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Dream-Seekers (Ladson-Billings, 2009): An Analysis of Culturally Relevant Pedagogical Development Through the Perspective of Black Novice Teachers

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the Black educators who have modeled culturally

relevant and liberating pedagogies for us.

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Nana Becoat

Sing with me: If it had not been for the Lord on my side, tell me where would I be? Where would I be? As a child, I did not comprehend the magnitude of this congregational song. As an adult, it all makes sense. I thank all of the saints in the congregation who have held me up through it all: Mom and Dad (Peace and Love: Forever and Always). Dee Dee & Dame, Leah, and Billie & Chantel. Jordy, Brody, Elanna, & Manu (My heartbeats). Nieces & Nephews. Christina, Michelle, & Pablo. Let the church say Amen! And thank you for listening to our mixtape.

Michelle Cooley

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Christina Grove

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Pablo Ramos, Jr

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ABSTRACT

Using critical race theory and Gloria Ladson-Billings' culturally relevant pedagogy as theoretical frameworks, this thematic narrative analysis study explored the epistemology and ontology of culturally relevant pedagogy by investigating the research question: How do Black novice teachers (years 1-5) become culturally relevant practitioners? The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with Black K-12 public school teachers in which the participants reflected on how their upbringing, cultural identities, K-12 experiences, and teacher preparation program/process impacts their readiness to practice culturally relevant pedagogy. Five themes emerged from the narrative analysis: 1) K-12 racialized trauma; 2) racialized awakening and awareness; 3) the sanctuary of educational and familial spaces; 4) the impact of professional development; and 5) seeking the dream: the quest toward embracing the epistemological and ontological paradigms of a culturally relevant pedagogy. This dissertation covers the findings related to these themes, as well as possible implications and recommendations from the study including: surfacing the impact of K-12 trauma on teacher ways of being; the importance of reflecting on pre-service and in-service lived experience to develop a culturally relevant pedagogy; and the need for clearer guidance from educational policymakers, educator preparation programs, professional development providers, and district/school leaders regarding the development of culturally relevant practices. As a homage to Ladson Billings' (2009) *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*, Dreamseekers explores the path taken to becoming culturally relevant practitioners.

Key words: Black novice teachers, culturally relevant pedagogy, cultural identities, K-12 experiences, and teacher preparation.

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Background

Contemporary history shows that educational scholars have sought to determine the best pedagogical practices that fit the community and home culture of students of color to promote their academic success (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). The cultural, economic, linguistic, and racial differences that exist between teachers and the students they serve often lead to achievement and opportunity gaps between White and other students drawn from Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC; Darby & Rury, 2018). Particularly, the racial imbalances have persisted and grown over the years. According to Bidwell (2010), in 2006, 43.1% of K–12 public school students were non-White. However, in 1990, only 32.4% identified as such (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Although American classrooms have become increasingly more diverse, the teaching force does not reflect the student population as 79% of teachers are White (Pew Research Center, 2021). Exacerbating this disparity, fewer African Americans are choosing education as a profession, which perpetuates the cultural divide between teachers and students (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Pew Research Center, 2021). Given the need to transform these disparities, educator preparation programs (EPPs) are tasked with implementing a resource pedagogy to equip preservice teachers (PSTs) with the criticality needed skills, strategies, and mindset, to effectively teach a growingly diverse student body (Paris, 2012).

Django Paris (2012) stated that resource pedagogies seek to integrate linguistic, cultural, and literacy practices of the global majority communities in the United States in an effort to assist students from such population access dominant American English

(DAE) skills and cultural norms. While there is an abundance of resource pedagogies, some of the more prominent frameworks include culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2013), culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995b), and culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012). These frameworks have subtle, yet noticeable, differences and are often used interchangeably to describe the practice of using students' cultural backgrounds and funds of knowledge to enhance classroom practices and experiences.

For the purpose of this research, the authors sought to understand how Black novice teachers become culturally relevant practitioners through the examination of their cultural identities, upbringing, elementary and secondary experiences, teacher preparation program/process, as well as their current teaching experience. A foundational understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy outlines the framework used to understand the participants' narratives. According to Ladson-Billings' (1995b) theoretical model of culturally relevant pedagogy "not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate" (p. 469). Her pedagogical approach moves beyond the goal of preparing students to fit into meritocratic structures and spaces. In her seminal work, *The Dreamkeepers*, Ladson-Billings (1994, p. 20) described culturally relevant teaching as:

> Specifically, culturally relevant teaching is a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural references to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These cultural referents are not merely vehicles for bridging or explaining the dominant culture; they are aspects of the curriculum in their own right.

Ladson-Billings (1995a) fronted three criteria for culturally relevant teaching: 1) the ability to facilitate students' academic development, 2) the willingness to nurture and support students' cultural competence and 3) the ability to develop students' sociopolitical and critical consciousness Additionally, she offered three propositions that emerge from the work of culturally relevant teachers: 1) conceptions of self and others, 2) the structuring of social relations, and 3) concepts around knowledge creation and acquisition.

For educators committed to academic excellence and critical consciousness, culturally relevant pedagogy theoretical model is a linchpin in the practice. Moreover, it is a key framework undergirded in anti-bias anti-racist pedagogy. Anti-bias curriculum emerged in the late 1980s due to the pioneering work of Derman-Sparks (1989) and the A.B.C. Task Force. When first introduced, the anti-bias curriculum grounded its work on developmental perspective, which stresses tailoring "...materials and activities to each child's cognitive, social, and emotional developmental capacities" (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010, p.8). Derman-Sparks (1989) and the A.B.C Task Force proved that there was a significant need for an anti-bias curriculum in classrooms as early as pre-K. Escayg (2019) posited that one of the earliest studies targeting children and race revealed that the onset of racial self-identification–that is, identifying with a particular aspect of one's racial ancestry, such as skin color- develops between the ages of three and four. With this research several K-12 schools and districts understood the need to implement this curriculum and bring racial awareness and self-identification to the forefront.

Moreover, Bidwell (2010) conducted an analysis of data, which suggested a need for spaces in which preservice teachers, in-service teachers, and teacher educators could

discuss and openly debate issues of race, and challenge racial hierarchies found in schools and society at large. The findings also recommended developing a sharp focus on multicultural anti-racist education in teacher preparation programs. This aspect should equally be incorporated it into professional development plans for in-service teachers.

Key Terms and Definitions

Critical Race Theory (CRT). A legal framework that identifies race and racism to be normalized and deeply entrenched in Western history and society - it is fundamental to how institutions, structures, and systems function. (Crenshaw, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 2016; Taylor, 2016).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP). the practice of utilizing students' existing funds of knowledge from cultural identities, linguistic expression, lived experiences, and performance styles to make learning experiences more relevant, accessible, and effective to help them achieve their academic goals (Gay, 2002; Hollie, 2011). Practitioners of the CRP pedagogical approach focus on student learning and achievement, cultural competence, and critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

Novice Teachers. Educators currently working in a public-school district with 1-5 years teaching experience. These educators would not have received tenure within their current school district.

Educator Preparation Program/Process (EPPs). A post-secondary college or university educator program or a process by which the educator becomes legally credentialed (Paris, 2012).

Diverse Learners. According to this study, this term is often used to describe students who are not members of dominant societal groups (i.e. students of color, social economically disadvantaged students, student who identify as LGBTQIA, etc.)

Narrative. The psychological concept of understanding the role of stories in the development of personality, identity, and psychological experience (Josselson & Hammack, 2021).

Sanctuary. A place of refuge.

Problem Statement

As the landscape of public-school students continues to shift, educator preparation programs should design and implement curricula that would equip novice teachers with the core tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy. The problem is that many novice teachers lack the foundational knowledge of culturally relevant pedagogy and are entering classrooms with little to no cultural sensitivity. Abrahams and Troike (1972) argued that if educators were to be successful in instructing children from marginalized communities, they needed the necessary skills. Additionally, as the education and opportunity gaps persist in American schools and society, it is imperative that novice teachers are equipped with a culturally competent framework that prepares them for the emergent multicultural classrooms (Darby & Rury, 2018). The implementation of the culturally relevant pedagogy affirms the dignity of these multicultural students who are often the most marginalized and underserved.

Contrasting perspectives include research that suggests culturally relevant pedagogy could only be implemented by educators who are of the same race as their students. White, female educators struggle the most when implementing culturally

relevant pedagogy in urban classroom settings (Callaway, 2017). This brings up a crucial concern about who could be successful with other people's children (Delpit, 1995). While the researchers are not arguing that African American teachers are inherently culturally relevant in their approach, there is a recognition of the opportunity to decenter the dominant perspective in search of ways to address this quandary. In the course of this research, the topic was investigated by examining the lived, educational, and professional experiences of Black novice teachers in a mid-sized Midwestern city.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to understand how Black novice teachers become culturally relevant practitioners through the examination of their cultural identities, upbringing, elementary and secondary experiences, and teacher preparation program/process. While this study sought participants who self-identify as already using or seeking to use culturally relevant practices, the researchers adopted the Ladson-Billings' (1995a) definition of culturally relevant practitioners, as educators focused on student learning and achievement, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. The research study analyzed the narrative responses of Black novice teachers to understand how their lived experiences impact the implementation of culturally relevant teaching practices.

Significance of the Study

This study sought to foster an understanding of the ontological and epistemological paradigm of Black novice teachers related to the adoption of culturally relevant pedagogy and practices in their classroom spaces. By centering the voices of those most often negatively impacted by cultural erasure and oppression in K-12 spaces,

specifically among Black teachers, the researchers aimed to illuminate possible paths for a more comprehensive culturally relevant pedagogy (Bell & Busey, 2021; Dixson & Rousseau-Anderson, 2018). There have been studies on CRT and White teachers' ability or inability to serve diverse students. For instance, Busey et al.'s (2022) study, which highlighted that "if scholars prioritized the voice of communities of color in CRT research in addition to the material impacts of racism, radical solutions towards eliminating racism would become more expansive" (p. 28).

The racialized tension in the U.S. inevitably made its way into educational spaces (Dixson & Rousseau-Anderson; 2018; Gordon, 2019; Johnson, 2020). As such, the researchers in this study hoped to illuminate the ways in which African American teachers could be working to eliminate oppressive conditions in schools. When the lived experiences, knowledge base and voice of students, educators and communities of color are not represented in the research then the "criticality of CRT will not see full effect" (Busey et. al, 2022, p.28).

Research Questions

This study was anchored on the narratives of novice Black teachers to understand their adoption of culturally relevant pedagogy and practices in classrooms. "Narrative researchers begin with a conceptual question ("Big Q") that provides the framework for the research, and they construct questions about experience ("little q") that can be a launching point for interviews" (Josselson, 2021, p. 8). The following research questions guided this study.

