even my earlier classes, and got into some curriculum and everything, I started to become more aware of the different races and different cultures and all that kind of stuff and how it kind of relates to teaching. (Tyler, Interview 2)

Although participants articulated a certain degree of racial and cultural unawareness, they were cognizant of the impact individuals and systems during childhood had on their perceptions of race and culture at the time of the interviews.

Elizabeth acknowledged that although she had a friend, classmate, or teammate who was "non-White," it had never occurred to her to ask them their racial or cultural identity. She admitted that due to "colorblindness," she may be underestimating the number of BIPOC individuals she encountered during her childhood years. Elizabeth said specifically, "I wouldn't be surprised if I'm under-representing people from minority backgrounds, because I just truly wasn't really thinking about it." Participants were White individuals surrounded by people who looked, talked, and acted similarly to them. While participants acknowledged a lack of racial and cultural consciousness as young people, their experiences in a teacher preparation program allowed them to reflect on the limited presence of BIPOC individuals in their childhood.

White Culture

In addition to being surrounded by the dominant culture in their family lives, participants were immersed in "White culture" in their schools and communities. Sarah said, "There's always White culture shoved in everyone's face." She further explained that her teachers "primarily would teach us about White culture because that's what we knew." Sarah shared that being part of the dominant culture did not impact her in her own schooling experience:

> Being the majority and not the minority race in my school made it so that I didn't have problems, so I often try to think about what if I was a different race in my school, how that would be. To answer your question, I don't think my race affected how I learned simply because most people around me were the same race as me. So I think if I went to a more diverse school, it would have been more of a factor in my education, 'cause I had all white teachers, too. (Sarah, Interview 1)

Elizabeth pointed out that, while she felt like her advanced placement courses in high school went into a little more detail about culture, the course content was delivered from a "White perspective." Specifically, she said, "We talked about cultural conflicts. I would venture to guess that it was still from a White perspective, but at least I was introduced to different religions and what they believe." Elizabeth shared that being a White student in a majority White school was to her "advantage":

> I don't wanna say my teachers were racist, but being a White student, I wouldn't be surprised if I was subconsciously treated slightly differently, just because of even things I see happening in my field placement now, but that's for a different day. Things that I didn't think about one way or another because I had the

> advantage, but it's hard for me to say without being able to point out how the other students are treated. (Elizabeth, Interview 1)

The racial congruence between the participants and their predominantly White teachers led them to indicate that race was not a factor in their schooling experience. However, one participant acknowledged the potential for teacher bias.

All participants noted that their familial roots in the dominant culture influenced their perceptions of race and culture. Tyler discussed the differences between his maternal and fraternal side of his family and how it influenced him:

> My mom's side of the family, I would say, definitely helped me to see that being different is okay, but if I talked to my dad's side, it would be the complete opposite, where it would be "We're in America, so you need to be White and you need to speak English" . . . that has an impact based [on] just having a stronger relationship on my mom's side. (Tyler, Interview 1)

Sarah revealed that one side of her family holds "racist" views and had influenced her thoughts as a child. She stated, "Like my grandfather is a racist, and my extended family, I would say are racist. So their experiences are limited." Sarah added, "I don't think that I was racist, but whenever everybody in your family says those things and you're a child, there is not really a way to think about it than what you know." Chloe discussed her experience in high school trying to decide whether dating someone outside of her race was "right or wrong" and mentioned that in her "culture it was kind of frowned upon." She shared that she discussed it with her mother, which is what influenced much of how she looks at race. Specifically, Chloe said, "I went to my mum and I asked her about this,

that really influenced how I looked at color and race." Participants recognized that they were not as "in-tune," as Elizabeth called it, with noticing the racial and cultural makeup of their spaces until they entered their teacher preparation program. However, they acknowledged the impact the dominant culture had on their early perceptions. Participants expressed a certain degree of confusion as they navigated predominantly White spaces throughout their childhood.

Confusion

All participants found themselves confused by the messaging they received at home, in their neighborhoods, and at school regarding race and culture. Tyler shared that even as a young child, he "knew better" than to think negatively of groups of people who were different, but he felt like people around him were trying to "brainwash" him and "just coming up with these myths" that he knew not to be true. However, Tyler recalled that he only saw BIPOC individuals in his school buildings in positions outside of classroom teachers:

> I just remember, even in elementary school, my teachers were always either White or even into high school, they were predominantly white. The only time I've seen different cultures or backgrounds, was either a substitute or if it was someone that was just working in the school as like a custodian or a cafeteria worker, but not necessarily a *teacher* teacher. (Tyler, Interview 1)

Chloe expressed being "confused" due to the messaging she received regarding BIPOC individuals being "okay," but also feeling like they were "bad." Chloe noted that in high school, "a lot of those colored students were in basic classes, they had less work to do" and they were at the school "on scholarship.*"* She recalled the influence that other

sources had on her as she was developing her perception of BIPOC communities. She mentioned “watching TV shows and it seemed like all of the colored people were portrayed as bad people.” Chloe expressed that “having a relationship” with a BIPOC individual was “frowned upon,” but that she had been told that they were “okay,” which resulted in confusion:

> I was confused as to what was right or wrong. In my culture it was kind of frowned upon. So that kind of affected me, because then I started looking at them as not good people, as bad, even though I was always told they're okay, good people, and there's nothing wrong with them. But when someone says that to you, when you're thinking about having a relationship with someone, kinda gave me mixed signals. I was very confused. (Chloe, Interview 1)

Sarah discussed times when a BIPOC student in her high school made jokes against others in the same BIPOC community:

> Because we do have people of color in our school, and those people—like the one is a boy and he makes jokes against his own race so that he can fit in and have friends because, you know, if he would go against that and say, “Hey, please don't be racist,” he wouldn't have those people as his friends. (Sarah, Interview 1)

Similarly, Elizabeth mentioned that an Armenian student in her high school advanced placement class was described by peers as the “Whitest Black person.” Elizabeth expressed confusion around how a comment like that would make her classmate feel.

All participants were White individuals who attended primarily White schools and lived in predominantly White neighborhoods. Participants acknowledged the familial impact of their early perceptions. Some participants shared experiences with explicitly

racist family members while others expressed experiencing colorblindness. They each shared experiences with attempting to make sense of their limited interactions with BIPOC communities and the messaging they received during childhood. Their early perceptions of BIPOC communities were formed largely by their immediate family, neighborhood, and school community, which consequently led to the sub-themes of colorblindness, White culture, and confusion to emerge. Conversely, as participants shared insights on experiences during a teacher preparation program, they noted how "eye-opening" it was for them. The following section outlines participants insights from both childhood as well as experiences during a teacher preparation program.

Classroom Environment

Participants in this phenomenological study were asked to reflect on both their lived experiences prior to and during a teacher preparation program. In analyzing the insights provided across all three rounds of interviews, the notion of classroom environment was significant in the experiences participants recalled both prior to and during their teacher preparation program. Participants readily recollected the influence of relationships in the school context as well as representation or lack of representation in the physical classroom environment. Participants noted concepts of relationships and representation in their own experiences both as students and as teacher candidates in a teacher preparation program. Furthermore, all participants made conjectures about the relationships they planned to build and the type of classroom environment they planned to set up in their future classrooms. Thus, after a thorough examination of the four participants' insights regarding their lived experiences prior to and during a teacher

preparation program the sub-themes *relationships* and *representation* emerged. These sub-themes are discussed in detail in the following sections.

Relationships

Both Chloe and Tyler reminisced about experiences as elementary students where a relationship with an educator in their school influenced their career choice. Tyler discussed the impact his principal had on him during a challenging situation in third grade:

> I was pretty severely threatened by another student in the class, to the point where I kind of refused to go to school, and that was not like me, 'cause at the time I was a really happy kid and I was doing good in school. And the reason that I went back to school is because I was at home and my principal at the time had called me on the phone, like personally, at home. She said, “It's gonna be okay. I'm gonna take care of it. You can come back to school. We're all gonna be here for you.” (Tyler, Interview 2)

Tyler attributed his career choice to the rapport he had with the educators who helped him through a challenging time. Comparably, Chloe shared the influence of an educator as she was reeling from a significant loss:

> I didn't go to school for about a month, and I walked into school. I was in fourth grade; she [classroom teacher] had a worksheet on the table. I had so much work [to] catch up on, and I couldn't focus. I couldn't work on the worksheet. And she told me throughout the rest of school, if I wanted to not do the worksheet, I was able to go sit in a cozy corner and read a book, and when I was ready, I could start. That's why I wanted to become a teacher, because I saw how she focused on

> me as a person and my emotions and my mental health, rather than worrying about addition problems and division and multiplication. (Chloe, Interview 1)

Elizabeth perceived the impact of an educator as being significant for the English language learners who attended her high school:

> I remember my one Spanish teacher that I really, really liked. She had a really great rapport in high school with all of the English language learner students. They would always just come in there and hang out with her, and you could tell they felt safe, they felt comfortable, and that was just their hangout spot, and it was their home at school. (Elizabeth, Interview 1)

Participants revealed experiences during student teaching that highlighted the importance of relationships. Teacher candidates speculated about their future classrooms. Tyler said, “It's just been [rewarding] building relationships with the students. I ask them something that's not academics, kind of get to know students more.” Elizabeth described her intention to build community in her future classroom:

> I want them to communicate with each other, learn from each other, and learn with each other. To me, it's important that they're learning from each other as much as they're learning from me, so I wanna have them collaborate and communicate, and that also builds community in the classroom, the more they get to talk to each other. (Elizabeth, Interview 3)

Sarah and Tyler mentioned “building relationships with students” as integral components of their future classrooms. Participants outlined significant relationships within the school context prior to entering a teacher preparation program. Some divulged plans for their future classrooms specifying that building relationships would be substantial. In addition

to relationships being a focus within the classroom, all participants noted the importance of representation.

Representation

The notion of representation within the physical classroom was infused in each of the participants' interviews. Participants discussed groups represented in the physical classrooms they were part of as K-12 students as well as in their field placements. Moreover, participants mentioned how they planned to incorporate various races and cultures into their classrooms through books and posters. Chloe felt confident in visually representing various cultures in her future classroom. She stated, "That would really come easy to me. And also, just the culture component within the classroom, like hanging pictures and talking about it." Sarah said, "There hasn't really ever been in my classroom in elementary school, there weren't pictures of children that were different colors than us." Chloe spoke about an assignment in one of her teacher preparation courses where she "had to write down the environment and if we saw any cultural posters." Elizabeth shared that when she and her peers had to create a newsletter for a hypothetical classroom, their professor pointed out that "all of the names we had chosen didn't reflect diverse students." She noted her professor pointing out the importance of representation in all facets of the classroom. Elizabeth remarked that her student teaching mentor made a concerted effort to represent BIPOC learners in the classroom:

> I do think she values making sure everyone is represented and everyone feels safe and everyone feels welcome, and I know when we're picking our leaders for the day, she'll think of... Not only gender, but also like "We [had] a a student of color yesterday. Have all of our students been White that have been leaders? (Elizabeth,

Interview 2)

Sarah referred to the “eye-opening” experience when education professors indicated the importance of representation in the classroom:

> When I first started taking education classes and they were like, “You need to be aware that only showing pictures of people who look like you in your classroom is very detrimental to children because they don't see people that look like them.” (Sarah, Interview 1)

All four candidates declared an interest in visually representing BIPOC communities in their future classrooms.