RQ1. How do Black novice teachers (years 1-5) become culturally relevant

practitioners? (conceptual framework: ontology and epistemology of culturally

relevant pedagogy)

This question guided the interview conversations between the researchers and the

participants. It also gave the researchers context of the participants' perceptions on their

readiness to implement or engage in culturally relevant pedagogy.

RQ2. How do Black novice teachers' cultural identities, upbringing, K-12 experience,

and teacher preparation program/process impact their practice of culturally

relevant pedagogy?

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

This research endeavor did not include perspectives from higher education nor

did the researchers interview any faculty member from higher education. The researchers

realized that by interviewing Black novice teachers there was a limit to the diversity of

perspectives. First, self-reported bias might have skewed the results, as teachers might

have overestimated or underestimated their readiness to implement culturally relevant

pedagogy. Second, the study's results might have been influenced by subjectivity in

interpretation, limiting the objectivity of the conclusions.

Furthermore, this study did not achieve a level of generalizability because the

sample was restricted to the voices of Black novice teachers who teach in the St. Louis

Metro area. However, the researchers aim was to explore broadly the perspectives of this

often overlooked group of educators. Additionally, the study relied solely on qualitative

data, which could limit the ability to draw quantitative comparisons.

Different interpretations of culturally relevant pedagogy could have also influenced responses. Teachers' feelings of preparedness might change as they gain experience, a factor a cross-sectional study might not have captured. There might have also been a selection bias since participation was voluntary, potentially leading to a sample of teachers particularly interested or confident in culturally relevant pedagogy.

Delimitations

The researchers chose to interview novice teachers of color, instead of all in-service teachers or pre-service teachers. Reasonably, Gallaway and Harris (2019) stated that literature has yet to document the perspective of women of color and their pedagogy might have details to contribute, which the current theories have overlooked. Participants were chosen from school districts in the mid-sized Midwestern city, St. Louis. Nonetheless, the focus on novice teachers of color allowed for an in-depth exploration of their experiences and feelings of preparedness in employing culturally relevant pedagogy, which was the core interest of this study.

The study was delimited in the following ways:

- Population: The research was focused specifically on Black novice teachers. This means the findings might not necessarily apply to all teachers, especially those with more years of experience or those still in pre-service training.

- Geographic location: All the participants were located in the same metropolitan area. This might have impacted the generalizability of the study.

- Subject matter: The study specifically looked at preparedness to employ culturally relevant pedagogy. Therefore, other aspects of teaching preparedness were not considered.

- Methodology: The researchers chose to use qualitative methods, specifically interviews, to gather data. This provided in-depth insights, but might have limited the ability to generalize findings or make quantitative comparisons.

- Time frame: The study was conducted at a particular point in time, meaning it captured the Black novice teachers' feelings of preparedness as they were at the time of the research, not how these feelings might evolve over time.

Research Plan

The researchers used narrative analysis, a qualitative research method that focuses on the systematic examination and interpretation of narratives or stories. In this study, the context for the novice teachers was their cultural identities, upbringing, K-12 experience, and teacher preparation program/process, and the impacts on their practice of culturally relevant pedagogy. Because the researchers focused their study on the whole human experiences of the participants to ensure a complete analysis of each story individually prior to finding interconnectedness across the sample, narrative analysis was the best option to meet such objective (Josselson & Hammack, 2021). The participants were asked to complete a demographic survey (See Appendix A) prior to the one-on-one interview conducted by the researchers.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

As the landscape of public-school students continue to shift, the practice of preparing new teachers to navigate such a dynamic environment appears the same. One of the needed changes in teacher preparation programs is how novice teachers could be equipped to be culturally relevant practitioners. In an effort to deepen the contextual understanding surrounding the issue, a review of the existing literature-beginning with an examination of critical race theory (CRT) as part of the framework for the research was conducted. Subsequently, the historical context and evolution of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) by Ladson-Billings (1995a) was examined. This review investigated current educator preparation programs (EPPs) work with CRP. The review concludes with an analysis of preservice and novice teachers' perceptions of readiness in regard to culturally relevant pedagogy.

The literature review that follows explores the researchers' hypotheses: The ontological and epistemological paradigm of Black novice teachers that identify as culturally relevant practitioners usually includes a) a deep understanding of the historical implications of white supremacy on education, b) strong critical consciousness, and c) continuing exposure to and adoption of culturally relevant pedagogy and practices. In reviewing the literature, the researchers sought to understand the following concepts:

- Historical implications of White supremacy on education and the larger society: The study emphasizes the historical and systemic privileging of White interests in education. It suggests that without understanding the historical implications of whiteness in education, novice teachers might merely regurgitate racially-just terminology without truly understanding or implementing it.

- Developing critical consciousness in novice teachers: The study values the importance of cultivating critical cultural consciousness in novice teachers. This involves acknowledging implicit biases, understanding, and respecting cultural identities, and being able to discuss difficult topics related to race and culture.

- Culturally responsive strategies on course and program levels: The study touched upon the strategies employed in educator preparation programs to address the need for culturally responsive pedagogy. It highlights the importance of self-reflection and understanding one's own cultural scripts and biases.

- Culturally responsive teaching and practices: The researchers defined and emphasized the importance of culturally responsive teaching, especially given the increasing diversity in classrooms. Likewise, the study discusses the challenges and perspectives related to implementing such pedagogy, especially by educators who might not share the same racial or cultural background as their students.

Conceptual or Theoretical Frameworks

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) is a legal framework born out of a need to interrogate the role that race played in legal education and application (Crenshaw, 2019; Taylor, 2016). Often seen as an offshoot of critical legal studies (CLS), early critical race theorists rejected CLS notions that laws and legal applications were impacted by class, but that race was irrelevant to the conversation (Cook, 1995; Crenshaw, 2019; Matsuda, 1995). Spurred by their critique of CLS, the stall in civil rights advancement, and the activism happening at law schools surrounding the implications that White-dominated faculty and traditional course offerings were having on the future of the practice of law

(and people's everyday lives), a group of legal scholars began a legal theory that was both race-conscious and justice-oriented (Crenshaw, 2019; Delgado, 1995).

While initially a framework by which legal scholars critically analyzed the impact of racial power on the creation and application of the law, CRT has been widely applied to a range of disciplines, including education (Crenshaw, 2019). Tenets of CRT include the concept that racism is ever-present and normalized in the United States, the assertion that race is a social construct, the idea that Whiteness allows racial progress only when said progress aligns with their interests, the importance of understanding the historical context of the effects of European colonialism, and the centering of counternarratives of less-centered cultures (Busey, et. al., 2022; Taylor, 2016). Additionally, CRT in education explores the notion of a commitment to social justice and a transdisciplinary approach to research (Busey, et. al., 2022). Crenshaw (2019) outlined the importance of CRT specifically rebutting the liberal and conservative darling of colorblindness as an undergirding structure of meritocracy. These concepts and underpinnings of CRT make it an ideal theoretical framework for our examination of Black novice teachers' adoption and implementation of CRP.

Ladson-Billings (2016) presented multiple areas in which CRT scholarship could inform educational theory and practice, including: curriculum, instruction, assessment, school funding, and desegregation. As such, one of the functions of CRP is to value and center all students' cultural identities in curricular decisions. This aspect stands in direct opposition to a concept Swartz (2007) called *master scripting*. Likewise, the ideas exemplify the upholding of White epistemology as superior with all other narratives being critiqued through the lens of Whiteness before being absorbed into the master

narrative (Ladson-Billings, 2016). The master-scripting of the curriculum illustrates another CRT tenet: Whiteness as property (Harris, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2016). As Ladson-Billings (2016) reiterated, a CRT framework aids an investigation of race-neutral instructional strategies believed to be effective for all students, but foster a sense of student deficiency when said strategies do not produce the anticipated student outcomes. CRT allows for the critique of assessments that purport objectivity and rationalism while being constantly utilized to support ideas of White intellectual superiority. Lastly, CRT's elevation of counternarratives and centering the voices of those impacted is needed in educational spaces to a) add much needed perspective to the research; b) counteract the underlying color blindness of much of the research; c) counter the prevalence of whiteness as property in teacher preparation and policy decisions; and d) posit overlooked solutions to the issues (Bell & Busey, 2021; Busey, et. al., 2022; Dixson & Rousseau-Anderson, 2018; Sleeter, 2017)

The CRT was used as the theoretical framework of this study to understand racialized oppression in the education sector. Busey, et al. (2022, p. 8) explained,

> CRT is born out of struggle, speaks to the experiences of people of color with racism and various forms of racial subordination, and provides a framework for analyzing the quotidian encounters with state power, modes of survival at the intersections of various hierarchies, and constant proximity to liminality.

Research around and interest in culturally relevant pedagogy often underscores the desire to improve the educational conditions for Black students and other youth of color because of the pervasive racial oppression that exists in school spaces resulting in low academic expectations and inadequate academic success (Darby & Rury, 2018; Ladson-Billings,

1995a; Paris 2012). CRT informed the researchers' understanding of these phenomena. It

also helped to examine the concepts of a) understanding the historical implications of

white supremacy, b) development of critical consciousness, and c) importance of

culturally responsive pedagogy this study sought to investigate as fundamental

understandings for educators seeking to positively impact students of color (Freire, 2003;

French, 2023; Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Taylor, 2016). Absent historical understanding

and critical consciousness, how could educators fully understand the prevailing context of

educational policies and practices and interrupt oppressive practices through action? This

action could take "the form of content, pedagogical practices, and work that provides

students with perspectives, skills set and opportunities to address oppression in its

multiple forms" (French, 2023, p. 315). Conversely, teachers without this contextual

knowledge engage in less inclusive practices, have shorter tenures in urban classrooms,

or adopt a saviorism stance that seeks to save children from their culturally deprived lives

(Freire, 2003; French, 2023).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Historically, the U.S. education system has often neglected to accommodate the

unique cultural needs of the diverse student populations. Ethnic minorities were forced to

conform to European-American norms at the expense of preserving their unique cultural

identities - which not only alienate these students, but also place significant obstacles in

the way of their academic success. Woodson (1993) demonstrated the dangers associated

with an education system not grounded in its students' lived experiences - suggesting it is

ineffective without engaging students in real world challenges - something most

education systems fail to do. Thus, learning should come through engagement rather than

from abstract ideas being presented from above - something an education system cannot achieve without engaging its diverse student body in turn leads to genuine learning.

As culturally responsive pedagogy gains more attention, there has been a shift from already employed teachers to pre-service and novice educators to equip educators with necessary tools and knowledge before entering classrooms. Abrahams and Troike (1972) noted that for educators to effectively instruct children from racial minorities, they should possess sufficient cultural knowledge. Culturally relevant pedagogy has become a mainstay of pre-service educator training programs in recent years, yet many are left wondering exactly what constitutes culturally relevant teaching and practice. A foundational understanding of culturally relevant teaching and practices could serve as a yardstick against which pre-service educator training programs could be measured against.

Nevertheless, gaps remain in research evaluating higher education institutions that offer novice educator training with an emphasis on culturally responsive pedagogy. This review attempted to address some of these gaps by investigating novice teacher readiness with respect to culturally responsive teaching and practices through qualitative responses. Some contradicting perspectives in the field suggest that culturally relevant pedagogy is most successfully implemented when educators who share a similar racial background as their students were involved, suggesting White female educators face additional hurdles when trying to implement culturally relevant pedagogy in urban classroom settings. Yet scholars like Ladson-Billings (1995a, 1995b, 2009, 2016) and Gay (2002, 2013) disagreed, emphasizing instead the universal applicability and importance of developing critical cultural consciousness regardless of racial or cultural background.

Gay's (2002, 2013) definition of culturally responsive instruction stressed the significance of infusing academic knowledge into students' lived experiences to make learning relevant, deepen understanding and retention, as well as reduce biases and enhance retention. EPP strategies play a vital role in equipping future educators with tools they need for culturally responsive practices (Paris, 2012). Such programs emphasize self-reflection, understanding one's biases, continuous learning, and adaptation for educators as key strategies of culturally responsive teaching practice.

Indeed, culturally relevant pedagogy can only be judged properly when its theories are translated to practice. Simply having theoretical knowledge alone would not suffice - educators should also understand real world classroom dynamics and understand their students' diverse cultural backgrounds to provide an inclusive education experience that enriches all (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Hence, culturally relevant teaching involves actively incorporating these diverse backgrounds into curriculums to ensure an inclusive education that provides enrichment opportunities to all.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in Educator Preparation Programs

There is a direct correlation in the readiness of educator preparation programs and novice teachers' ability to engage in culturally relevant pedagogy. According to Stein and Stein (2016, p. 193), novice teachers, specifically during their first and second year of teaching report,

> They are overwhelmed and taken aback by the myriad challenges they have
>
> to face. It is not surprising therefore that many research studies on teacher
>
> attrition rates have concluded that there is a direct correlation between the

large number of teachers who leave the profession and the preparedness to
teach.

Although students of color, especially Black and Latinx students are born
developmentally equivalent to their White peers (Geber, 1957; Wilson, 1991), there is
still the "ingrained notion that Black people are inadequate—legacy of enslavement, the
founding fabric of this country" (Delpit, 2012, pp.10-11). There remains a need for a
better programmatic approach to educating the diverse population of students in schools.
The majority of this research was completed from the lens of the dominant culture. In
order to get a complete breath of the need for culturally relevant pedagogy within the
schools, there is a critical need to have the perspectives of Black educators. Hedges
(2015) and Wilcoxen (2021) shared a similar idea that when teachers better understand
students' life experiences, more educators could find opportunities to create space for
building on that knowledge within the curriculum.

Although the need for inclusive educational pedagogy remains a major concern in
the contemporary educational landscape, "there is much that we do not know about how
to prepare teachers to teach an increasingly diverse student population" (Grant & Secada,
1990, p. 420). The overarching question that educator preparation programs both
traditional and non-traditional are plagued with entails whether teachers are prepared to
teach in a diverse landscape. From the idea of multicultural education, which was born in
the 1970s, came the understanding that lack of proper teacher preparation and teacher
limitations increased the minority achievement gap. Producing culturally relevant
teachers prepared to educate a new generation is an exhausting task (Darling-Hammond,
2010). However, it is necessary to prepare teachers to disseminate content knowledge

while simultaneously managing classroom activities, communicating effectively, integrating technology, and reflecting on their practice for constant improvement. "In recognition of the course on diverse learners or culturally responsive teaching in addition to methods courses. Often these courses remain independent of one another and rarely, if ever, overlap" (Adams & Kaczmarczyk, 2023, p. 28). Liou and Rotheram-Fuller (2019) and Lawrence et al. (2022) proposed that when new teachers were not aware of the diverse backgrounds of the students or lack the skills to meet the those needs; they were more likely to spread stereotypical perceptions of such students.

Understanding the need for universities to be heavily involved in developing teachers that are culturally relevant practitioners, Wilcoxen et al. (2021) studied a university that began culture walks. It was the intention of the culture walks to act as a way for the pre-service teachers to immerse themselves in the communities that they would be serving. Initially, Lindo and Lim (2020) found that although community walks aided in dispelling some myths of teaching in urban schools, the walks did not provide an opportunity for self-reflection or implicit bias from our cultural upbringings or life experiences. Students did not have an opportunity to engage in discourse with classmates to apply new learning in context.

Culturally relevant pedagogy stems from the tenets of anti-bias education, according to Derman-Sparks (1989). As a part of its framework, anti-bias education positions both educator and children as agents of social change, and promotes specific goals, identity, diversity, justice, and activism (Escayg, 2018). The preparation of pre-service teachers has usually been in the form of traditional multicultural education course

work and commonly led to one of the following conditions as Grana (2022, p. 42-43) revealed:

> (a) a curriculum centered on the dominant culture, which ignores bias and fails to address inequity; (b) a curriculum which pretends that difference does not exist, thereby denying the experiences of many children in the classroom; or (c) a curriculum that treats multiculturalism as tourism, in which superficial aspects of culture such as holidays and food are introduced as curious examples of surface culture.

As illustrated in previous research, "a failure to account for societal inequities that exist because of antiquated demands for standardization in U.S. education could be detrimental to the success of millions of culturally, linguistically, and cognitively diverse students" (Carrizales et al., 2022, p 27). In a research conducted by Hale et al. (2008), service-learning opportunities for pre-service teachers were minimal, but promising to support pre-service teachers' development. Due to the recognition of the change in student population, educator preparation programs have committed to having at least one course studying diverse learners or culturally relevant pedagogy in addition to the various courses, which rarely were interconnect or intersect at any point within the program (Adams & Kaczmarczyk, 2023; Hattie, 2009). These efforts are still reliant on the reactionary interventions that are often a day late and a dollar short for many students (Carrizales et al., 2022).

Studies have shown that service-learning opportunities helped pre-service teachers develop an awareness of their own beliefs and assumptions. For instance, Hale (2008, p. 67) posited,

With service-learning, pre-service teachers have the increased developmental

opportunity not only to break down stereotypes, build confidence and learn and

apply course theories but also to develop an active quest for further knowledge

and a desire and belief in their abilities to advocate for others.

Even with classes and service-learning opportunities Ladson-Billings (2009) proposed

that these things in isolation would not meet the need of the diverse learners, but rather

there would need to be a systematic and comprehensive transformation to the current

U.S. educational system. Furthermore, "when teachers better understand students' life

experiences, opportunities emerge for them to capitalize on that knowledge and embed it

into the curriculum" (Wilcoxen et al., 2021, p. 1). To advance culturally relevant

pedagogy, there needs to be more research on how "pre-service teachers (PSTs) are

prepared to support diverse learners" (Lawrence et al., 2022, p. 159).

Teachers and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

As American schools become more ethnically, racially, culturally, and

linguistically diverse, teachers should be prepared to navigate the heterogeneous

classrooms (Chiu et. al, 2017; Sleeter, 2017). While White teachers account for 82% of

the education workforce, all educators, regardless of race or ethnicity, share in the

responsibility of providing an education that bridges cultural, linguistic, and racial

divides (Sleeter, 2017). Furthermore, Sleeter (2017) emphasized that White pre-service

students should "complete university programs at considerably higher rates than students

of color" (p. 156). This idea indicate that White teachers are solely responsible for

bridging aforementioned divides and gaps. However, non-White tutors are integral to the

work as well. All teachers should understand the importance of implementing culturally relevant pedagogy (Chiu et. al, 2017; Colwell et al., 2020).

For generations, educator preparation program coursework has been heavily rooted in Eurocentric pedagogy. These frameworks are not designed to consider the needs of Black students. Sleeter (2017) noted that pre-service teachers of color decide to enter the field "primarily to serve communities like where they grew up…[because] curriculum and field placement were not relevant to preparing teachers for their communities… and most of the professors seemed unaware of this problem" (p. 162). Aronson and Meyers (2022) stated that there was a "plethora of literature advocating for culturally relevant, socially just, and anti-racist pedagogies" (p. 35) in teacher preparation programs. They argued that critical race theory and critical Whiteness studies theoretical frameworks that could enhance the understandings of White supremacy among teachers. The inclusion of theoretical frameworks that decenter Whiteness shifts the paradigm from the traditional Eurocentric stance to one that elevates the perspectives of Black and Brown. Without the incorporation of these frameworks into teacher preparation programs, novice teachers enter classrooms unprepared to provide students with a rigorous, culturally relevant education.

Consequently, as Darby and Rury (2018) opined, there is an achievement gap between White and Black students; the Black students have been denied quality education for generations. A paradigm shift should occur in educator preparation programs for graduate teachers to understand and be able to implement the culturally relevant teaching practices that would benefit a more diverse student population. Whitaker and Valtierra (2018) stated that the "persistent racial achievement gaps make it

critical that teacher educators equip preservice teachers with not only the knowledge and skills, but also the desire, to be an effective multicultural teacher" (p. 181). Therefore, educator preparation programs that equip preservice teachers with the will and skill to be culturally relevant teachers could facilitate a necessary paradigm shift in American education. This move could assist in mending the "educational debt" that Gloria Ladson-Billings described in much of her scholarship.

Whitaker and Valtierra (2018) argued that "multicultural coursework infused with preservice teacher education positively affects teachers' attitudes and sense of efficacy toward teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students" (p. 172). Additionally, strategically designed coursework could help alter preservice teachers' implicit biases about the academic abilities of diverse students, as well as build their confidence and self-efficacy toward implementing culturally relevant pedagogy. Notably, as Groulx and Silva (2010) highlighted, "[m]any teachers enter school settings unaware of the degree to which their lack of cultural understanding can lead to lower expectations and miscommunication" (p. 3). They contended that educator preparation programs should prepare teachers to be socially just. Thus, preservice teachers should not only learn culturally relevant teaching practices, but also implement them during student teaching and have ongoing, long-lasting support upon entering the profession.