Chloe stated, “I really want a lot of posters regarding culture and incorporating culture into crafts and assignments.” Similarly, Tyler planned to include “lots of diverse books” while Elizabeth asserted that she intended to include “multiple races” in her classroom making sure “they're not all White as they might have been when I was a student in school.” Sarah emphasized the importance of having BIPOC learners, authors, and artists included in her classroom:

> [I will] put [books and posters] in my classroom that show every culture of every child in my classroom, and whether those cultures and races are in my classroom or not. I should have children of every color displayed somehow. Or artists of every color, and authors and books from every color and genders that are different, and things like that. (Sarah, Interview 2)

Elizabeth disclosed that in the kindergarten classroom where she student taught the sole BIPOC student in the classroom cried each day throughout the duration of the school year. As she reflected on the possible reasons, she postulated that the student may have

struggled due to a lack of representation and relationships within the classroom environment:

> He's clearly racially different than the rest of them. And so this whole time I've been wondering like, is his whole issue that he comes to school and doesn't feel like he looks like anyone in his classroom? (Elizabeth, Interview 3)

Elizabeth went on to say, “So it was, again, just to me, another sign that he didn't feel safe or comfortable or welcome, or he didn't feel like he belonged.” Although, in this insight, she did not specifically use the words representation or relationship to describe how she made sense of this student’s struggle, she described the essence of these two concepts.

Participants not only identified experiences in their own childhood that related to the relationships and representation within the classroom environment, but also revealed their plans to focus on these two areas in their future work as classroom teachers. Each of the participants reported that their knowledge and ability to recognize and implement these practices came as a direct result of their teacher preparation program.

Preparing to be a Teacher

All four participants were enrolled at predominately White universities with approximately 90% of their peers in their teacher preparation program identifying as White. All had professors who were overwhelmingly White and all were engaged in field placements that occurred in majority White settings. Participants largely attributed their knowledge and skills associated with culturally responsive teaching to their teacher preparation programs which were predominantly White. Participants discussed

experiences within their programs that influenced them as developing educators. Sarah exclaimed, “This program has made me who I am today, really, in terms of being a teacher.” Elizabeth purported, “The program that I went through really did help me think about things differently in a new way, challenge the way things are always done in favor of best practices.” After a comprehensive analysis of the insights shared by participants, the following sub-themes emerged: *exposure* and *application*. These sub-themes are discussed in detail in the following sections.

Exposure

Participants agreed experiences during their teacher preparation program were a strong force in preparing them to implement culturally responsive teaching practices. All four participants discussed the importance of exposure during a teacher preparation program. Some remarked on the value of being challenged to think critically about education while others stressed the need for exposure to BIPOC communities. Participants found it difficult to identify specific conversations or guidance from mentors in the field related to culturally responsive teaching, but instead recalled assignments and experiences tied to their teacher preparation program. Elizabeth stated, “I think then, course wise, the exposure. I wouldn't have known things are wrong or right from my experience as a student had it not been brought up.” She remembered that during a social studies methods course she was exposed to “biases and stereotyping in the curriculum” and it was “really eye-opening.” Sarah said, “My professors are basically the only people who ever taught me these things” and “there's three classes that taught me all of these [practices associated with culturally responsive teaching].” Comparably to Elizabeth, Chloe recalled an experience in her social studies methods course where she was asked to

self-reflect on her own race and culture:

> Our teacher brought in all different skin colors. So going back to biases, reflecting on your own culture and how you grew up and realizing that not every child, not every student, came from that background. So taking a step back and treating them as if you never really had your culture, putting that aside when you walk into the classroom. (Chloe, Interview 3)

Similarly, Sarah and Elizabeth shared that they were asked to reflect on how biases impact teaching and learning. Sarah stated, "We were asked to think about our biases and how those affect us while we are teachers because if we have biases, obviously that's gonna lead to how we teach." Elizabeth stated, "We've reflected on our own identities and how these biases would impact teaching." Three participants noted explicitly that they were asked to explore biases in one of their courses.

Throughout each of the three semi-structured interviews, participants used the handout of practices associated with culturally responsive teaching (Appendix D) that the researcher provided. Teacher candidates were cognizant of the teaching practices cited on the handout. However, they were not aware that the practices were associated with culturally responsive teaching. Elizabeth stated, "I'm not sure I was conscious that all of these were culturally responsive; I grouped them as best teaching practices." She noted, as she reviewed the handout, that she believed the practices were weaved throughout her program. She stated, "Looking at this list, I feel like these concepts were embedded in nearly all of my classes." Sarah observed that her inability to identify the practices associated with culturally responsive teaching could be attributed to the lack of consistent

language and explicit teaching of the practices within her program:

> If I can't recognize when someone's using these things, well, how am I ever going to be able to teach them? I would also say the language they [professors] use. So I feel like there's synonyms for culturally responsive teaching. So teaching has all these acronyms and all these abbreviations, but until you teach people them, they aren't gonna know the specifics, like what you're really talking about, unless you have a list like this. So I just feel . . . I would tell faculty that their course work is very good, but their field experiences, in terms of what I'm I supposed to be watching, is not as good. (Sarah, Interview 3)

While some participants mentioned one or two other courses, the social studies methods course specifically surfaced with all participants.

In addition to being exposed to thinking critically about education, participants believed exposure to BIPOC communities was necessary. Sarah advised teacher candidates to "get a more diverse placement to get yourself interacting and learning about all the different kinds of learners that can be in your classroom." Equally, Tyler recommended "visiting another state or a different country" if ever given the opportunity to increase exposure to various groups. Elizabeth urged teacher candidates to seek out opportunities for exposure to different groups:

> The more you're involved with your community or outside communities, I feel like if you're in college, chances are, not always, but oftentimes you're in a different community than you grew up with. So even if you're just interacting with that community, you're learning about a community that in one way or another is different from your own, unless you did grow up in that town, but if

> you didn't, then even just trying to go to community-based events, volunteer, learn about their culture, so at least then you're expanding on it [your own culture] a little bit. (Elizabeth, Interview 3)

Elizabeth and Sarah recollected on-campus clubs and activities they engaged in during their teacher preparation program that provided exposure to different ways of thinking and different groups of people. Sarah stated, "My club work with Bridge for Kids and Kappa Delta Pi, you meet people and you talk about things, but then you also meet children and you interact with children in different ways than just teaching them." Elizabeth referenced a "social justice summit" offered by faculty on her campus that brings in speakers on a variety of topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Participants recognized the role these activities played in providing exposure to different groups of people. Participants recalled and suggested exposure to a critical analysis of education as well as diverse groups as a necessary experience. In addition to exposure, some mentioned the importance of opportunities to apply the new knowledge and skills.

Application

In addition to an increased level of exposure, participants wished they experienced more opportunities to apply their knowledge. Tyler shared that he would have liked "actually applying it [practices associated with culturally responsive teaching] personally . . . a lot of real-world current exposure, not just talking about it." Elizabeth expressed that she felt like "modeling and hand-on actually trying it yourself is essential." Chloe suggested an assignment for teacher candidates to create a lesson plan and specifically incorporate culturally responsive teaching: "Have an assignment based on culturally responsive teaching. We didn't have that. I think doing an assignment on it

would be really beneficial, creating our own lesson plan and incorporating culture into it" (Chloe, Interview 3). Due to a lack of application, Elizabeth conveyed a concern with her preparedness. She cited, "I have all this theory, but I still feel like there's this bridge from data to practice that I'm not quite sure I can cross just quite yet, I don't know if I'm quite there." Participants desired more time and space to apply the knowledge and skills they learned.

Participants were more comfortable applying the knowledge and skills they acquired during their teacher preparation program to work with English language learners. Chloe asserted that she is confident in her ability to differentiate assignments for English language learners:

> I feel like [working with ELLs] is really easy for me, especially with assignments and tests and worksheet, things like that. That's easy, 'cause I can just put their home language underneath the actual English. So I think that's easier for me to create pictures for them, just differentiating things. (Chloe, Interview 3)

Sarah discussed a scenario when her student teaching mentor had made disparaging comments about an English language learner. Although Sarah did not feel comfortable speaking up at the time, she felt confident that she knew what to do in the situation:

> [A practicing teacher] said, "Sometimes it's difficult because of his accent and where he comes from. I'm not sure where he comes from." And that's how she phrased it. And it was like, "Well, maybe you should try to figure out where he's from and try to talk to him more, so you're able to understand him better." (Sarah, Interview 2)

Elizabeth declared that she felt comfortable learning about and incorporating her

students' linguistic backgrounds into her classroom:

> I really enjoyed reading that bilingual book [during field placement]. And since I do have a little bit of a Spanish background, I'd just like to keep that going kind of since I feel like, at least in my setting, a lot of students who are ELLs are Spanish-speaking, and then just incorporating, learning about the students' linguistic background. (Elizabeth, Interview 3)

Teacher candidates focused heavily on cultural and linguistic diversity along with socioeconomic status as opposed to focusing on race.

Participants in this study largely attributed their developmental knowledge of the practices associated with culturally responsive teaching to their teacher preparation program. Elizabeth said, "I feel like I have grown a lot. I feel like going back to my freshman year, if you'd have asked me these questions, then I would have been like, 'I don't know what to say.'" Comparably, Sarah stated, "The experiences I've just had in general are what make me want to include all of these [culturally responsive teaching practices] in my future teaching because, like I said, it's how I was taught to teach." Participants revealed the influence their respective teacher preparation programs had on developing them into educators as well as their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy.

Summary

Throughout the data collection process in this phenomenological study, participants offered insights into the experiences they perceived to have influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. While each participant had a unique perspective and different lived experiences prior to and during a teacher preparation

program, three themes emerged from the interview data: early perceptions, classroom environment, and preparing to be a teacher. Participants conveyed an awareness of the race and culture prior to entering a teacher preparation program while also recognizing the impact dominant culture had on their perceptions of individuals from BIPOC communities. Participants recalled significant relationships that impacted the classroom environment and stated that they aspire to visually represent BIPOC communities in their future classrooms. Lastly, participants attributed their knowledge of the practices associated with culturally responsive teaching and their development as an educator largely to their teacher preparation programs. The next chapter provides a summary of the study along with implications and recommendations for future research.

Chapter Five

Summary of the Study

The disproportionality of White teachers in schools alongside an increasingly diverse student body population makes the work of teacher preparation programs vital in the creation of an equitable education. Teachers must be prepared in a way that provides them the necessary tools to engage in culturally responsive teaching practices (Gay, 2000; Siwatu, 2011). This study aimed to highlight teacher candidates' voices through the exploration of experiences they perceived to have influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy using a constructivist worldview guided by critical race theory as the framework. The researcher sought to gather the insights of teacher candidates in an effort to bridge the gap between a majority White teacher workforce and BIPOC learners in order to improve educational outcomes for all students.

A phenomenological approach was used to examine the life experiences of four teacher candidates prior to and during their teacher preparation programs. Each participant engaged in three, confidential, in-depth, semi-structured interviews over the course of a three-week period. Study participants were undergraduate teacher candidates seeking to obtain a PreK-4 certification at one of two accredited four-year institutions in southern Pennsylvania. Three participants identified as White females and one identified as a White male. The sample population in this study aligned with the demographic of the overall teacher workforce in Pennsylvania being 96% White and 73% female. Participants were in their final semester of a teacher preparation program and engaged in a student teaching experience.

Following the conclusion of the semi-structured interviews, data analysis occurred using both inductive and deductive approaches. Employing in vivo and axial coding, the researcher reviewed the participants' insights in order to discover emergent themes. The three major themes identified through inductive coding and discussed in the previous chapter were *early perceptions*, *classroom environment*, and *preparing to be a teacher*. Subsequently, the researcher analyzed the experiences teacher candidates shared to explore possible alignment with the six tenants of critical race theory. The themes that emerged from the deductive analysis are noted in this chapter along with a summary of findings, relationships to previous research, implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Summary of Findings

The goal of this phenomenological study was to offer insights into the experiences that influenced teacher candidates culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. This study examined the following research questions:

1. What experiences prior to entering a teacher preparation program do teacher candidates perceive as influencing their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy?
2. What experiences during a teacher preparation program do teacher candidates perceive as influencing their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy?

Based on the inductive and deductive analysis of data, the findings of this study indicated that a variety of experiences prior to and during a teacher preparation program influenced teacher candidates' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. The experiences prior to a teacher preparation program that influenced teacher candidates' culturally responsive

teaching self-efficacy were the overwhelming presence of Whiteness, belief systems of their immediate family members, observations and interactions in their schools, and media. The experiences during a teacher preparation program that influenced teacher candidates' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy were coursework, fieldwork, and on-campus activities. Research questions are addressed and a detailed summary of the findings are provided in the sections below.

RQ1: Experiences Prior to a Teacher Preparation Program

The four teacher candidates whose insights were gathered identified as White individuals. Participants were products of predominately White spaces where they had little to no exposure to individuals in BIPOC communities prior to entering a teacher preparation program. Their nuclear families were White and only one participant revealed a BIPOC individual in their extended family. All four teacher candidates attended majority White schools for the duration of their elementary, middle, and high school years. Elizabeth shared that her elementary school was "predominantly White," but when the three elementary schools in her district merged for middle and high school it "became more culturally and racially diverse." However, her settings were still majority White. Additionally, all four participants were taught by a majority White teacher workforce. Tyler asserted, "I think they were all White, which is kind of crazy to me now." All participants engaged in extra-curricular activities with predominantly White peers and White coaches. Chloe discussed her time as a cheerleader, gymnast, and field hockey player. She said, "My peers were predominantly White. I think there was one colored peer. And then that colored peer, her mum was one of the coaches." Like Chloe, all

participants noted a limited number of BIPOC peers in their schools and neighborhoods or on their teams.

Participants shared experiences during their time as students prior to entering a teacher preparation program with the few BIPOC peers in their schools. Elizabeth recalled that when there were physical altercations at her high school, her peers would make “racist comments.” She went on to add that she knew that “it wasn't that all of the Spanish-speaking students were from Mexico” but her peers would say, “Oh, the Mexicans were fighting again.” Elizabeth disclosed that when she was in seventh grade a classmate shared that her family was undocumented. She said, “Her family was undocumented, and she was from Guatemala, and I didn't know all the complexities of that in seventh grade, because it wasn't my life as much.” In addition, Elizabeth recalled her White peers in an advanced placement class called a student from Armenia the “Whitest Black person.” Sarah remembered a BIPOC peer in her high school who made “jokes against his own race so that he can fit in and have friends.” Chloe recalled that she “noticed in high school, a lot of the colored students . . . were on scholarship, and a lot of them were in the basic classes.” Participants disclosed how these experiences influenced their perceptions of BIPOC communities.

Teacher candidates shared experiences with their families that influenced their early perceptions of BIPOC communities. Sarah remarked that her “grandfather is a racist, and my extended family, I would say are racist.” She went on to say, “I don't think that I was racist, but whenever everybody in your family says those things and you're a child, there is not really a way to think about it than what you know.” Chloe said, “I went to my mum and I asked her this [being involved romantically with a BIPOC individual],

that really influenced how I looked at color and race." Tyler mentioned that having a stronger relationship with one side of his family led to him leaning more towards their beliefs about race and culture:

> My mom's side of the family I would say definitely helped me to see that being different is okay, but if I talked to my dad's side, it would be the complete opposite, where it would be "We're in America, so you need to be White and you need to speak English". . . that has an impact based [on] just having a stronger relationship on my mom's side. (Tyler, Interview 1)

Participants noted a sense of confusion because of the varying messages they received regarding race and culture from their families. Chloe stated, "I was confused as to what was right or wrong . . . because then I started looking at them [BIPOC individuals] as not good people, as bad, even though I was always told they're okay, good people and there's nothing wrong with them." Teacher candidates relayed that their families' beliefs about race and culture influenced their early perceptions of BIPOC communities.

In addition to experiences in families and schools, two participants noted that their early perceptions were influenced by the media, specifically television. Sarah shared, "The most diversity I got was from television, and wasn't a lot. Back then, like now, it's super diverse." Chloe disclosed, "I remember watching TV shows and it seemed like all of the colored people were portrayed as bad people." Although the influence of media did not emerge with all participants, the messages they received through a variety of ways was evident. In addition to experiences prior to a teacher preparation program, teacher candidates noted experiences during a teacher preparation program that influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy.

RQ2: Experiences During to a Teacher Preparation Program

The findings in this study demonstrated that the experiences during a teacher preparation that influenced their culturally responsive teaching were coursework, fieldwork, and on-campus activities in which they partook. Participants entered predominantly White universities where approximately 90% of the individuals in their teacher preparation program were White. However, teacher candidates shared that they were exposed to different ideas about teaching and learning and were asked to reflect on biases in certain courses. All four teacher candidates specifically recalled their social studies methods course as being one where they discussed practices associated with culturally responsive teaching. Chloe indicated, "In my social studies class, it was a lot about color and race." Similarly, Sarah said, "So our social studies methods class. Well, that did [discuss race and culture] because it was social studies, and you cover diversity." Teacher candidates noted a limited number of other classes but did recognize that there were a few others that discussed race and culture. Tyler mentioned a literacy course that was taught by a Latino faculty member:

> I had an English class, and it was talking what all these types of different literature and everything like that . . . but I think it had to do a lot with the professor that I had because they were . . . I think they were Latino, so they brought a lot of [diverse literature]. (Tyler, Interview 2)

Similarly, Elizabeth recognized that although one of her classes emphasized culturally responsive teaching practices, this could be attributed to the interests of the professor:

> The professor of that course, it was all about curriculum instruction and assessment, and . . . her biggest passion was culturally responsive teaching, so it

> most definitely came up using that terminology in that class. But prior to that, I do not recall it being referred to as culturally responsive teaching. (Elizabeth, Interview 2)

Two candidates declared that their teacher preparation programs infused the practices associated with culturally responsive teaching throughout the program. Elizabeth stated, "I feel like these concepts were embedded in nearly all of my classes." However, she went on to say, "I'm not sure I was conscious that all of these were culturally responsive; I grouped them as best teaching practice." Likewise, Sarah said, "And it's [culturally responsive teaching] something that's talked about in almost all of our classes." Yet, she also mentioned, "There's three classes that taught me all of these." While both teacher candidates expressed a belief that culturally responsive teaching was embedded throughout their program, they expressed an inconsistency in the claim.

Participants identified assignments within their courses that required them to consider their biases. Elizabeth claimed, "We've reflected on our own identities and how these biases would impact our teaching." Sarah recollected an assignment in one of her courses where they were asked to reflect on "biases and how those affect us while we are teachers because if we have biases obviously that's gonna lead to how we teach." Chloe recalled a time in her coursework where teacher candidates were required to "really identify within themselves their biases towards people. And really notice everyone comes from a different background, a different home life, a different culture." Teacher candidates were given assignments in their courses that required them to look for biases in their field placements. Chloe noted, "We had to do a child study, and I think we had to write down the environment and if we saw any cultural posters." However, Sarah

expressed a need for more guidance from her program on what to look for while in the field. She said, “There needed to be a more structured task list [of culturally responsive teaching practices] for when I was doing my observations or observing teachers.” Teacher candidates in this study shared assignments that influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy but voiced a need for additional support from their teacher preparation program particularly while in the field.

While participants recalled encounters during their field placements throughout their teacher preparation program, the experiences teacher candidates shared from the field were disproportionately White and emphasized the representation of BIPOC learners. Teacher candidates had between five and six placements through their program. Placements were short-term in the beginning of their program, followed by a long-term student teaching placement. Participants’ placements were disrupted during the 2020 semester due to Covid. Elizabeth shared, “That [field placement] was also a brief placement 'cause of COVID.” All participants disclosed that the majority of their field placements were in predominantly White schools with White mentor teachers exclusively. Elizabeth, however, mentioned that her teacher preparation program made an attempt to provide a at least one placement in a “more diverse setting.” She said, “I think [it was] an attempt to be a more diverse setting, 'cause I was in a Head Start classroom and most of my peers were in Head Start classrooms as well.” Tyler expressed concern with having only worked alongside White practicing teachers. He said, “Everyone that I work with is White and they're female.” While both students and teachers were predominantly White in participants’ field placements, teacher candidates indicated that the visual representation of BIPOC communities within the classroom was prominent.

Teacher candidates divulged that they did not have discussions around race, culture, or culturally responsive teaching practices, but observed an emphasis on reading books with diverse characters and in posters displayed around the classroom. Chloe conveyed that culturally responsive teaching practices come up occasionally:

> I would say it mostly comes up when we're doing a craft or maybe something that is about the student as like a whole. So, like my mentor will say, "Well, you could do this for these children instead of doing this for the other ones just to make it more to their culture or their differences." (Chloe, Interview 2)

Participants observed practices in the field they believed to be in opposition to culturally responsive teaching. Elizabeth remembered an inservice she attended with her mentor where the district administration was addressing the social unrest in society due to racial inequities:

> [The question from administration was] how we are going to approach the school year and make sure all of our students feel safe and welcome and represented and all these positive things, and I felt like either the answer she gave was very vague or I don't know, almost implied it wasn't her top priority. (Elizabeth, Interview 2)

Sarah recalled an experience where her mentor expressed a disinterest in getting to know an English language learner in their classroom:

> She [mentor teacher] said about the one boy that is an English language learner, she said, "Sometimes it's difficult because of his accent and where he comes from. I'm not sure where he comes from," and that's how she phrased it. (Sarah, Interview 2)

Tyler recollected an observation of his mentor teacher making disparaging comments

about BIPOC learners:

> She [mentor teacher] kinda would talk down on the kids that were coming from a different ethnicity or background, or the ones that were like . . . I remember one of the kids missed school one day, but it was because they missed the bus because their mom had to work into the night because she couldn't afford rent. The teacher was just kind of talking, I guess you could say, trash on the students and their family at the time.

Participants recognized experiences in their field placements that focused heavily on the physical representation of BIPOC communities in the classroom as well as observations of resistance to the practices associated with culturally responsive teaching.

Two participants recalled the influence of extra-curricular activities they engaged in during their teacher preparation program. Elizabeth discussed a "social justice summit" that she attends on a bi-monthly basis. The summit is a virtual webinar that focuses on a variety of topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Sarah communicated that her work within two different clubs on campus influenced her culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. She stated, "My club work with Bridge for Kids and Kappa Delta Pi, you meet people and you talk about things, but then you also meet children and you interact with children in different ways than just teaching them." Both participants suggested that future teacher candidates get involved in extra-curricular activities on campus that provide exposure to different groups of people.

Through an exploration of teacher candidates' experiences during a teacher preparation program that influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy, it was revealed that a combination of coursework and fieldwork along with extra-curricular

activities on campus influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. In addition, teacher candidates in this study shared experiences prior to a teacher preparation program that influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. The findings suggested that experiences prior to a teacher preparation program were the overwhelming presence of Whiteness, immediate family members' belief systems, school experiences, and media. A review of the literature alongside the findings of this study largely indicated an alignment between this study and previous studies, with the exception of one area.

Relationship to Previous Research

While there were some slight misalignments, the findings of this study largely concurred with conclusions of previous research: Teacher candidates enter teacher preparation programs coming from predominantly White spaces in need of exposure to a critical analysis of education, cross-cultural field experiences, and the time and space to apply new knowledge throughout the duration of the program. Additionally, much like the previous research reviewed, this phenomenological study did not exclusively seek out insights from White teacher candidates. However, due to the overrepresentation of White teacher candidates in teacher preparation programs, participants were White and largely female. While there is an undeniable need to recruit and retain BIPOC teachers, given the current reality of the overwhelming presence of Whiteness in the American education system, 96% in Pennsylvania, the researcher recognized the importance of adding the experiences that influenced White teacher candidates culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy to the existing body of knowledge as a means to improve the inequitable outcomes for BIPOC learners.

Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1986) defines self-efficacy as the belief in the personal ability to plan and execute the processes required to accomplish a task while suggesting that mastery experiences are the most influential. Culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy is defined as an individual's belief in their capability to execute practices associated with culturally responsive teaching (Siwatu, 2007). Korkmaz & Unsal (2016) contend that self-efficacy impacts the activities that an educator chooses to enact in a classroom. Siwatu et al. (2017) reported teacher candidates' high levels of self-efficacy in assisting students in feeling like integral members of the classroom as well as in developing positive relationships. However, candidates reported low levels of self-efficacy with regard to infusing race and culture into the teaching and learning process (Siwatu et al., 2017).

Teacher candidates in this study expressed a desire for more opportunities to apply practices associated with culturally responsive teaching, which aligns with the notion that mastery experiences are the most impactful on confidence. Participants in this study focused heavily on relationships and the physical representation of BIPOC communities in the classroom which aligns to previous research. Teacher candidates conveyed the importance of the BIPOC images in books and posters within the classroom with little recognition of the need for representation within the teaching and learning process. All participants discussed their intention to build positive relationships with students but expressed a discomfort with the more difficult culturally responsive teaching practices such as integrating race and cultural into the pedagogical practices in the

classroom. Elizabeth revealed that she would be less confident implementing culturally responsive teaching practices that required additional preparation:

> But then some of the things that might require a little more time or thought, I'm less confident. If I have time, great, I'll try to stretch myself and do those things, but if I'm just trying to make it to the next day, the reality is that, yeah, I'm probably less confident. I probably will not . . . because I would need to spend extra time doing it to feel comfortable, or it's just gonna take more time to prepare myself, I don't know, in some way. So I'd be less confident, I think. (Elizabeth, Interview 3)

Both Chloe and Elizabeth disclosed that they would not be comfortable confronting race-specific topics. Elizabeth mentioned that if the topic of the Black Lives Matter movement came up in her future classroom, she would tell students that it was "a conversation you can have with your parents at home." Chloe expressed concern with a student in her future classroom using the term "racist." Elizabeth stated, "I feel like critically examining the curriculum. I don't feel like that's something as a first-year teacher I'm necessarily gonna be on the ball about." All participants either expressed low confidence in addressing race and culture within the teaching and learning process or it was absent from their experiences and future planning, which is consistent with previous research.

An area of inconsistency between the findings of this study and previous research related to working with English language learners. Siwatu (2007) reported findings that teacher candidates were less efficacious in their abilities to work with English language learners. Participants in this study, however, described a plethora of experiences in working with English language learners and expressed confidence in engaging with this

particular group of learners. Chloe recalled an assignment in a course focused on English language learners:

> I think I only did that like once or twice [applied practices associated with culturally responsive teaching] and that would be in my ELL class. We had to create a worksheet for a Spanish speaking . . . well, so we had to pick out of a hat, and you picked out a language, and you had to create your own worksheet of how you would incorporate that or adapt it for that child or student. (Chloe, Interview 2)

Elizabeth declared that "incorporating" and "learning about the students' linguistic background" was a culturally responsive teaching practice she felt confident in implementing. Sarah mentioned that she was confident in her ability to "really differentiate instruction based on the student and where they come from, especially if it's an ELL student, differentiating the worksheets and thing like that." Chloe expressed that she felt "really confident" in implementing the practices of culturally responsive teaching that focused on English language learners:

> I feel like that's really easy for me, especially with assignments and tests and worksheet, things like that. That's easy, 'cause I can just put their home language underneath the actual English. So I think that's easier to me creating pictures for them, just differentiating things. (Chloe, Interview 3)

In this study, teacher candidates reported that they were less likely to include the practices associated with culturally responsive teaching in their future classrooms if they did not witness or have the opportunity to apply it through their programs.

A focus on the physical representation of BIPOC individuals through the use of graphics alongside the resistance to infuse race and culture into instructional practices supports previous research findings. However, there was a misalignment between the findings of this study and the findings of Siwatu (2007) regarding teacher candidates' confidence in working with English language learners. While the current body of literature on teacher candidates' experiences during a teacher preparation program that influence culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy is extremely limited (Siwatu et al., 2017), there are no qualitative studies exploring the experiences prior to a teacher preparation program that influence a teacher candidates' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy.

Experiences Prior to a Teacher Preparation Program

Although the existing literature on experiences prior to a teacher preparation that influence teacher candidates' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy is minimal, research shows that the predominantly White teacher workforce are products of overwhelmingly White spaces (Neito, 1996; Milner, 2010; Sleeter, 2008). The experiences of teacher candidates in this study align with the previous research regarding the demographic background of White teacher candidates. However, this study was unique in that it offered teacher candidates' insights into experiences prior to a teacher preparation program that influenced culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy to satisfy the need for literature on this phenomenon.

Sleeter (2008) contends that White teacher candidates' experiences prior to entering a teacher preparation program occur in fairly homogeneous homes, communities, and schools. Participants in this study were White individuals who

disclosed experiences prior their teacher preparation program where they almost exclusively associated with other White individuals. The consistent presence of Whiteness in their early experiences led all participants to declare that their teacher preparation was “eye-opening.” They speculated about the influence their immediate family, neighborhoods, and schools had on their perceptions of BIPOC communities. Sarah stated, “I don't think that I was racist, but whenever everybody in your family says those things and you're a child, there is not really a way to think about it than what you know.” Tyler stated that it was “my neighborhood for sure” where he first learned about race and culture. Nieto (1996) posits that White teacher candidates’ lived experiences prior to entering a teacher preparation program are racially and culturally limited due to living in overwhelmingly White neighborhoods. Participants in this study had limited interactions with BIPOC communities, which shaped their early perceptions. The findings of this study indicate that experiences with an overwhelming presence of Whiteness, the beliefs of family, the school community, and media prior to entering a teacher preparation program influence teacher candidates’ culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy.

Experiences During a Teacher Preparation Program

Teacher preparation programs typically subscribe to the theory-practice interconnection offering teacher candidates university-based courses paired with school-based field experiences (Sleeter, 2008). Research indicates that when teacher educators offer experiences in their courses as well as in the field setting, teacher candidates are more likely to implement culturally responsive teaching (Capella-Santana, 2003; Gorski, 2009; Sleeter, 2008). The body of knowledge around strategies and frameworks used by

teacher educators to prepare culturally responsive teacher candidates is abundant. However, studies are commonly done from the teacher educators' perspective. A review of the literature exposed four themes in the previous studies done to examine teacher candidates' experiences with culturally responsive teaching during a teacher preparation program. The emergent themes were a focus on shifting beliefs, notion of otherness, field placements, and programmatic implementation. The findings of this study concur with previous research while simultaneously lifting up the voices of teacher candidates, making them an important addition to the existing literature.

Shifting Beliefs and Notion of Otherness. Sleeter and McLaren (1995), Gorski (2009), and others conducted studies where teacher educators required predominately White teacher candidates to self-reflect through various forms of writing in order to shift beliefs about BIPOC communities. Participants recalled course assignments where they were asked to reflect on their lived experiences and their own biases. All teacher candidates revealed that they engaged in course-related activities that required them to consider their thinking around race and culture. Elizabeth was not able to recall the specific assignment, but she remembered being asked to reflect on the impact her identity has on the teaching and learning process:

> We've reflected on our own identities and [thinking about] how these biases would impact our teaching is definitely something we have done. The nature of the activities, I can't recall specifically, but we've definitely been encouraged to just take a minute to be like, "Who are you? How does that impact you? And how could that impact your classroom?" and things like that. (Elizabeth, Interview 3)

Chloe recollected a similar assignment in her coursework:

> So going back to your biases and things like that, reflecting on your own culture and how you grew up and realizing that not every child, not every student came from that background. So taking a step back and treating them as if you never really had your culture, putting that aside when you walk into the classroom. (Chloe, Interview 3)

Teacher candidates shared the "eye-opening" experiences they had once they entered a teacher preparation program, noting the shift in thinking that occurred throughout their four years of preparation. Elizabeth stated, "I feel like I have grown a lot. I feel like going back to my freshman year, if you'd have asked me these questions [about culturally responsive teaching practices], then I would have been like, 'I don't know what to say.'" She went on to say, "The program that I went through really did help me think about things differently in a new way, challenge the way things are always done." While participants recognized a momentous level of growth during their teacher preparation program, there was evidence to suggest the notion of otherness in their experiences.

Research illustrates that White teacher candidates often view BIPOC learners as "other" and "see damaged and dangerous caricatures of the vulnerable and impressionable beings before them" (Delpit, 1995, p.xiii). Schmidt (1999), Goodwin et al. (1997), Horton and Scott (2004), and others conducted studies yielding results showing that White teacher candidates lack awareness of their own positionality within society and view culturally responsive teaching benefitting BIPOC communities. The findings of this present phenomenological study were consistent with previous research. Participants in this study spoke about BIPOC individuals in terms of being "those

children.” Chloe said specially, “A lot of my friends were White, so if we played with those children, it [time spent playing] was very, very short.” Chloe added that as a child she felt “scared to approach them [BIPOC peers] or maybe play with them” because they were “different than me.” Sarah implied the notion of otherness when discussing her lack of experience with culturally responsive teaching during her own elementary schooling. She cited, “I had no real background when talking about culturally responsive teaching, because my elementary school, I don't wanna say didn't need to do these things, they just . . . they really didn't need to.” Elizabeth recalled an instance from her childhood when a Black family moved in to a home on the street where she lived. She stated, “It was the first one [Black family] that was kind of like on my street.” Chloe thought back to her own high school experience and shared an observation she made regarding her BIPOC peers:

> These kids who were of color always picked each other. And even in the school setting, they always had their group. They always hung out with each other, so if you were walking in the hallway, they were never with another person of a different race. (Chloe, Interview 2)

Chloe reflected on a conversation she had with her student teaching mentor. She recalled her mentor saying, "Well, you could do this for these children instead of doing this for the other ones just to make it more to their culture or their differences." Elizabeth speculated that the students in her future classroom were likely going to be “a diverse body of students” and that she “just accepts that that’s what I’m most likely going to encounter.” The language used by participants illustrated a mindset linked to the notion of other.

Participants shared experiences prior to and during their teacher preparation program that demonstrated otherness in their perceptions of BIPOC individuals. Thus, there is an alignment with the findings of this study and previous studies noting the emphasis on shifting the beliefs of teacher candidates as well as the idea of otherness. Furthermore, the findings of this study corresponded with previous research findings on the importance of field experiences and a need for programmatic implementation.

Importance of Field Experiences and Programmatic Implementation.

Capella-Santana (2003) reported that the use of coursework alone to prepare teacher candidates to implement culturally responsive teaching was not enough, but that teacher candidates needed to be exposed to the inequalities in society through fieldwork. Similarly, Sleeter (2001) argues that field placements must be long-term, cross-cultural, and paired with coursework as part of a programmatic approach to equity. Participants in this study indicated that their university-provided field experiences were in predominately White school buildings and expressed the need for increased exposure to a critical analysis of education and to BIPOC communities through their teacher preparation program, which aligns with previous research.

Tyler described his field experiences by saying, “It's predominantly White for sure. There's little to no diversity and it just kind of concerns me.” When discussing a field placement, Chloe mentioned, “There was zero colored children in my class. They were all White.” Sarah suggested, “If you [teacher candidate] can get a more diverse placement to get yourself interacting and learning about all the different kind of learners that can be in your classroom, do it.” Participants, collectively, realized that they did not

discuss practices associated with culturally responsive teaching while in the field which indicates the need for a more comprehensive, programmatic approach to preparing culturally responsive teachers.