Walker (2011), applied Ladson-Billings' (1995a) framework for culturally relevant teaching to analyze teachers' perceptions of African American students. As the study revealed, developing students' academic achievement was the most prevalent demonstration of culturally relevant teaching practices while the other tenants still needed development. Moreover, preservice teachers need opportunities to work with diverse

student populations and practicing teachers need supportive administrators who prioritize culturally competent professional development. Likewise, teachers need to engage with the communities they serve (e.g. neighborhood walks) and develop their practice beyond focusing solely on academic achievement as this "does not automatically result in equity practices" (Walker, 2011. p. 578).

Furthermore, Walker (2011) illustrated that deficit thinking labels "poor minority students and their families as disadvantaged" (p. 577). Deficit thinking also negatively characterizes families by implying that parents are uninvolved, lack interest in their students' education, and that the families' lifestyles are detrimental to student success. Often, public school teachers typically operate from the perspective of a deficit thinking while reviewing the achievement issues of students of color.

While deficit thinking is pervasive in public schools, false empathy also hinders teachers' practice. Warren and Hotchkins (2015, p. 267) defined false empathy as,

> An individual's tendency to think, believe, and act as if he or she possesses more empathy than what can be personally confirmed or validated by: (a) the beneficiaries of the empathetic response, or (b) positive outcomes resulting from the individual's application of empathy in social relationships.

Using critical race lens to unmask the subtleties of racist ideology in the conception and application of empathy among teachers, the study found that while most of the White female teachers considered themselves empathetic, the results proved otherwise. Their false empathy, or belief that they knew what was best for others, centered on Whiteness and undermined their ability to be authentic allies. The White female participants "believed that empathy was a necessary disposition for teaching Black children, and

Black males more specifically" (Warren & Hotchkins, 2015, p. 279). Although, their false empathy led them to believe they could fix students, it revealed their lack of cultural competence.

Disrupting deficit thinking is an important and demanding undertaking; however, it is not impossible. Utt and Tochluk (2020) proposed that while teacher preparation programs play a significant role in providing knowledge, skills, and strategies for cultural relevance, they should also internalize and apply their understanding of their racial identity. Thus, White teachers could disrupt deficit thinking and divest from Whiteness by engaging in six areas of self-work including:

- Analyzing privilege and microaggressive behavior.

- Exploring ethnic and cultural identities.

- Engaging with history of White anti-racist and multiracial struggles for justice.

- Developing intersectional identity.

- Building White anti-racist community.

- Demonstrating accountability across race (Utt & Tochluk, 2020, pp. 130-131).

Moreover, Utt and Tochluk (2020) explained that White teachers should reflect and interrogate how their identities inform their practice. This aspect includes examining curricular design, classroom management, instruction, discipline, and grading among others. Indeed, White teachers should participate in transforming education by encouraging people of color to pursue careers in education.

Research about culturally relevant teaching practices generally focused on the voices and perspectives of preservice and practicing teachers. Rarely did researchers investigate the extent to which students felt like their teachers were culturally relevant.

Howard (2001) conducted a study on students' perceptions, viewpoints, and interpretations of their schooling experience. The study found that more and more students continue to fall through the academic cracks. Markedly, most of these students not only come from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds, but also low-income backgrounds. Nonetheless, their voices should be included in the conversation about the efficacy of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Further to his study, Howard (2001) argued that the students prefer teachers who demonstrate care and concern. Even if the teachers were stern, more often, students recognized that it was because the educators cared about their academic success. The students were able to discern between teachers who cared from those who did not. Additionally, learners found teachers whose classrooms mimicked home or community environments as favorable. Morning circles, routines and mannerisms that reminded students of family members helped them feel safe to explore learning. Finally, the students enjoyed teachers who made learning fun, used emotion, theatrics, and personalization of tasks. Consequently, the students identified culturally relevant teachers as those who emphasized academic growth, exhibited care, fostered classroom community, and made the classroom both a fun and engaging space, consistent with the culturally relevant pedagogy tenets.

Chapter Summary

The literature underscored the need for continued research in this area, exploring new strategies for teacher training, addressing the evolving needs of diverse educator populations, addressing the voices of the underserved and oppressed educators, and assessing the long-term impact of culturally relevant pedagogy on students and society.

Research also highlighted the importance of teacher preparation and professional development in equipping educators with the skills and knowledge to implement culturally relevant pedagogy effectively. In-service training, workshops, and ongoing support are crucial for helping teachers incorporate diverse perspectives into their teaching practices. Chapter 3 covers the methodology of the study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study was anchored on narrative analysis, a qualitative research method that focuses on the systematic examination and interpretation of narratives or stories. The narrative analysis approach was used to gather and examine narratives of Black novice teachers' cultural identity, upbringing, K-12 experiences, and teacher preparation/process. This was necessary in understanding not only the perceptions of Black novice teachers on their preparedness as culturally relevant practitioners, but also their plight navigating the American educational system. Using these stories to illuminate barriers to culturally relevant pedagogy as Black educators and how they continue to seek the dream provided reoccurring patterns of strategies for developing culturally relevant practitioners. In this chapter the rationale for choosing this methodology and methods used to conduct this qualitative research is explained. The chapter starts with a rationale of the research design, followed by researchers' positionalities, and roles as researchers. Next, entails an outline of how participants were identified and an explanation of the data collection and analysis process.

Rationale

This study examined the integration of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) by Black novice teachers in diverse classrooms, focusing on their pedagogical strategies that reflect and affirm the cultural backgrounds of their students. The study addressed a critical gap in existing literature by exploring the unique experiences of Black novice teachers through their cultural lenses, aiming to understand their paths towards implementing CRP amidst the challenges and successes they encounter. The significance of this research is underscored by persistent educational disparities affecting students of

color and the lack of diversity within the teaching workforce. By investigating the

backgrounds, experiences, and pedagogical approaches of Black novice teachers, this

study contributes to the discourse on enhancing teacher preparation programs for

fostering educational equity and culturally relevant teaching practices.

Employing thematic narrative analysis, this research methodologically aligns with

the study's objectives by examining the lived experiences of Black novice teachers.

According to Josselson and Hammack (2021), narrative analysis allows researchers to not

only explore, but also conceptualize human experience through an in-depth investigation

of the meanings that individuals assign to their experiences. Thus, this approach

facilitated a deeper understanding of how cultural identities, upbringing, and teacher

preparation experiences influence the practice of CRP.

The rationale for this dissertation is further justified by the potential implications

of its findings, which aim to inform and improve teacher preparation programs by

integrating CRP principles more explicitly. This study not only fills a significant gap in

the literature, but also contributes to the broader discourse on educational equity,

providing valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers alike.

Examining Researcher Bias

Qualitative researchers are considered the "primary instrument" (Xu & Storr,

2012, p. 1), meaning they are the source of data collection as opposed to an experiment or

survey. From the research design to the selection of participants, collection of raw data to

its nuanced analysis, and interpretation, researchers' responsibilities are vast and varied.

Given the background of the researchers in in this study is education, it enriched their

perspectives, while remaining acutely aware of the potential biases they might have.

However, this dissertation acknowledged the subjective nature of qualitative research and employed strategies to mitigate researcher bias (Schensul, 2012). For instance, through continuous reflexivity, the researchers strived to ensure that their voices amplified, rather than overshadowed, the narratives of the study participants (Beaudry & Miller, 2016; Tracy, 2010).

Furthermore, memoing and reflective journaling were integral throughout the data collection and analysis phases, allowing for the identification and examination of preconceptions and biases. Regular discussions within the research team about emerging themes and data saturation facilitated a critical examination of the analysis process, ensuring themes derived were authentically grounded on participant the collected data rather than researchers' assumptions. This process aligns with the principles of reflexivity, emphasizing the importance of continually reflecting on one's influence on the research and the research's influence on oneself. Adhering to these strategies helped to maintain the integrity and trustworthiness of the study by ensuring that findings were a true representation of the data (Saunders et al., 2023). Each researcher's positionality is as follows:

Nana Becoat

As a qualitative researcher, this topic is important for a variety of reasons. Some of the most salient being the horror stories I have heard from family and friends of color about their educational experiences. Additionally, the pain that I often felt as a Black student in courses that never centered voices of color; the trauma I have seen teachers inflict on students from underserved and underrepresented communities; and, the inadequate training I received prior to entering my own classroom made this study topic

imperative to me. Additionally, my position as a high school English educator animates my research as it works to offer insight into the culturally relevant theories and practices of novice teachers.

Michelle Cooley

I recognize that "the term positionality both describes an individual's worldview and the position they adopt about a research task and its social and political context" (Holmes, 2020, p.1). I acknowledge that because of my lens as a Black woman I have preconceived notions about culturally relevant pedagogy and one's ability to provide such educational experiences for the students they serve. My positions as a teacher, instructional coach, assistant principal, and principal have helped to expand my desire to and interest in learning more about this topic and how it impacts education as a whole. I am however, committed to maintaining reflexivity throughout this study and I continuously reflect on my positionality and its potential impact on the research.

Christina Grove

In qualitative research, researcher reflexivity is considered integral to establishing the trustworthiness of a study (Beaudry & Miller, 2016; Tracy, 2010). Accordingly, I acknowledge my lens as a Black, cis-gendered, heterosexual woman educator with secondary-level experience, and as a current doctoral student. My certifications in social science and language arts, as well as my current role in working with new teachers around culturally and linguistically responsive practices informs my interest in and understanding of this topic. This lens also impacts how I view collecting and exploring counternarratives as a valid research method.

Pablo Ramos Jr.

As a researcher with a profound commitment to education, my experiences as a Black male educator have significantly influenced my perspectives on culturally relevant pedagogy. Having grown up in diverse, multicultural settings, I have firsthand knowledge of the challenges and opportunities presented by varied educational environments. My commitment to promoting equity in education drives my research, and I constantly reflect on my own biases and experiences to ensure the authenticity of my contributions.

Research Design

The objectives of this study were to record Black novice teachers' narratives regarding their lived experiences, educator preparation programs/processes, and their first years of teaching. Thematic narrative analysis was used to analyze emerging themes about novice teachers' implementation of culturally relevant teaching practices. Josselson and Hammack (2021) stated that narrative analysis focuses on narrative truth versus historical truth. This method does not question the "accuracy" of the participants' recollection of the events, but how the participants construct meaning of the events. Thus, the researchers adhered to the interpretivist methods as they gained deeper insight into the measures that novice teachers used to self-analyze. Additionally, interpretivism "is more sensitive towards individual meanings and contributions…[and] assumes that reality is subjective and can differ considering different individuals" (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020, p. 42). Hence, this method helped the researchers analyze the similarities and differences between the novice teachers' reflections in a more robust manner.