Although participants communicated the influence their teacher preparation program had on their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy, only one of the participants in this study claimed that her teacher preparation program employed a coherent approach to culturally responsive teaching. Elizabeth stated, “But looking at this list, I feel like these concepts were embedded in nearly all of my classes. I feel like building relationships with students has been a topic of conversation in nearly all my education classes.” However, she noted that it was only in the last two years of her program that the term culturally responsive teaching was introduced, and she relied on the handout of culturally responsive teaching practices provided by the researcher. All four participants relied on the handout of practices associated with culturally responsive teaching provided by the researcher throughout all three rounds of interviews. The use of the handout is evidenced through an analysis of the video recording along with participants’ references to the use of the list. The researcher noticed participants leaning in and pointing to the screen where the handout was being shared. In addition, teacher candidates used phrases like “looking at this list” when answering interview questions.

Three of the four participants believed that while there were certain practices of culturally responsive teaching embedded in their teacher preparation program, there was not a common language or a coherent approach to preparing them to implement culturally responsive teaching practices. Sarah recommended that the faculty in a teacher preparation program should be mindful of the “language they use” so that teacher

candidates know when they are describing a practice associated with culturally responsive teaching. In addition, she suggested that teacher candidates be provided with a list of culturally responsive teaching practices such as the one provided by the researcher. Sarah said, “Because these things are important. So going to my [mentor] teacher, well, if I can't recognize when someone's using these things, well, how am I ever going to be able to teach them?” Participants expressed an interest in more explicit instruction around culturally responsive teaching practices while in the field.

Cross-cultural field experiences paired with coursework that provides a safe space for reflection significantly impacts White teacher candidates’ ability to think critically about race and rise above feelings of trepidation (Sleeter, 2008). Participants in this study outlined experiences and suggestions that align with previous research on the need for diverse field placements coupled with an overall coherent approach. Sleeter and Grant (2007) purport that there is a need for the inclusion of practices associated with culturally responsive teaching in course and field work but added that long-term paradigm shifts needed to occur in order to prepare teacher candidates to work effectively with BIPOC learners. Gay (2002), Villegas and Lucas (2002), and others contend that the disproportionate representation of White teachers in American classrooms serve as evidence that teachers need to be prepared to work with racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse learners. Siwatu et al. (2017) noted that teacher candidates attributed doubts about their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy to ineffective field experiences, lack of knowledge around student diversity, limited understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy, inadequate exposure to practices associated with culturally responsive teaching, and a general lack of preparedness. The findings of this

present study indicate that there is a plethora of experiences prior to and during a teacher preparation program that influence teacher candidates' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy, which largely aligns with previous research (Siwatu, 2011). One conflict in findings was noted. Previous research indicated teacher candidates had low efficacious beliefs towards their work with English language learners but this was not the case for the participants in this study. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge in significant ways. The findings from this research provide insights from the teacher candidates' perspective, deepen the understanding of the phenomenon of culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy, offer research focused on teacher candidates' experiences prior to a teacher preparation program, and problematize an inequitable education system through a critical race lens.

Relationship to Theoretical Framework

In this study, along with employing the framework of culturally responsive teaching, the researcher sought to center race and racism in the theoretical underpinnings of the research. Ladson-Billings (1998) insists that examining the relationship between race and power is crucial to educational equity. The overwhelming presence of Whiteness in schools combined with the resolute nature of the opportunity gap made critical race theory a necessary lens through which teacher candidates' experiences were viewed. The use of the culturally responsive framework brought educational practices into focus while the addition of critical race theory placed the perniciousness of racism in education in the foreground.

In order to investigate the alignment of the tenets of critical race theory and the insights shared by participants in this study, the researcher examined the data using a

deductive analysis following an inductive process. Strauss & Corbin (1998) define deductive analysis as a method to determine whether there are consistencies between a set of data and established theories. Saldaña (2016) explained that coding is a cyclical process. Thus, once themes were identified using in vivo and axial inductive coding methods, the researcher referred back to participants' insights to inspect for a possible relationship between the data and the tenets of critical race theory. The six major premises associated with critical race theory are as follows: the centrality of race and racism, challenging dominant ideology, commitment to social justice, the centrality of experiential knowledge, intersectionality, and interest convergence.

Consistent with Critical Race Theory

A careful examination of the data using a deductive approach showed consistencies between teacher candidates' experiences and two of the tenets of critical race theory. Evidence of the ubiquitous nature of racism along with the notion of interest convergence were present. Racism is built into the American society as an omnipresent force (Ladson-Billings, 1998). The data showed evidence of the pervasiveness of racism in their lived experiences. Sarah communicated, "A lot of the jokes were racist jokes, and a lot of the comments were racist." Sarah spoke about her contemporary experiences as an adult with friends in the BIPOC community:

> And my other roommate's boyfriend is half black, but you can't. . . he's not . . . I don't wanna say dark enough, but lack of a better word, he's not dark enough, and some people don't realize, so then they still make racial comments around him, not to him, because they don't realize that he's Black, and then that becomes an uncomfortable situation. Some of my friends don't feel comfortable going to a

> local bar because they've heard that part is racist, so then my whole group picks another establishment to go to. So those little experiences, I think, changed me a lot, too. (Sarah, Interview 2)

Chloe remembered an experience in middle school where a peer, who was an English language learner, would be "mocked" because of his accent. She said, "I don't think they [teachers] really saw it as serious. They kinda just let it go. Which probably wasn't the best thing to do. [chuckle] But that's what they did." Elizabeth recalled a BIPOC peer in her advanced placement classes being called the "Whitest Black person," while Sarah recollected that boys would make "racist comments whenever we went over the terrorism things" in her high school social studies class. Each of these insights serves as evidence of the ubiquitous nature of racism in the education system.

Participants shared experiences indicating systemic racism and were acutely aware of the stigma that is attached to being racist. Sarah mentioned that she worried about being thought of as racist when considering teaching BIPOC learners:

> I don't want them to think that I am racist or that I'm trying to degrade their race in any way. I remember thinking, "I don't want them to think that I'm different or that I'm one of those people that always tries to make their race lesser than." (Sarah, Interview 2)

Chloe, who used the term "colored" to refer to BIPOC individuals, disclosed that she worried about students in her future classroom using the word racist:

> 'Cause some people nowadays could still be called a racist and things like that. So I think that's a big hurdle, and it's something I worry about. Because if someone

> says that word in my classroom, then it's like, okay, that's one of those questions that you don't [chuckle] see coming. And you have to address it in a respectable teacher manner. So that's something I worry about. (Chloe, Interview 2)

The experiences participants shared validated the ever-present existence of racism in society and schools. Participants also highlighted the notion of interest convergence in their experiences and future plans.

Bell (1992) defines interest convergence as the notion that Whites will engage in equity work for BIPOC groups to the extent that there is something positive in it for them. Participants in this study exhibited a degree of interest convergence. When Elizabeth discussed implementing practices associated with culturally responsive teaching, she stated, “I just feel like that'll be natural and I feel confident that I'll do that because it's also a value of mine.” Tyler shared, “Dealing with that [a BIPOC learner with truancy issues] has been a plus in a sense.” He also stated concerns with having had only White colleagues during his student teaching experience. He noted that he wished he had more experience working with BIPOC educators because it is a question that was asked at a job interview. Chloe remarked on how she found it rewarding after watching a video during a course where the BIPOC children choose a White doll:

> And so that was pretty rewarding for me because I saw that they maybe didn't even notice that there was a difference. They didn't see a difference. But it was nice to see that it didn't matter which one. (Chloe, Interview 2)

The statements provided by participants demonstrated that, at times, as members of the dominant culture, they would support the of interests of BIPOC learners, provided there was no harm to their own pursuits or it benefitted them in some way. Although

participants expressed the significant role their teacher preparation program in expanding their views of race and culture, some of the experiences and intentions disclosed served as evidence that there was a level of interest convergence exhibited by participants in this study. In addition, teacher candidates in this study relayed experiences that were inconsistent with the tents of critical race theory.

Inconsistent with Critical Race Theory

Participants conveyed experiences and future plans that were in direct opposition to two of the tenets of critical race theory: a commitment to social justice and challenging dominant ideologies. Sarah discussed that she believes "all kids are kids," which exemplifies the sentiment of colorblindness, a dominant culture ideology. Chloe claimed the teachers she had throughout her school experiences "never showed any signs of racism." She said, "Yeah, all of them [teachers] were White.....they never showed any signs of racism, no.....no isolating of people who were a different color. I never had that issue." Tyler shared that he believed his understanding of culturally responsive teaching comes in part because of his ability to "never give up" in the face of challenges. He said, "I never stopped or I never quit. I never give up, in a sense. So I would say that definitely helped me to kinda think about culturally response teaching, like it, in many ways, probably ended up shaping me." The notion of not quitting in the face of adversity is an ideology espoused by dominant culture. It places the responsibility on the individual rather than on the system in which the challenge was created.

Although participants declared a commitment to building relationships and visually representing BIPOC communities in their future classrooms, they shared plans that were resistant to a focus on social justice. Elizabeth predicted that she would not

implement practices associated with culturally responsive teaching if they were contradictory to the curriculum or expectations in her first year:

> I'd feel less confident also coming in as a first-year teacher, and then straying too far from..... Even though I know what's wrong, I understand my place, and as a first-year teacher, I'm not..... If I do it on the down-low maybe, but I'd be nervous to out-step my position and challenge someone on that. (Elizabeth, Interview 3)

Similarly, Sarah stated, "But if it was serious enough that a parent or someone that controls if I continue to have a job or not, I feel like then I don't .....really wanna push back much." Tyler considered an activity he planned to do in his future classroom and pointed out that one of the drawbacks could be it being "too sensitive for some people":

> 'Cause I just, one of the things I wanna do as a teacher is an around the world thing, where you kinda visit a different country, and then you talk about what it's like to live there. But if what I'm talking about can kinda be too sensitive for some people, I would say that my biggest drawback, would be how to approach that situation. (Tyler, Interview 3)

Tyler observed his mentor teacher making derogatory comments about BIPOC learners but expressed a reluctance to disrupt the narrative:

> She [mentor] kinda would talk down on the kids that were coming from a different ethnicity or background ..... I remember one of the kids missed school one day, but it was because they missed the bus because their mom had to work into the night because she couldn't afford rent. It was something pretty severe, and the teacher was just kind of talking down about it and didn't really acknowledge it

> in a sense. I just remember sitting in the faculty lounge at lunch..... The teacher was just kind of talking, I guess you could say, trash on the students and their family..... I knew it wasn't okay, but also, at the same time, I didn't know how to make it not okay. (Tyler, Interview 2)

Elizabeth explained that she would approach a conversation around a topic like the Black Lives Matter movement by telling students to talk with their parents about it and shift the discussion to topics like compassion and respect:

> I feel like in some ways that would be easier for me to explain instead of actually going to the movements. I might more push that under the rug and say, “Okay, now that's a conversation you can have with your parents at home, but let's just think about this as a class,” and then talk about .....Like make it a conversation about our classroom rather than the world at broad, and maybe just zero them in on how we care about each other and we respect each other, 'cause I'll hope we have established that community feel by the point in time this conversation is coming up, and so we can focus in on it from that perspective rather than a movement. (Elizabeth, Interview 3)

While teacher candidates shared experiences that were in opposition to the two tenets of commitment to social justice and challenging dominant ideologies, there was no evidence to indicate participants were aware of the importance of the centrality of experiential knowledge or intersectionality.

An analysis of the data using a deductive method revealed that participants’ experiences were consistent with critical race theory’s tenants of systemic racism and interest convergence. However, there were inconsistencies presented between

participants' experiences and critical race theory's tenets of a commitment to social justice and challenging dominant ideology. Lastly, there was no indication connecting their experiences or future plans to critical race theory's tenets of centering BIPOC voices or recognition of intersectionality.

Implications

The linkage between the percentage of representation that White teachers hold in the education system and inequitable educational outcomes for BIPOC learners creates challenges and opportunities for teacher preparation programs (Sleeter, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Teacher candidates in this study articulated that their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy was influenced by both their experiences prior to and during their teacher preparation program. However, the data suggested that participants would have benefited from additional support by being provided a race-centered coherent approach to teacher preparation. While the researcher acknowledged the small sample size of this study, teacher preparation programs housed within universities similar to those represented in this study would benefit from the insights gathered in this study. Implications for future practice are described in detail in the following sections.

Teacher Preparation as a Mitigating Force

Experiences prior to a teacher preparation program influenced the early perceptions of race and culture for teacher candidates in this study. Likewise, upon entrance into a teacher preparation program, participants encountered experiences that influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. Based on the data in this study, it is recommended that teacher preparation programs provide teacher candidates with opportunities to explore the development of their own racial and cultural identities

and perceptions along with exposure to a critical analysis of education and interactions with BIPOC learners and communities.

Teacher candidates in this study were White individuals who had limited interactions with BIPOC communities, resulting in either colorblindness or negative perceptions of those individuals. Participants noted the influence of their teacher preparation programs, mentioning the shift in thinking that occurred between the time they entered the program and their final semester. Sarah reflected by saying, “I'm receiving an education from and with people that aren't like who I've always been around.” She proudly claimed that friends from her hometown pointed out the change in her beliefs regarding race and culture since she entered a teacher preparation program:

> But I know how some of my friends are so stuck in their same old ways.....They look at me and they're like, “Well, you changed.” I'm like, “That's the point. We shouldn't be how we are here.” (Sarah, Interview 3)

Teacher preparation programs may serve as vehicles to shift teacher candidates’ early perceptions of BIPOC and their confidence in implementing culturally responsive teaching practices as a practicing teacher.

The findings of this study indicate an urgent need for teacher candidates to explore their own implicit and explicit biases beginning early in the teacher preparation program and lasting throughout the duration of the program. Teacher candidates should engage in critical self-reflection identifying their own positionality within the education context, their own experiences as students, and preconceived notions they hold about other individuals in society. Previous research suggests the use of reflecting writing, critical dialog, surveys, and the development of narrative portfolios (Colon-Muniz et al.,

2010; Cruz-Janzen & Taylor, 2004; Gorski, 2009; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995).

In addition to engaging teacher candidates in racial and cultural self-reflection, teacher preparation programs ought to engage teacher candidates in the critical analysis of pedagogy and the education system as a whole. Elizabeth declared the importance of her teacher preparation program providing her with different ways to think about the education system. She stated, "The program that I went through really did help me think about things differently in a new way, challenge the way things are always done." Teacher candidates should be pushed to consider race, culture, and the inequities that exist in the education system. Research suggests the use of course text, statistical data showcasing societal injustices, and critical dialogue as a means to provide exposure to teacher candidates and push their thinking regarding race and culture (Fernandez, 2003; Genor & Goodwin, 2005; Goodwin et al., 1997; Horton & Scott, 2004). Along with exposure to the critical analysis of education, teacher candidates must be provided with opportunities in engage with BIPOC learners and communities.

Previous research along with the findings in the present study indicate the importance of a cross-cultural field placement as a means for teacher candidates to feel confident in the implementation of culturally responsive teaching (Capella-Santana, 2003; Duarte & Reed, 2004). While the present study did not explore the implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices, the candidates' responses were consistent with previous research regarding high levels of self-efficacy leading to increased implementation. All participants stated that more opportunities to engage in cross-cultural field experiences would have impacted their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy.

Tyler disclosed that it had been "hard" for him to gain confidence in applying the practices associated with culturally responsive teaching because his field placements had been in predominantly White settings. He said, "But applying it into a classroom has been hard for me because most of them [field placements] are predominantly White." Teacher candidates could be provided with cross-cultural field placement in either school-based or community-based settings where they engage with individuals who are of different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. School-based field placements provide teacher candidates with insight into BIPOC individuals as learners while community-based placements could strengthen teacher candidates' confidence by building their knowledge of BIPOC communities. Sleeter (2008) and Villegas and Lucas (2002) contend that cross-cultural placements offer experiential resources that, when connected to coursework, could potentially dispel negative perceptions previously held by teacher candidates. Teacher preparation programs must provide teacher candidates with exposure to both different ways of thinking about the education system and experiences with BIPOC learners and communities. Teacher preparation programs with similar demographics to the universities represented in this study would benefit from providing teacher candidates with cross-cultural field placements that are school or community based and tied to a course where reflection is encouraged.

Coherent Race-Centered Approach

While the findings in this study indicate that experiences in teacher preparation programs may serve as tools to expand teacher candidates' thinking on race and culture, there is evidence to suggest a coherent approach with an emphasis on race is needed within teacher preparation programs. The findings in this study suggest that, in addition

to exposure to BIPOC communities and a critical analysis of education, teacher candidates desire increased opportunities for application, trained mentors, and a clear programmatic vision for culturally responsive teaching. Additionally, participants would benefit from a race-centered comprehensive approach.

Participants engaged in course and fieldwork experiences during their teacher preparation programs that influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. However, they expressed an interest in wanting more time and space to apply the culturally responsive teaching practices they learned. Tyler noted, “I haven't had a ton of experience in actually applying it personally.” Elizabeth said, “I can have this theory, but there’s still kind of a hesitancy to implement it.” Teacher candidates must be provided an opportunity to think about the impact of race and culture on the teaching and learning process and be provided with opportunities to apply their learning (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Bandura (1986) suggests that mastery experiences, ones where individuals execute a task, are linked to high self-efficacy. Teacher preparation programs should offer teacher candidates assignments that afford them the opportunity to implement practices associated with culturally responsive teaching in real-world scenarios, both in their course and field work.

Programs must align course and field work, extending the opportunities to practice culturally responsive teaching from their university-based courses into their field experiences. Participants in this study noted limited experiences in their field placements, not only with BIPOC learners, but also with applying culturally responsive teaching practices in the field. They expressed a need for explicit instruction from their teacher preparation program on culturally responsive teaching practices to look for in the field.

Sarah stated, “I would tell faculty that their course work was very good, but their field experiences, in terms of what I'm supposed to be watching, was not as good.” She went on to say, “There needed to be a more structured task list for when I was doing my observations or observing teachers.” Teacher preparation programs should require teacher candidates to complete assignments where they are asked to identify culturally responsive practices and apply them personally while in the field.

All participants in this study, perhaps due to the lack of explicit instruction from their teacher preparation program, noted limited discussions with their mentor teachers regarding race and culture. Chloe remarked that there were “no discussions around race or culture” during her student teaching placement. Additionally, teacher candidates observed mentor teachers showing signs of opposition to the practices associated with culturally responsive teaching. Teacher preparation programs should consider seeking out mentor teachers who effectively implement culturally responsive teaching practices or consider training mentors in the practices prior to allowing candidates to learn from them. In addition, teacher preparation programs should provide mentors with the program’s expectations of preparing culturally responsive teacher.

Teacher preparation programs must have a clear, programmatic vision for preparing teacher candidates to implement culturally responsive teaching practices that is infused throughout the entire program. The vision should guide curricular decisions and should be shared with university supervisors and mentor teachers (Milner, 2011). Teacher candidates in this study attributed their knowledge of culturally responsive teaching practices to information provided largely in their social studies methods course along with one or two other courses. Sarah mentioned, “There's three classes that taught me all

of these [practices associated with culturally responsive teaching].” All four participants in this study relied on the handout created by the researcher that outlined practices associated with culturally responsive teaching, suggesting an unawareness of the practices. Elizabeth stated, “I'm not sure I was conscious that all of these [practices listed on the handout] were culturally responsive, I grouped them as best teaching practices.” Teacher preparation programs ought to include a common language around culturally responsive teaching practice in order to prepare them to improve outcomes for BIPOC learners.

The findings in this study demonstrate a critical need for race to be placed at the center of teacher preparation programs’ approaches. The deductive analysis of the insights provided by teacher candidates in this study interpreted alongside the tenets of critical race theory proved that although teacher preparation programs influenced the candidates’ culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy, teacher candidates were underprepared to problematize race within the education system. Participants acknowledged experiences that demonstrated a basic understanding of the pervasive nature of racism in institutions while exhibiting interest convergence. Additionally, teacher candidates presented no evidence of recognizing the importance of centering BIPOC voices or intersectionality.

Milner (2006) argues that in order for White educators to be able to work effectively with BIPOC learners, they must first acknowledge the inequalities in the education system. Participants in this study were not confident or willing to address race and racism within institutions. When asked, Elizabeth explained that she would not feel comfortable talking about race, specifically something like the Black Lives Matter

movement, in her future classroom. She stated, “I might more push that under the rug and say, “Okay, now that's a conversation you can have with your parents at home.” Chloe predicted that a challenge she anticipates in her future classroom is students bringing up race or using the term “racist.” She said, “I think that's [dealing with race] a big hurdle, and it's something I worry about.” Teacher candidates were candid about their hesitancy with race-related topics.

Conversely, and although participants demonstrated a level of honesty regarding race and culture, they simultaneously evaded the topic of race throughout their interviews. Teacher candidates discussed experiences with English language learners and focused on culture more heavily than race when given the option. Participants ended sentences and became silent rather than finishing a thought that was race focused. Sarah began speaking about challenges she anticipated in her future classroom when infusing race into the classroom but switched topics before finishing her thought:

> I anticipate facing children who aren't used to seeing things that I may be introducing to them and then hearing those comments and having to explain that they aren't appropriate or having to deal with ..... I think another challenge is children that come to school hungry. (Sarah, Interview 3)

Similarly, Tyler avoided extending his thoughts regarding the racial makeup of his future classroom and instead spoke about the socioeconomic status. He said, “I would say I would see a lot of diverse..... I would say lots of diversity in terms of socioeconomic status.” There was a noticeable reluctancy to engage in conversations regarding race. Additionally, one of the teacher candidates used a racially-charged derogatory term, “colored,” to describe BIPOC individuals and communities. It was done in a ubiquitous,

pragmatic manner, serving as evidence that the experiences during a teacher preparation program were not enough to dispel basic harmful language patterns.

Previous research (Howard, 2006; Sleeter, 2011), along with the findings of the current study, suggest that teacher candidates are hesitant to infuse race into instructional practices and educational conversations. The insights shared by participants within this research revealed a heavy emphasis on the physical representation of BIPOC individuals through the use of graphic representation within classrooms with little recognition of the importance of BIPOC representation in other more impactful areas. Results from the deductive analysis of the current study aligned with the finding that participants displayed a surface-level understanding of the significance of race in education. Participants shared experiences that indicated there was an alignment with two of the tenets of critical race theory which are the ubiquitous nature of racism and the notion of interest convergences. Teacher candidates' experiences were in predominately White settings where racism was ever-present and normalized. Participants exhibited an inability to move beyond the graphic representation of BIPOC communities in the classroom and were unwilling to implement components of culturally responsive teaching unless it served their interests.