Each participant's responses reflected the perceived reality of their preparedness and did not affect the other participants' responses. This study began with a conceptual

question ("Big Q") that provides the framework for the research, then the construction of

questions about experience ("little q") that could be a launching point for interviews

(Josselson, 2013). The conceptual question was derived from the scholarly literature and

contributed to the knowledge in the study's field. The *little q* directed the participant to

the aspect(s) of their lives that the researchers wished to learn about. It also invited the

respondents to describe in detail—tell the story of—either particular events or a

significant aspect or time of life (e.g., a turning point) or to narrate an entire life story.

The conceptual question of this study was *How do novice teachers (years 1-5) become*

culturally relevant practitioners? The question was grounded in the conceptual

framework of ontology and epistemology of culturally relevant pedagogy. It led to the

inquiry about experience, which provided a "launching point for interviews" (Josselson &

Hammock, 2021, p.8). For this study, the question about experience was *How do novice*

teachers' cultural identities, upbringing, K-12 experience, and teacher preparation

program/process impact their practice of culturally relevant pedagogy?

Selecting Participants

In narrative analysis, the intent is to examine the meaning making process of the

participants, thereby making purposeful sampling necessary (Creswell & Guetterman,

2019; Josselson & Hammack, 2021). The research participants in this study were Black

novice K-12 teachers within their first five years of being the teacher of record in their

classrooms. The researchers utilized social media and personal networks to share a

recruitment flier that contained a link to a selection criteria survey. Additionally, the

researchers contacted teachers within the various school districts in which they were

employed. The potential participants were made aware that this study was not connected

to their work in their school district and thus participation was voluntary. Recruitment

efforts yielded nine volunteers who completed the initial selection criteria survey. To

secure more gender diversity in the volunteers, the researchers issued personal invitations

to Black male educators in their personal or professional circles. This yielded no further

participants. Upon completing the survey, the researchers contacted volunteers who met

the study criteria via email to schedule an interview and complete a demographics survey.

The potential participants were provided with the informed consent form (Appendix B).

Three Black novice teachers scheduled interviews with the researchers. These

interviews were conducted over Zoom to provide the participants with privacy and the

convenience of being interviewed at a location of their choosing, while also providing the

researchers with the ability to record the interviews and utilize transcription technology.

All three volunteers participated in the study over the course of two individual interviews

each. Two of those participants also engaged in a focus group discussion. In narrative

analysis, the number of participants necessary to reach saturation, or the point in which

no new data are produced, varies (Josselson & Hammack, 2019). The researchers found

that the number of participants and interviews allowed for reaching saturation or the

space of redundancy in the data and the emergence of no new themes.

Table 1 entails the demographic information of the participants including

ethnicity, gender, years of service, content area, and the interviews in which they

participated. The absence of male and non-gender conforming participants, as well as

participants who completed traditional educator preparation programs has potential data

implications later discussed in the chapter. While data from those groups would have

enriched the study, there also exists a gap in research focused on the group represented in

this study. Additionally, as research shows that some areas are seeing increasing numbers

of new teachers matriculating though alternative certification programs, and that those

same new teachers are more likely to teach in high need schools, namely schools with

large numbers of racially minoritized and low-income students, this particular group of

participants allows this study to add to the discussion of the current shifts in the

educational landscape (Callahan & Brantlinger, 2023; Redding & Smith, 2019).

Table 1

Black Novice Teacher Journey Toward Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Participant Pseudonym	Ethnicity	Gender	Educator Preparation Program	Years of Service	Grade Level and Content Area	Second Interview	Focus Group
Mary H.	Black/ Biracial	F	Non-traditional	1	Secondary Dance	Yes	Yes
Katherine L.	Black	F	Non-traditional	3	Secondary Career and Technical Education	Yes	No
Rue C.	Black	F	Non-traditional	5	Elementary Education	Yes	Yes

Data Collection

This research relied on the data collected, primarily through in-depth, semi-

structured interviews. The data was collected in three stages through three distinct

methods. As a pre-screener for the participants, their demographic information was

gathered through a Google form survey. The survey resembled a more traditional

collection of data, closed ended questions with a distinct start and finish. Next,

information was disaggregated and two narrative interviews with each of the participants

chosen to continue with the research were conducted. Riessman (2008) stated that

narrative interview requires a change in the interviewer's approach. Therefore, the

interviewers assumed the position of active members in the conversation rather than the

facilitator of a question answer session. Lastly, the participants engaged in a focus group

interview that included the participants from the survey and initial interview phase.

Phase one was the survey in which the participants received a Google form aimed

to capture the participants' cultural identities, educational experiences, and professional

identities in relation to culturally relevant pedagogy. Josselson and Hammock (2021)

presented that "narrative research questions tend to focus on processes– individual,

developmental, and sociocultural–that reflect how experience is constructed both

internally and externally" (p. 18). The participants were asked to answer the following

demographic questions: (1) What is your field of study? (2) Briefly describe your

educational background from pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade? (3) List what

extracurricular/school programs you participated in? (4) How long have you been a

teacher? (5) What was your certification process? (6) Rate the type of student you were?

(7) How valued was education in your household? (8) Overall, rate your enjoyment of K-

12 school experience? All questions allowed the participant the option to reply with

prefer not to say. The researchers were able to use this information to develop open

ended questions to expand upon how the participants' identities shaped how they

approach the classroom.

At the end of the demographic survey participants were asked to provide a

pseudonym to provide a level of confidentiality. The interviews were captured using

Zoom, a teleconferencing platform, which also allowed the researchers to create a digital

recording to preserve the participants' precise responses for data analysis. These recorded

interviews were securely stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's laptop to

ensure confidentiality and privacy. Subsequently, an external transcriber reviewed and

formatted the audio interviews for accuracy (See Appendix C), after having committed to a confidentiality agreement (See Appendix D).

Phase two consisted of two one-on-one semi-structured interviews with the participants. Before the researchers recorded the conversations, they made the participant aware of the purpose of the study and reviewed the informed consent form (Appendix B), which outlined how privacy would be honored, norms of the interview and finally, asked permission to record the conversations. Once participants provided consent the researchers hit record for the digital platform and also the digital transcriber, Parrot AI. Parrot AI is a password-protected transcription platform that the researchers utilized in addition to the live transcriber to ensure that all elements of the interviews were captured. Each participant was aware of the purpose of Parrot AI and agreed to allow the platform to record and transcribe. These conversations lasting for between 45 to 60 minutes, were designed to be immersive experiences, conducted in environments where participants felt at ease. Riessman (2008, p. 31) stated that:

> All narratives are, in a fundamental sense, co-constructed. The audience, whether physically present or not, exerts a crucial influence on what can and cannot be said, how things should be expressed, what can be taken for granted, what needs explaining, and so on. We now recognize that the personal account, in research interviews, which has traditionally been seen as the expression of a single subjectivity, is in fact always a co-construction.

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), conducting interviews for research is a methodical task that one could acquire proficiency in. Hence, the researchers ensured the selection of an interview format that could produce optimal findings for the research.

Semi-structured interviews enabled researchers to extract targeted information from all participants while adapting to emerging worldviews and new ideas on the topic. This format facilitated a dynamic exchange, accommodating both planned inquiries and responsiveness to the evolving perspectives of the respondents.

During the initial semi-structured interview, the researchers formulated a single statement for all participants to address: "We are looking to understand how Black novice teachers become culturally relevant practitioners. Tell us how your cultural identities, upbringing, as well as your K-12 experience impact your practice of culturally relevant pedagogy." During the interviews, the researchers took anecdotal notes to allow for follow up questions for an in depth understanding of their perceptions and experiences. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) stated that semi-structured interviews approach enables researchers to adapt to the current context, respond to the evolving worldview of respondents, and consider new ideas on the topic. The flexibility of this format facilitated dynamic interactions, ensuring the exploration of emerging perspectives and incorporation of novel insights as they arose during the research process.

The second semi-structured interview took on the same approach as the first, but all participants were asked a different opening statement from the first one: "We are looking to understand how Black novice teachers become culturally relevant practitioners. Tell us how your teacher preparation program/process and current teaching experiences impact your practice of culturally relevant pedagogy." The statements were strategically placed in different interviews so that the researchers had a timeline of each narrative. This aspect permitted the researchers to pre-examine the transcript of the initial interviews to assess whether saturation had been achieved (Josselson & Hammack,

2021). At the end of each audio-recorded interview, participants were invited to share any

additional thoughts or details they wished to include to enrich their narrative.

Phase three was one focus group interview in which all three participants were

invited to answer a list of pre-planned questions. Due to the intentionality and design of

the interview, this conversation was done as a virtual focus group. Merriam and Tisdell

(2015) highlighted that the distinctive feature of focus group research is the interactive

discourse for data generation, yielding unique insights unattainable in individual

interviews. Group participants exchange and refine their perspectives based on shared

views, fostering a dynamic exchange of ideas. During the conversation the researchers

took notes on the interactions as well as the responses to the initial question or statement.

The researchers then asked follow-up questions or sought clarification about a specific

topic. Interviews continued until it seemed no new information was forthcoming, or

participants indicated they had no further contributions to make (Creswell & Guetterman,

2019; Josselson & Hammack, 2021).

After each phase of the data collection was completed, the researchers were able

to reconvene to review all the information as a team. The data from the findings are

shared in Chapter 4. The discussion on the findings and reflexivity of each researchers

are revealed in Chapter 5.

Data Analysis

Narrative analysis, as detailed by Josselson and Hammack (2021) was chosen for

analyzing the data. This methodological choice, rooted in the systematic examination and

interpretation of narratives, allowed the researchers to delve deep into the stories,

experiences, and perspectives shared by the novice teachers. By focusing on the

sequence, context, and inherent meanings within their narratives, the researchers aimed to unearth patterns, themes, and structures that define their experiences. The iterative process, which involves multiple readings and extensive annotations was complemented by meticulous thematic exploration, providing a multi-dimensional view of the participants' journey as educators.

The researchers' education field is characterized by extreme diversity and complexity. There is no single way to do narrative research, just as there is no single definition of narrative (Riessman, 2008). Analyzing data entails arranging information to effectively convey the acquired knowledge to others (Hatch, 2002). However, Riessman (2008) cautioned researchers to focus their attention on *what* is said rather than *how*, *to whom*, or *for what purposes*. Thematic narrative analysis allowed the researchers to use this process in both one-on-one interviews, as well as the focus group interviews. During analysis, anonymity and confidentiality were maintained, ensuring there were no identifiable markers within the analysis. The researchers used the work of Josselson and Hammack (2021) to aide them in the analysis process:

1. Initial review: Each researcher independently analyzed the audio recordings alongside transcriptions, annotating preliminary thoughts and ideas.

2. Collaborative analysis: The research team collectively examined transcripts systematically, constructing narrative plots (refer to Appendix E) and identifying overarching themes.

3. Validation and citation: The team collectively conducted a thorough transcript review, scrutinizing theme validity and incorporating in-text citations to substantiate identified themes.

4. Reading and discussing the focus group interview as a research team.

After the interviews were complete, the audio file along with the Parrot AI transcript were sent to the transcriptionist for review and formatting. This method was employed to preserve the integrity of the transcript, safeguard against researcher bias, and identify any transcription errors. The transcripts were subsequently placed in a folder secured with a password. Each researcher independently engaged with the interviews, listening attentively, forming impressions of the data, and identifying overarching patterns. These thoughts were written in the researchers interview journals by hand.

Next, the team reviewed each transcript and outlined the participants narrative plots. Developing the narrative plots was crucial as it helped in organizing and visualizing the temporal structure of events, relationships, and emotions within each narrative. This visual representation aided the researchers in identifying key turning points, themes, and patterns, enabling a more nuanced interpretation of the narrative data. Additionally, creating a narrative plot assisted in conveying findings effectively, making research outcomes more accessible and compelling to a wider audience. This process also allowed the researchers to immerse themselves with the narratives, becoming familiar with their stories and therefore notice rising themes or patterns throughout the participants. This approach also enabled the researchers to deeply engage with the narratives, familiarizing themselves with the stories and thereby, discerning emerging themes or patterns across participants.

On the third review of the transcripts, the researchers reviewed the initial themes and checked them for validity and saturation. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) defined saturation as the point where no new information emerges, and the themes identified are

sufficiently comprehensive to address research inquiries, encompassing subsequent data

collection. Themes, along with in-text citations, were organized in a thematic analysis

table. An instance includes a theme capturing participants' experiences of sanctuary in

educational spaces, accompanied by codes denoting their positive or negative encounters.

This method facilitated a comprehensive exploration of recurring patterns and enriched

the understanding of the participants' diverse experiences within the study.

During the final stage of the data analysis, the researchers undertook a

comprehensive examination of the focus group transcript, following the same

transcription procedures employed for the individual interviews. Notably, findings

revealed that only two out of the three study participants engaged in the focus group

interview. A thorough line-by-line review of the transcripts indicated a lack of substantial

interaction between the two participants present, and no new information emerged to

contribute to the existing findings. Consequently, the focus group interviews did not

warrant additional readings, as their content did not significantly enrich or alter the

established outcomes and the researcher's reached saturation.

Ethical Issues and Trustworthiness

Tracy (2010) emphasized that establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research

is essential. This study received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for video

recording and transcription of two individual interviews for each participant, as well as

focus group discussion with all participants. Ensuring the well-being, privacy, and

informed consent of participants is fundamental to maintaining the integrity of the

research process (Dilshad & Latif, 2013; Tracy, 2010). Prior to the collection of data,

each participant received a written informed consent form (Appendix B) and recorded

their assent. Each participant was also asked to provide a pseudonym for privacy

purposes. Additionally, the transcriber signed a confidentiality agreement, Transcriber's

Pledge to Confidentiality, stating they would not share any information the recordings

with anyone except the primary researchers of this project. Recorded and technology-

generated transcript files were sent to the transcription service with no participant names

attached to the file names.

All research data, which includes digital survey and recordings data, were stored

in secure files on the researchers' password-protected laptops. All digital recordings were

destroyed once transcribed and reviewed. Any potentially identifying information was

redacted from transcripts and data analysis documents shared in the appendix of this

dissertation. Because two of the participants worked in the same school districts of two of

the researchers, it was important to articulate to both participants that their involvement

with the study would not be disclosed to their school districts and they were to participate

in the study voluntarily.

Issues of Validity and Reliability

In thematic narrative analysis, ensuring validity involves meticulously aligning

themes with the data to authentically represent participants' experiences, echoing the

phenomenological emphasis on data-supported themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The

researchers collected data through interviews, focusing on the lived experiences of the

participants. Through careful analysis, they identified recurring patterns or themes, such

as challenges faced. The validity in this context was achieved by ensuring such themes

were directly supported by participants' quotes and narratives, demonstrating a clear

connection between the data collected and the themes derived. The process is inherently

interpretive, suggesting multiple valid interpretations exist, highlighting the qualitative

research's subjective nature (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Reliability is fostered through consensus among researchers that identified themes

genuinely reflect the essence of participants' narratives (Nowell et al., 2017). The

research team conducted interviews with educators across various departments. After

analyzing the interview transcripts separately, they convened to review and correlate their

observations, aiming to pinpoint shared themes. Through detailed discussions, the

researchers reached a consensus on emerging themes, ensuring they genuinely reflected

the essence of participants' narratives. This collaborative approach enhances the

reliability of the findings, as it verifies that the identified themes are consistently

observed and agreed upon by multiple researchers. Incorporating participant feedback on

thematic structures further solidifies the study's rigor and accuracy, ensuring findings

resonate with participants' experiences (Tobin & Begley, 2004). While member checking

is a practice in some qualitative studies, it is not a standard practice in narrative analysis

because the researcher checks the accuracy of the transcript against the recording

(Josselson & Hammack, 2021). This methodological approach underscores the

importance of reflexivity, transparency, and methodological coherence in establishing

trustworthiness in thematic analysis.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 outlines the rationale for choosing thematic narrative analysis as the

tradition for this study. Three participants volunteered and took part in the study. Data

was collected through demographic survey, semi-structured interviews, and a single focus

group. The data interviews data collection was conducted through Zoom platform.

Narrative analysis was selected and applied to this study during data analysis. Chapter 4

presents the findings of this study.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to understand how Black novice teachers become culturally relevant practitioners through the examination of their cultural identities, upbringing, elementary and secondary experiences, and teacher preparation program/process. This chapter presents the findings from the thematic narrative analysis study that explored the culturally relevant epistemological and ontological paradigms of Black novice teachers. The researchers sought to gather comprehensive data to determine how the novice teachers' cultural identities, upbringing, K-12 experiences, and teacher preparation programs impact their practice of culturally relevant pedagogy. The researchers interviewed three Black novice teachers from a major metropolitan area whose teaching experience ranges from one to five years. Each novice teacher participated in two recorded interviews with the researchers. Additionally, two of the three participants engaged in a focus group discussion.

Thematic Narrative Analysis

The researchers used a thematic narrative analysis method to analyze all seven transcripts. Thematic narrative analysis typically emphasizes understanding the underlying human experiences within narratives in a particular context (Riessman, 2008). After collaboratively analyzing the transcripts, the researchers determined the data collected achieved saturation (Josselson & Hammack, 2021). After attaining saturation, the researchers distilled the information into five emergent themes that represented the ideas that arose across all seven transcripts. The themes are: K-16 racialized trauma, racial awakening and awareness, the sanctuary of educational and familial spaces, the impact of professional development, and seeking the dream.

In this chapter, the findings are organized by the salient themes as well as the *loci classici* identified across the interviews with all three novice teachers. Theme one illustrates how all three teachers endured racialized trauma during their K-16 educational careers. Theme two explores their experiences with racial awakening and awareness. The third theme examines the significance of sanctuary throughout their education. Theme four probes the role of professional development both prior to and during their careers. Finally, the fifth theme delves into seeking the dream as a shared pathway guiding their journeys toward implementing culturally relevant pedagogy.

Theme I: K-16 Racialized Trauma

For each Black novice educator, the manifestation of K-16 racialized trauma is multifaceted and extensive. Whether during elementary, middle, or high school, all three participants shared stories of overt and covert racism perpetrated by the adults entrusted with their education and well-being. The participants recalled instances of discrimination, marginalization, and psychological distress within their educational institutions, which led to feelings of isolation and loneliness. In response to the racialized trauma, each participant turned to their families to seek solace and make meaning of the situations. The following excerpts illustrate the participants' varied experiences with K-16 racialized trauma. While their experiences differ, their reactions to the trauma are quite similar.

Feelings of Isolation and Loneliness

Each respondent related experiencing feelings of isolation and loneliness as a result of the marginalization and discrimination that occurred during their K-16 education. Katherine L. described attending predominantly White schools during her K-8

educational career. Despite transitioning to a more diverse high school, she describes the isolation she felt in her new space. She said,

> So, I was definitely not accepted in high school–at least by the Black students. So, at the time, that high school was about…50 Black, 50 white, no maybe 48 percent Black and we'll say about 2% Hispanic. No, I was accepted by the Black students because I talked different. I dressed different. I looked different. My hair is different. My statue [sic] was different. My demeanor was different. So, I really didn't fit in there either.

Mary H. also recalled the feelings of isolation she experienced after transitioning to her new high school. According to her,

> I was quiet for the most part. I didn't go into a classroom out and proud about myself and my identity or things I had to say. I mostly like head down try to get my work done and it makes me sad for when I was struggling in school because I didn't know how to speak up or advocate for myself.

Experiences with Overt and Covert Racism

The participants shared explicit examples of experiencing both overt and covert racism from teachers, administrators, and other adults throughout their education. Katherine L. shared the following anecdote:

> But I really didn't start feeling that you're not welcomed here until around seventh or eighth grade when my, at the time, Caucasian principal was killed by a Black man. He was robbed. So, then it became the–you're guilty by association.
>
> Likewise, Katherine L., continued to expand on this moment to illustrate how she

was treated differently by the adults at the school. Her response denotes the guilty by

association treatment due to the racial background of the man who murdered their principal. She stated, "It was a shift made in the classroom and a shift made from the parents…I could sense come here, honey, you know you don't have to play with her. Go play with such and such."

After spending K-8 and part of high school in a racially diverse district where she felt at sense of safety and belonging, Mary H. described the overt racism she experienced on her first day at her new predominantly white high school. She shared that,

> I had a teacher say something not very nice to me. And, he said it, like, jokingly, but I went to walk into this personal finance class and he stops me at the door. I'm thinking, oh, it's because I'm new. He maybe just wants to introduce me. He stops me and he goes, Well, you can't come in. I was like, Oh, ok, I think this is my class. He's like, No, no, no. We're at [redacted high school] limit for amount of colored kids in a class. I was just like, oh, but I'm not that old. It was 2012, 13 maybe when I moved there. I joked with him back in order to not feel so confronted. I looked in the class and there's another biracial kid in there. I was like, Well, actually we make one, and I walked past him and sat down.

Rue C. detailed the overt racism she encountered at the hands of her middle school principal.

> I think in middle school we had a principal that we said he was prejudiced, but we were–we meaning all Black students–sat at a lunch table together knowing that we weren't supposed to. He came up to our table and said distinctively, I don't think I assigned an all-Black table. Just at the instance, all of us were just jaw-dropping in awe.