In addition, the deductive analysis presented evidence of opposition to committing to social justice and challenging the dominant ideology, while the importance of intersectionality and centrality of experience were nonexistent. The misalignment and absence of these major premises of critical race theory may indicate a lack of preparation surrounding the importance of race and the impact of racism in education. The limited understanding of race and racism displayed by participants mirror the cursory

experiences they engaged in during their teacher preparation programs. Participant's inability or unwillingness to consider the impact of race on the teaching and learning process may be the result of the perfunctory nature through which race was addressed in their teacher preparation programs. Participants in the current study expressed a desire for more cross-cultural experiences and explicit guidance on practices associated with culturally responsive teaching. Teacher preparation programs should consider embedding race-related content in coursework in conjunction with diverse placements from the start of the program through graduation. Teacher candidates should be exposed to the tenets of critical race theory in an effort to expand their thinking on the impact and importance of race and racism in education.

The findings in this study serve as evidence that although teacher preparation programs have the ability to serve as a bridge between early perceptions of BIPOC communities and culturally responsive teaching practices, there is a considerable amount of work to be done to prepare future educators to be culturally and racially responsive. Providing teacher candidates with the knowledge and tools needed to disrupt the existing inequities within the current education system may occur more readily if teacher preparation programs prepared culturally responsive teachers in a strategic, comprehensible, race-centered manner.

This study sought to lift up the voices of teacher candidates by exploring their perceptions of the experiences prior to and during a teacher preparation program that influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. Universities such as Colvin and Bridges, along with others who have similar demographics, may use the insights gathered in this study to inform their teacher preparation programs. The implications for

practice provided by this study could allow teacher preparation programs to equip teacher candidates with the confidence and skills to bridge the gap between a predominately White teacher workforce and BIPOC learners. There is evidence to suggest that a well-planned, coherent, race-centered teacher preparation program may influence teacher candidates' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy, leading to the improvement of educational outcomes for BIPOC communities. While the findings and implications offered in this study have the potential to move teacher preparation programs forward in preparing teacher candidates to implement practices associated with culturally responsive teaching, limitations inherent within research must be noted.

Limitations

The purpose of this study was to explore teacher candidates' experiences that influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. Creswell (2009) suggests that limitations must be noted when considering the findings of a study. Limitations are inherent in research as they are restrictions that are outside the researcher's control (Terrell, 2016). The limitations in this study include generalizability, the current social climate, and the role of the researcher within the study.

This study is limited to the perspectives of four White teacher candidates who were seeking a PreK-4 certification. In addition, participants engaged in teacher preparation programs at two different universities, both of which were in southern Pennsylvania. While the researcher did not include gender or race as a possible criterion, she acknowledged that due to the demographics of those enrolled in the teacher preparation programs at Colvin and Bridges universities, it was likely that participants would be White and female. While the sample population in this study, 100% White and

75% female, did align with the teacher workforce in Pennsylvania, the findings from this study are not transferable across settings. Given the limited number of participants and the phenomenological nature of the study, the data is not representative of the sample population.

The phenomenon in this study, experiences that influenced teacher candidates' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy, required participants to reflect on their lived experiences as they related to race and culture. Interviews occurred during a time of social unrest due to a heightened awareness of police brutality towards BIPOC communities alongside the Covid-19 pandemic. The insights provided may be skewed as a result of the controversy around the topics of race and culture. Participants may have been hesitant to share honest feedback for fear of offending the researcher because of the subject matter.

The researcher recognized her role as an instrument in the research and thus a potential limitation. As a White woman who is the product of a poverty-stricken childhood with two biracial children and a spouse who identifies as a Black man, the topics of race and culture are ones that evoke strong emotions. The researcher is a member of a teacher preparation program, making teacher education an issue of the utmost importance to her.

While the researcher acknowledged the limitations of generalizability, social unrest, and the impact of her role within the study, the findings of this study offered insights into the experiences that influenced teacher candidates' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. The findings of this study demonstrated the important influence of experiences prior to and during a teacher preparation program on culturally responsive

teaching self-efficacy. Future research should build upon the findings and seek to transcend the inherent limitations presented within this study.

Recommendations for Future Research

The devastating events impacting BIPOC communities, along with the recent national attention on systemic racism, enhances the need for future research that places race and racism at its core. Further examination of the experiences that influence teacher candidates' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy is timely and imperative. Due to the limitations that are fundamental within research, it is recommended that future studies be conducted to deepen the understanding of the phenomenon of teacher candidates' experiences that influence culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. The areas of future research suggested as a result of this study are varying sample populations to allow for potential transferability, including teacher candidates' experiences prior to a teacher preparation program, and race-centered research.

This study was limited to a small group of White teacher candidates seeking the PreK-4 certification. In order to broaden the scope, it is suggested that a similar study be conducted with the inclusion of middle-level and secondary teacher candidates, other universities within and outside of Pennsylvania, increased male participation, post-accelerate candidates, and BIPOC individuals. The expansion of this study on a larger scale to include various demographics and more universities, within and outside of Pennsylvania, would increase the potential for generalizability of results.

Although this study provided insights offered by undergraduate teacher candidates in their final semester of a teacher preparation program, further research is needed to gather the perceptions of practicing teachers. Sleeter (2001) argues for

researching backwards, positing that in order to move teacher preparation programs towards a more equitable education system, researchers must examine the practices of educators who are successfully implementing culturally responsive teaching practices. Using the findings of this study, future research should follow teacher candidates into the field once they are practicing teachers to better understand their lived experiences as they attempt to implement culturally responsive teaching practices in their own classrooms. Teacher preparation programs would benefit from understanding the experiences practicing educators have had that influence their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy.

The findings in this study suggest that the lived experiences teacher candidates have prior to entering a teacher preparation substantially influence their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. Using the findings of this study as a basis, teacher preparation programs housed within universities similar to Colvin and Bridges universities would benefit from an increased understanding of the impact early experiences have on teacher candidates' perceptions of race and culture. Future studies should expand on the findings of this research to deepen the knowledge base of teacher candidates' experiences prior to entering a teacher preparation program, including the impact of their familial roots.

Although teacher candidates in this study identified their teacher preparation program as having a profound influence on their development of culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy, they expressed feelings of being underprepared to teach BIPOC learners. For this reason, it is suggested that future research continue to examine teacher candidates' experience using a critical race theory lens. Participants in this study were

asked to share experiences related to both race and culture. As such, teacher candidates often defaulted to experiences related to the notion of culture rather than shining the spotlight on race. Exploring teacher candidates' insights through a critical race theory lens is necessary to better understand the impact of race and racism on education.

Conclusion

To further explore the experiences that teacher candidates perceive to have influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy, a qualitative phenomenological study was conducted. This phenomenological study was guided by a constructivist worldview while grounded in critical race theory. The insights gathered from this study are useful in identifying the experiences that teacher candidates perceive to have influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. Ultimately, adding teacher candidates' voices to the existing body of knowledge on culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy provides an understanding of the experiences that may serve as a bridge for the cultural discontinuity that comes as a result of the overwhelming presence of Whiteness in American school. Although biases are an inherent part of society, Delpit (1995) asserts that teacher preparation programs have the power to alleviate the impact of preconceptions held by teacher candidates by equipping them to support all learners, including those in BIPOC communities.

The impacts of an inequitable education system, along with the overrepresentation of White educators in schools, has been noted for decades without substantial change. While the opportunity gap that exists between BIPOC learners and their White peers is profoundly problematic, the problem itself lies in systematic practices that perpetuate racist ideologies. The American education system was built on an intolerant foundation

(Nieto, 1996). Teacher candidates must be prepared with the knowledge and tools needed to interrogate the existing education system which prioritizes the dominant culture at the expense of BIPOC communities. Teacher preparation programs have an obligation to mitigate the impact of a system that is deeply rooted in racism and consistently fails to meet the needs of *all* students. There is much work to be done in teacher preparation programs. However, studies such as this one, which emphasize the experiences that influenced teacher candidates' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy, provide hope that teacher preparation programs can prepare the next generation of educators to be competent and confident in their abilities to improve outcomes for communities that have been historically forced into the margins of the American education system.

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Appendix A

Email to Participant Pool

Dear Prospective Study Participant,

I am a doctoral student in an Educational Leadership program at Millersville and Shippensburg Universities. I am conducting a research study as part of my doctoral degree requirements. My study is entitled, A Phenomenological Study of the Experiences Before and During a Teacher Preparation Program that Influence PK-4 Teacher Candidates' Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy. This is a letter of invitation to participate in this research study. The purpose of this study is to gain insights into the experiences that have influenced teacher candidates' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. The researcher seeks to serve as a vessel through which teacher candidates' insights regarding the development of culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy are added to the limited body of knowledge on the phenomenon.

By agreeing to participate in the study, you will be giving your consent for the researcher or principal investigator to include your responses in their data analysis. Your participation in this research study is strictly voluntary, and you may choose not to participate without fear of penalty or any negative consequences. You will be able to withdraw from the survey at any time and all survey responses will be deleted, including the attached informed consent agreement.

Participants will engage in three one-on-one confidential interviews with the researcher over the course of a three-week period during the spring 2021 semester. Each interview will take no more than one hour. Your participation will contribute to the current literature on experiences teacher candidates perceive to influence their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. No compensation will be offered for your participation. If you are interested in receiving the results of the study, you may request the results be sent to you by emailing the researcher at jessica.benito@gmail.com.

If you would like more information about this study, please respond directly to this email asking for more information. If you decide to participate after reading this letter, please respond directly to this email indicating your interests in participating.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jessica Stephens
Doctoral Candidate
Educational Leadership Program
Millersville University | Shippensburg University
Jessica.benito@gmail.com

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Title of project/study: A Phenomenological Study of the Experiences Before and During a Teacher Preparation Program that Influence PK-4 Teacher Candidates' Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy
Principal Investigator's (PI) Name: Jessica Stephens
PI's University Affiliation and Title: Doctoral Candidate | Millersville University

1. **Purpose of the research/study:** The goal of this qualitative phenomenological study is to gain insights into the experiences that have influenced teacher candidates' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. The researcher seeks to serve as a vessel through which teacher candidates' insights regarding the development of culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy are added to the limited body of knowledge on the phenomenon.
2. **Procedures to be followed:** An in-depth interview will occur using the following open-ended questions.
3. **Potential risks or discomforts to participants:** Because of the nature of the data collected in this study, it may be possible to deduce your identity. To protect your identity, the researcher will assign pseudonyms for participants and anyone mentioned during the interviews.
   Non-Shippensburg University affiliated participants who are in distress after participating in this study should contact the SAMHSA'S National Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357). Participants may also call 1-800-487-4889, which is a confidential, free, 24-hour-a-day, 365-day-a-year, information service, in English and Spanish, for individuals facing mental and/or substance use disorders. The following weblink provides a list of area mental health service providers: https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/
4. **Potential benefits to participants:** The results of this study will not benefit you directly. The study may provide insights into the experiences teacher candidates perceive to have influenced their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy.
5. **Duration/time requirement for participants:** The study will require no more than 180 minutes of time over a course of three separate interviews taking place within a three-week time period.
6. **Confidentiality and anonymity protections provided to participants:** Three, separate, confidential interviews will take place with each individual participant using the online platform Zoom. Zoom sessions will be recorded. After each session, the video recordings will be extracted and saved to a password-protected laptop which will be stored in a locked office. Only the researcher will have access to the locked office as well as the password-protected laptop. The password-protected laptop has the automatic log-out feature activated to ensure security and confidentiality. The stored data will not be encrypted as the information obtained is not highly sensitive data. Should the Primary Investigator need to share data, it will be done using an internal file transfer. The audio recordings from Zoom will be used to transcribe verbatim the insights provided by participants. The transcription service scribie.com will be utilized. Participants' personal information will be kept confidential using

pseudonyms. Hard signed copies of the informed consent and those signed electronically will be placed in a password-protected computer, deleted from email upon receipt, and stored in a locked file cabinet along with all other hard copy materials. A verbal and visual review of the informed consent will occur at the beginning of each interview.