Family Response to Racialized Trauma

Familial responses to the incidents of racialized trauma are significant and played a critical role in molding the participants' coping mechanisms. Mary H. spoke about the candid conversations she had with her brothers about the racist treatment she received at their new high school and they advise they offered her. She responded,

It gave me an opportunity to have that conversation at home with my brothers first and be like How are you feeling? What are you doing at school?. They maybe didn't have some of the same experiences as me, but they've had their own set of really identifying experiences. They've been like this is where we are, this is the area we live in now, and these are the precautions potentially that we have to take.

Following the racist remarks from her middle school principal, Rue C. explained both her family and community's response:

Just going home–I remember going home just talking to my mom about I just can't believe he would say that. And, she said, Well, why not? And, I'm like, you know, there's things that you would think people would think people would say to colleagues or not to students. She said, Well, Rue, you're right, you are Black...The next day, of course, parents went to the school. They wanted to talk to school boards. Of course, there were channel two news and channel four news. Of course, parents were talking about how that affected kids. But, I wondered why my mom never went. I remember talking to her like, you're not gonna take off work and go and talk about it? She told me, You know, this is what racism is. This is what prejudice is and you're gonna get up every day and go to that school. You're still going to. I'm still gonna hold you to these expectations and these

responsibilities. You're still gonna sit in that classroom and you're gonna do the best that you can do and then we'll go from there.

Impact on Mental Health and Well-being

The cumulative effect of K-16 Racialized Trauma on participants' mental health and well-being is complicated. As a result of their traumatic experiences, feelings of low self-esteem and anxiety emerged. After transferring to a new school, Katherine, L. felt ostracized and lonely. She said the following: "I cried every day that I had to go".

Mary H. described that she elected to avoid the isolation she experienced at her new high school by removing herself from the space:

And when I went to [school name redacted], it was not that at all. Most times I didn't even eat in the cafeteria because it was A, like, pretty segregated, B very clicky. And so I couldn't, like, it wasn't really doable to find, as a new kid, a place to sit. So I remember I took a business internship…which meant that I only had to stay at school through fifth or fourth or fifth hour. And then I could leave to go to work halfway through the day. And that was the compromise that I made with myself to get myself through high school at that point.

Following the racist treatment at her middle school, Rue C. disclosed that it impacted her self-esteem and identity. She said,

That's when I think, at that moment, I really knew I was Black. I felt like I knew I was different. And, I wanted to be white at the time. I had white friends, but I wanted to talk like them. I wanted to be like them so that I can erase what other people's perception of all-Black table, or what other people's perception of being Black was.

Theme II: Racial Awareness and Awakening

The second theme emerged in two domains as all three participants articulated heightened racial awareness and awakening as a result of K-16 racialized trauma. Participants shared memories of specific instances in their lives where the actions or words of teachers, administrators or other adults caused them to become acutely aware of their Black identities. In many cases, the racialized traumas that prompted the racial awareness and awakening ultimately introduced feelings of shame, isolation, low self-esteem, and anxiety. Alternatively, the participants also recalled how embracing their Black identities fueled their journeys of self-discovery, self-assurance, and belonging.

Participants described varying degrees of family awareness and engagement regarding the racial issues that animated their awareness and awakening. Whereas two individuals described open and supportive conversations with their parents about race, the other recounted a lack of discussion with the parent, but ongoing conversations about race with an older sibling. Their critical reflections were key as they explored their cultural heritages and confronted the societal messages about race. The following excerpts illustrate the participants' varied experiences with Racialized Awareness and Awakening.

School Environment

Each participant chronicled racial instances from their K-16 educational environments that often prompted their racial awareness and awakening. Once again, the murder of Katherine L.'s principal prompted her to grapple with racial issues. In the following quote, she revealed how this moment caused her to become acutely aware of her racial identity. "I don't think I really saw color until I was maybe around seventh or

eighth grade and I know that's, for some, taboo to say. But, I really wasn't–racism really didn't strike me until then."

      For Mary H., racial awareness and awakening became much more prevalent after transitioning from a racial diverse to a predominantly white school. As she stated,

> When we moved to [redacted high school], that was where I really became aware of my race–aware of the person I chose to be in the room and how I was perceived. That's a really impressionable age to become aware of those things because I realized I was a minority and then I had this turn with it within one year where I was like, no, I'm gonna be proud of the person I am.

Additionally, Mary H. unwrapped her racial awareness in other key spaces. In this comment, she explored her racial awareness in her dance studio. She said,

> I've grown up where I was always the minority in the room. I was always not necessarily the image of what people were seeking out as far as what a dancer looks like. So, I've always grown up trying to fight for my spot. I think that's always been my mindset walking into those learning spaces. I have to prove myself. I really have to show up here no matter how qualified I am.

      In another section of the narrative, Mary H. discussed that her new environment forced her to adopt a new racial identity in order to feel accepted and how her years in dance prepared her to navigate racially homogeneous spaces. She stated that,

> I had to get comfortable with calling myself biracial even though I may have identified as Black. And, get comfortable with being the only one sometimes and not being able to connect with people there. It became easy because I grew up in dance, so there's not very many people that look like me in my dance studio or in

dance period. So, I've never been super uncomfortable around large groups of

people who don't look like me or don't share commonalities with how I would

identify myself. But, when it's called out so abruptly it kind of makes me feel like

I have to be defensive about it.

As a result of the interaction in the cafeteria with her principal, Rue C. described

the awareness that arose and her desire to begin learning more about her racial identity

and history. She responded,

At that moment, I really knew I was Black. I felt like I knew I was different…And

it wasn't until high school that I was okay with who I was and really wanted to

learn who am I? Where do we come from? Just the history because you didn't get

it in the history books…So I had to start making some strides myself and do some

internal searching.

Family Awareness/Lack of Awareness

For each participant the extent of their family's response to the racialized trauma

varied. The diversity of familial response and engagement illuminates the complex

interplay that exists between family dynamics and the participants' development of their

racial consciousness. Katherine L.'s experience with the racist treatment by the room

parents at her school caused her to recall the lesson her family gave her about dealing

with such occasions. She shared, "But, you know, I learned at an early age from my

household you're there to get an education, not really much else. So you go and do your

work and be good."

In Mary H.'s family, discussions about race varied greatly. Her narratives illuminate how she either was or was not able to navigate her racial identity with her family members. For Mary H.,

> …race was never talked about in my family. Not until I brought it up in college to my mom. My mom is a Caucasian woman, so she didn't really have a lot of guidance in that area to help us or guide me and my siblings through whatever challenges we might have been going through. So, a lot of the things that I found out about my identity I had to discover on my own. I had to discover it and form opinions about who I wanted to be, how I wanted to be represented and even if that was important in the spaces that I was going to enter.

> Similar to Katherine L., Rue C.'s family emphasized the importance of education. Additionally, they ensured that their children were knowledgeable about important figures in Black history. Rue C. stated,

> You don't hear about some of the other pioneers that should be implemented in our classrooms or should be taught. So, that was taught at home. My parents taught that at home. They told us beyond people that we would hear about all the time.

Self-discovery and Belonging

The research participants reflected on their journeys of self-discovery, self-acceptance and belonging, as well as the challenges they encountered as they navigated the inner work of embracing their Black identities. Not only does Mary H.'s commentary about the lack of conversations with her mother regarding race relate to family

awareness/lack of awareness, it also highlights her journey toward self-discovery. She said,

> So, a lot of the things that I found out about my identity I had to discover on my own. I had to discover it and form opinions about who I wanted to be, how I wanted to be represented and even if that was important in the spaces that I was going to enter

Rue C. discussed that, even as an adult, her self-discovery and racial identity work continues. She responded,

> Recently, I changed schools and [it is] something very different than what I'm used to as far as classroom environment–how students look different than I do. I really struggled with that. I think it was more of me because those thoughts–those identity thoughts– popped back up in my mind of how I was going to be received. Being a minority in this situation–which I thought I had those thoughts buried years ago because now you're an adult. You went through college…But, in this situation, it seemed like everything just kind of zeroed in on me. And, although everyone was nice and they were warm and helpful–even the students–I still felt like I stuck out. So, I had to go back and talk to my mom again and rework those identity issues. I think I had to get back comfortable with me…it's amazing how you think that you're over something and it really comes back and you have to rework it.

Theme III: Sanctuary of Educational and Familial Spaces

This theme delves into the role of sanctuary for the participants. Their narratives unearthed the various spaces where they experienced sustenance, support, and refuge, as

well as spaces where there was a lack of community and belonging. According to their responses, sanctuary was found within their schools, extracurricular activities, families, and communities. Conversely, some of the same spaces were devoid of care and safety and the absence of the aforementioned exacerbated feelings of isolation and loneliness. Therefore, their responses reinforced the importance of sanctuary in educational and familial spaces.

For the participants, spaces offered community or contempt; refuge or ridicule; sustenance or scorn. Altogether, the dichotomy that often existed within the same spaces proved critical for navigating their lives and overcoming any challenges that arose while traversing complex educational landscapes. The following excerpts illustrate the emergence of sanctuary of educational and familial spaces as an essential theme.

School Environment

For the participants, their school environments were both harmful and helpful, and navigating this reality was difficult. School spaces served as crucial areas where they either did or did not find sanctuary. Classrooms and cafeterias were the key locations each participant recounted. Katherine L. recalled how one of her high school teachers offered sanctuary during her difficult high school journey. She stated, "She knew I struggled in high school. She knew I didn't wanna be there. She knew I cried every day that I had to go. I had her class first hour, so she would always set my day forth."

As for Mary H., her elementary and middle school experiences were filled with sanctuary and feelings of belonging. However, she noted how it dissipated once she moved to a new district. She shared,

…community is always important, but you don't realize how important it is until

you don't feel it. I think that my K-12 experiences when I was in [redacted school

district] –I didn't realize–you don't know what you have until it's gone. So, when

I moved districts, I all of a sudden felt not connected to the people I was attending

classes with.

Later in her narrative, Mary H. continued to explain the glaring differences between the

two districts as it relates to her feelings of community and sanctuary. As she explained,

I feel like a lot of the teachers I had in elementary school and middle school were

all very connected and it felt like a family. Maybe that's just because I spent so

many years in that one district that I grew up with the same kids and we all

traveled between elementary school, middle school, high school together…I think

the teachers leaned into the diversity aspect of our district…My mom was single

mom raising all of us…It was a lot of single parent households. And, I think that

I've never felt like that was a loss. Or, that not having two parents in a household

was a loss…then, when I moved districts…it was quite a shift.