Confidentiality will be prioritized by assigning each participant a pseudonym to protect personal information. The researcher and the administration within each of their respective universities will be the only individuals with access to participants' names. University administration will not, however, have access to participants' responses. The transcriptionist will have access to the participants' responses but will not have participants' identifying information.
Zoom recordings will be deleted from the researcher's password-protected computer after the completion of the study. Only transcription data with pseudonyms will be saved. Data and consent forms will be preserved for three years and then appropriately discarded.

7. **A description of incentives, payments, or rewards provided to participants, if any:** There is no compensation for participation in this study.
8. **Contact information:**

Jessica Stephens	Dr. Wendy Kubasko	Dr. Todd Whitman
Doctoral Candidate	Assistant Professor	IRB Chair
Educational Leadership Program	Educational Leadership	Research with Human Subjects
Shippensburg University	Millersville University	Shippensburg University
Jessica.benito@gmail.com	wlkubasko@ship.edu	IRB@ship.edu

9. **Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. Grades in your courses will not be affected by your participation in this study.
10. **Eligibility:** You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to take part in this study. By completing this form, you are consenting to participate in this study.

I consent to participate in this study and may withdraw at any time.

_____ _____

Signature Date

Appendix C

Interview Protocol & Questions

INTERVIEW ONE

Step 1: Welcome the participant and discuss the purpose of the interview.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to gain insights into the experiences both prior to and during a teacher preparation program that have constructed teacher candidates' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. Interviews will be conducted with undergraduate student teachers seeking a PK-4 certification and held via Zoom. The video recording will be transcribed and coded. The interview will last no more than one hour.

Step 2: Consent form

You have previously signed the informed consent form, but I'd like for you to review it as I share it on my screen. If you agree, we will move forward with the interview.

Step 3: Provide background information.

In this interview, there are no right or wrong answers. You will not be judged based on your responses. I am hoping to gather your insight and add the voices of teacher candidates to the existing literature on culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. Specifically, I'm hoping you'll share with me experiences that you've had prior to and during a teacher preparation program that have influenced your comfort level and confidence in implementing culturally responsive practices. I have previously shared a list of practices associated with culturally responsive teaching with you via email but will also share it on my screen during our chat today.

Step 4: Provide a list of practices associated with culturally responsive teaching on the shared screen.

Step 5: Ask interview questions, and probing questions as needed, for Interview One.

1. Tell me a little bit about your experiences as a child prior to starting school.
    a. Who is in your immediate family?
    b. Where did you grow up? What was the racial and ethnic make-up of your neighborhood?
    c. Did you, or do you, identify with a marginalized group?
2. Describe for me the most important encounter or memory that you have regarding your own culture and/or race?
3. Tell me about the schools you attended as an elementary, middle, and high school student.
    a. Talk to me about the curriculum in your schools.
    b. Describe your experiences learning about people of different cultures and races in school.
    c. How did your culture and/or race impact your experience as a student in elementary, middle, and high school?
    d. When did hear history from multiple perspectives? Do you remember a time when you learned about history from another perspective?
4. Tell me about your teachers in elementary, middle, and high school.

   a. Tell me about the first time you had a teacher who was a different race or ethnic group than you.
5. Tell me about the extra-curriculars and out of school activities that you took part as an elementary, middle, and high school student?
   a. What was the racial and/or ethnic make-up of the individuals associated with those activities both peers and those in leadership positions (i.e. coaches)?
6. Tell me about the times you've seen practices associated with culturally responsive teaching discussed, practiced, or modeled during elementary, middle, and high school.
7. How did you come to be part of a teacher preparation program?
   a. What made you want to be a teacher?
   b. What made you choose the specific teacher preparation program that you did?
8. Is there anything else you would like to add that I haven't asked you about as it relates to culturally responsive teaching practices?

Step 6: Thank the participant.

We have come to the end of our interview. I want to thank you for your time and for sharing honestly and openly with me. As you know, there is a second and third interview that will take place in the coming weeks. I'm looking forward to speaking with you again soon.

INTERVIEW TWO

Step 1: Remind participants of the purpose of the study.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to gain insights into the experiences both prior to and during a teacher preparation program that have constructed teacher candidates' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. Interviews will be conducted with undergraduate student teachers seeking a PK-4 certification and held via Zoom. The video recording will be transcribed and coded. The interview will last no more than one hour.

Step 2: Consent form

You have previously signed the informed consent form, but I'd like for you to review it as I share it on my screen. If you are in agreement, we will move forward with the interview.

Step 3: Provide background information.

In this interview, there are no right or wrong answers. You will not be judged based on your responses. I am hoping to gather your insight and add the voices of teacher candidates to the existing literature on culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. Specifically, I'm hoping you'll share with me experiences that you've had prior to and during a teacher preparation program that have influenced your comfort level and confidence in implementing culturally responsive practices. I have previously shared a list of practices associated with culturally responsive teaching with you via email but will also share it on my screen during our chat today.

Step 4: Provide a list of practices associated with culturally responsive teaching on the shared screen.

Step 5: Ask interview questions, and probing questions as needed, for Interview Two
Note: The interviewer will ask follow-up questions based on the first interview responses.

1. Is there anything you would like to add to what you shared in our last interview?
2. Tell me about your thoughts around race and culture when you were deciding to enter the teacher preparation program that you did.
    a. Describe your thinking around how race and culture would impact you as a teacher.
3. Describe experiences you had as a learner in your teacher preparation courses where you discussed culturally responsive teaching.
    a. Tell me about times there was dialogue around the practices associated with culturally responsive teaching.
    b. Tell me about times the practices associated with culturally responsive teaching were modeled by your instructors in your courses.
    c. Tell me about opportunities you had to practice culturally responsive teaching during your coursework.
4. Tell me about your field experiences prior to student teaching.
    a. Tell me about times there was dialogue around the practices associated with culturally responsive teaching.
    b. Tell me about times the practices associated with culturally responsive teaching were modeled by your mentors.
    c. Tell me about opportunities you had to practice culturally responsive teaching during field experiences prior to student teaching.
5. Tell me what a day is like as a student teacher from the beginning of the day to the end.
    a. Tell me about times there was dialogue or action around the practices associated with culturally responsive teaching during student teaching.
    b. What do you see as some of the biggest challenges in implementing culturally responsive teaching during the student teaching experience?
        i. What has helped you to handle the challenges you've described?
        ii. What has hindered your ability to handle the challenges you've described?
    c. What do you see as some of the biggest rewards with implementing culturally responsive teaching?
6. Describe opportunities you've had to reflect on your own race and/or culture and its impact on teaching and learning.
7. Describe the experiences you wish you had, or had more of, to prepare you to implement culturally responsive teaching.
8. Describe opportunities you've had in your teacher preparation program, outside of coursework and field work, that have helped prepare you to implement culturally responsive teaching practices (i.e., book clubs, speakers, student organizations)
9. Thinking of the various categories of experiences we've discussed (i.e., lived experiences, coursework, mentors, university faculty), what would you described as the most powerful in preparing you to implement culturally responsive teaching.

10. Is there anything else you would like to add that I haven't asked you about as it relates to culturally responsive teaching?

Step 6: Thank the participant.

We have come to the end of our second interview. I want to thank you for your time and for sharing honestly and openly with me again. As you know, there is a third interview that will take place next week. I'm looking forward to speaking with you again.

INTERVIEW THREE

Step 1: Remind participants of the purpose of the study.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to gain insights into the experiences both prior to and during a teacher preparation program that have constructed teacher candidates' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. Interviews will be conducted with undergraduate student teachers seeking a PK-4 certification and held via Zoom. The video recording will be transcribed and coded. The interview will last no more than 60 minutes.

Step 2: Consent form

You have previously signed the informed consent form, but I'd like for you to review it as I share it on my screen. If you agree, we will move forward with the interview.

Step 3: Provide background information.

In this interview, there are no right or wrong answers. You will not be judged based on your responses. I am hoping to gather your insight and add the voices of teacher candidates to the existing literature on culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. Specifically, I'm hoping you'll share with me experiences that you've had prior to and during a teacher preparation program that have influenced your comfort level and confidence in implementing culturally responsive practices. I have previously shared a list of practices associated with culturally responsive teaching with you via email but will also share it on my screen during our chat today.

Step 4: Provide a list of practices associated with culturally responsive teaching on the shared screen.

Step 5: Ask interview questions, and probing questions as needed, for Interview Three

Note: The interviewer will ask follow-up questions based on the second interview responses.

1. Is there anything you would like to add to what you shared in our last interview?
2. Looking to the future, when you envision yourself in a classroom of your own, where do you see yourself.
    a. Racial makeup of the school.
    b. Tell me about the challenges you anticipate.
    c. Tell me about the rewards you anticipate.
    d. Talk to me about the implementation of practices associated with culturally responsive teaching practices in your own classroom.
3. How prepared do you feel to use culturally responsive teaching practices in your own classroom?

   a. What experiences helped you to feel that way?

4. How confident are you that you will implement culturally responsive teaching practices?
   a. What do you see as possible obstacles to implementing culturally responsive teaching practices?
   b. Are there components you are more confident with? Less confident with?
5. What would you tell the faculty of your teacher preparation program you need in order to feel comfortable and confident to implement culturally responsive teaching practices?

6. What would you tell future student teachers that must experience in order to feel comfortable and confident to implement culturally responsive teaching practices?
   a. What personal lived experiences, if any, do you feel you need to have in order to be comfortable and confident in implementing culturally responsive teaching?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add that I haven't asked you about as it relates to culturally responsive teaching?

Step 6: Thank the participant.

We have come to the end of our third interview. I want to thank you for your time and for sharing honestly and openly with me throughout this interview process. If you are interested in receiving the results of the study, please send a request in writing to jessica.benito@gmail.com.

Appendix D

Handout of Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices

- obtain information about students' academic strengths.
- determine whether students like to work alone or in a group.
- adapt instruction to meet the needs of students.
- determine whether students feel comfortable competing with other students.
- identify ways that the school culture (e.g., values, norms, and practices) is different from students' home culture.
- implement strategies to minimize the effects of the mismatch between students' home culture and the school culture.
- assess student learning using various types of assessments.
- obtain information about students' home life.
- build a sense of trust in students.
- establish positive home-school relations.
- use a variety of teaching methods.
- develop a community of learners among students from diverse backgrounds.
- help students to develop positive relationships with their classmates.
- use students' cultural background to help make learning meaningful.
- use students' prior knowledge to help them make sense of new information.
- identify ways how students communicate at home may differ from the school norms.
- obtain information about students' cultural background.
- greet English Language Learners with a phrase in their native language.
- praise English Language Learners for their accomplishments using a phrase in their native language.
- design a classroom environment using displays that reflects a variety of cultures.
- develop a personal relationship with students.
- obtain information about students' academic weaknesses.
- obtain information regarding students' academic interests.
- identify ways that standardized tests may be biased towards linguistically or culturally diverse students.
- communicate with parents regarding their child's educational progress.
- structure parent-teacher conferences so that the meeting is not intimidating for parents.
- revise instructional material to include a better representation of cultural groups.
- critically examine the curriculum to determine whether it reinforces negative cultural stereotypes.
- design a lesson that shows how other cultural groups have made use of mathematics.
- help students feel like important members of the classroom.

- use a learning preference inventory to gather data about how students like to learn.
- use examples that are familiar to students from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- explain new concepts using examples that are taken from students' everyday lives.
- use the interests of students to make learning meaningful for them.
- implement cooperative learning activities for those students who like to work in groups.
- design instruction that matches students' developmental needs.
- teach students about their cultures' contributions to academics and society.

Adapted from Siwatu (2007)

Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale Siwatu, K. O. (2007). Preservice teachers' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy and outcome expectancy beliefs. Teaching and Teacher Education, 23, 1086-1101.