Due to the isolation Mary H. felt at her new school, she decided to seek sanctuary

and safety on her own. She vividly recalled the need to find community. According to

her,

I think that it was isolating at first and then it pushed me to seek the community

that I wanted to be around, and connect with the people I wanted to. I was able to

do that…I had one friend and she was a year older than me and I was so

devastated when she graduated. Then it was like, ok, I'll make friends with this

one other person and I'll really confide in this one person. It became a mission of

mine to find people to connect with who I felt safe around.

Just as with Katherine L. and Mary H., Rue C.'s narrative demonstrates the

internal struggle she navigated following her principal's racist remarks. For Rue C., the

school was no longer a place of emotional safety and refuge, but one of hostility and

harm. It became a space of isolation rather than inspiration. As such, she responded,

The next day, going back into the school building and hearing the apology, and

from that, it was just 'you can't take that back' and I wondered how could I

forgive someone for saying words that–to hurt you?...I think of her [mom]

showing me pictures of people…that have went through something similar, or

even worse, and telling me, You know, they continued. I remember Ruby

Bridges. She would tell me that she continued to walk…so that showed me, at an

early age, that even though I don't feel like it, or I don't want to, and even though

it hurts, I gotta get up every day because this is what I have to do.

However, though not as prevalent during her K-12 experience, Rue C. was able to

experience sanctuary and support during college. In the following excerpt, she described

how transferring to an HBCU (Historically Black College or University) changed her

outlook. She stated,

...I did go to a college in Missouri, at HBCU, and I must say that that really

changed the trajectory of my teaching preparation time. I think leaving the first

one [university] and coming to the second HBCU really showed me that I wanted

at that time I have to teach at HBCU or I have to teach at a all Black school

because I see a lot of representation…I like the representation.

Extracurricular Activities and Organizations

For one of the participants, extracurricular activities and organizations fostered a sense of belonging and sustained sanctuary. Within those spaces, she felt accepted, valued, and respected. The community connections created sanctuary and played a significant role in her life. Mary H. recalled the refuge she found through an extracurricular leadership program and the positive impact it had on her life. According to her excerpt,

> I did the [redacted] Leadership program and I always credit them for pushing me out of my shell…I was going through so much on my own–identity seeking and…I think that [program] kept me motivated to keep seeking out the communities that I felt myself in.

Along with the leadership program, Mary H.'s dance studio offered a sense of sanctuary despite its rigid structure.

> Even though the forms of dance can be really restrictive–like right versus wrong–I think that I had a good community at the studio that I grew up in. I didn't necessarily feel as competitive as it could have.

Family and Community

The participants also found sanctuary in their familial and community relationships. Their supportive family and community networks offered the emotional support, encouragement and guidance needed to navigate the obstacles they encountered throughout their educational careers. When Mary H. experienced the racial trauma at her high school and struggled to fit in, her brothers offered sanctuary. She stated, "I was very sad, and I found community in my brother and didn't make very many friends."

Additionally, she turned to her brothers for refuge following painful racialized trauma and detailed the conversation. As she expounded "It [racist statement from a teacher] gave me an opportunity to have that conversation at home with my brothers…I remember talking with them about that."

While Mary H. only had her brothers to consult and turn to for refuge, Rue C.'s network was more expansive. In the following excerpt, she remembers the importance of family and community. That is,

> Coming from a two parent home where you have grandparents that are still alive and active in your life and being around family and people that you know, and coming to a place where you don't know anyone, you have to gravitate to those that look like you and/or sound like you or have some type of home background like you and try to befriend them…

When Rue C. experienced racial trauma at school, her family provided a safe space for her to share her feelings. They also offered guidance for navigating life as a Black person in America. The community served as a fence of protection as well. She shared,

> I remember going home just talking to my mom…She said, Well, Rue, you're right, you are Black…The next day, parents went to the school. They wanted to talk to the school boards…She [Rue's mom] told me this is what racism really is…but, you're still gonna get up every day and go to school.

Theme IV: The Impact of Professional Development

The fourth theme arose as each participant reflected on the role their educator preparation programs/processes and current teaching experience have had on their pursuit and practice of culturally relevant teaching (CRP). Their responses indicated that their

coursework and professional development opportunities offered minimal exposure to the tenets outlined by Ladson-Billings (1995b). Additionally, since all three participants matriculated through non-traditional programs, they did not have the opportunity to work with mentor-educators who are well-versed in culturally relevant teaching. The lack of exposure caused the participants to conflate social-emotional learning and trauma-informed practices with culturally relevant pedagogy. The following excerpts identify the impact of professional development.

Educator Preparation Programs/Process

The participants' responses demonstrated varied access to extensive training and coursework on culturally relevant pedagogy during their educator preparation programs and processes. While one respondent intimated that she received no training, the others described their initial introductions to the concept of culturally relevant pedagogy. Katherine L. shared her path toward certification and its absence of training in culturally relevant pedagogy. She stated,

> I didn't do the normal route to education. I actually began as a permanent sub and filtered in through CTE…I was permanently substituting because of the need of teachers. So, obtaining my certification from the state of [redacted stated] was done a little differently. I was not introduced to culturally relevant pedagogy. A lot of what some teachers may learn through four university studies, I learned on the job.

Mary H. outlined that she was first introduced to culturally relevant pedagogy while completing her master's degree. She shared,

The first time I was introduced to culturally relevant teaching strategies was

through Nyama McCarthy Brown. She teaches at Ohio State University, but a lot

of her research deals with this lens in the viewpoint of dance classrooms and how

we decenter Western concert style and not prioritize them so much.

Equally, Rue C. described the coursework she completed in her alternative educator

preparation program introduced her to culturally relevant pedagogy. According to her,

There were a lot of videos that pertain to culturally relevant as far as the

classroom. As far as the teachers, there were a lot of statistics that was embedded

within those slides that really showed that African Americans were not really as

low as their counterparts…They really spoke to the positiveness of yourself and

what to look forward to when you do get into the classroom. You will have

students that are diverse and come from any background. So, how can you get to

build relationships, foundation with them as well as their parents and be a part of

that school?... How are you going to guide those students to success? What

challenges do you have? So, there was a lot of self-assessment as well.

Workplace Professional Development

The participants' experiences with workplace professional development

communicated limited exposure to culturally relevant pedagogy. While all of the

participants engaged in professional development that supported their professional needs

and growth as educators, only one participant described receiving training specifically

aligned with culturally relevant pedagogy. Katherine L. explained that while she does

participate in professional development, she has not received effective professional

development specifically focused on culturally relevant pedagogy. She noted that it

generally focuses on trauma-informed practices. Katherine L. shared, "No, not quite. If I could think of anything–trauma–maybe some trauma related PD. But, unfortunately, the trauma related PD doesn't really help or speak to what we deal with culturally every day. So, not really."

Mary H. depicted professional development as having little to do with culturally relevant pedagogy and more of a process of mining the sessions for relevant nuggets that can be used in her practice. Additionally, she cited a focus on social-emotional learning. As such, she responded,

When I first started doing professional development through my job, I had a really hard time connecting with the material because it wasn't so black and white. I had to really dig…You have to dig through and see what's gonna apply to you, what's gonna work for your classroom…we got more into social-emotional learning. Those were the things that I really connected with…it clicks for me depending on what the content of the professional development is, but it is a lot of sorting through and trying to dig for the meaning and then transferring than to dance.

Rue C. noted that professional development offered basic information about being a culturally relevant practitioner. She stated,

We did receive professional development in that just knowing how to deal with different cultures in the classroom. I think that at first, in Missouri, it was just the basic kind…it wasn't until you start getting students from different areas around the world that that same professional development kind of smacked you in the head where now I need to pull out that paper…and refresh myself and be aware of what I say and be aware of how I teach and be aware of the language that I

use…making sure that students can hear me providing ways for all students. So, it really made me look at the whole student.

Theme V: Seeking the Dream

The final theme explores the transformative journeys each Black novice educator navigates as they endeavor to embrace the epistemological and ontological paradigms of a culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP). Their narratives are replete with evidence of various factors that inspirit their practices. The findings indicate how their life experiences prior to teaching, professional development and continuing education, classroom practices and teaching strategies, mentorships, and mindsets and reflexivity intersect as they seek the dream of being culturally relevant educators. The following excerpts illustrate the myriad ways the participants are Seeking the Dream.

Life Experiences Prior to Teaching

The participants' life experiences prior to entering education noticeably influence their quests toward embracing culturally relevant pedagogy. The narratives demonstrate how one participant's previous career and their collective K-16 educational and extracurricular experiences both inside and outside of formal settings are proving to be pivotal with regard to their culturally relevant practices. Katherine L. recounted that being from the area where she teaches and having a shared background helps her make connections with students. She said,

> I'm from the area in which I teach in. So, that helps me a lot because they see me and they say, oh, well she came from here and she worked in industry and she made it pretty far up in industry. So, it is plausible. I think giving them my

experiences in industry is helping me to show up for them and make it relevant to

them.

Katherine L. discussed that her industry background has been instrumental in helping

teach her students what to expect if they elect a career in the business field. She also

stated that she uses her experiences in her previous career to provide guidance for

students who might not attend a traditional college or university. She explained,

I think that the industry background has helped me show up as a CTE teacher just

in general because I have the background knowledge of what employers are

looking for–industry expectations–and what you need or what you should have to

get there. I think it's important to note that college–for four years– is not for

everybody. It's not for every student…So, what do we do with those students who

just want industry certification. Having this industry background has helped…by

showing my students that look like me that you don't have to go to a four year

just because I chose that avenue.

In another response, Katherine L. also shared that she enjoys bringing her

corporate background into the classroom. She said, "I bring those experiences into the

classroom because we teach those work-based skills and those soft skills…it's nice to be

able to bring that into the classroom". Similarly, Mary H. described that her dance

background inspires how she shows up in her classroom. She described how her

experiences have helped her approach her teaching style, make connections with her

students, encourage agency, and offer sanctuary. As Mary H. expounded,

Contemporary movement has this sense of I'm displaying my emotions, or I'm

being really expressive, and then coaching dancers how to get to the spaces, but

also how to safely recover from [them] wasn't something that I experienced as a young dancer. So, it's been something that I prioritize in spaces. But, in order to do that, you have to open up the floor for people to tell you about themselves if they choose to. Consent wasn't a thing when I was a kid…I think that's been important…So, we have consent-centering movement.

Mary H. recounted how she also draws on her dance and K-12 experiences as she works toward being a culturally relevant educator. She shared,

I've always grown up trying to fight for my spot. I think that's always been my mindset walking into those learning spaces…I have to show up here no matter how I feel…So, through my dance education, which is a little bit separate than my k through 12 education. But, I teach that content area. I think it all plays a role into how I show up for my students. I think that it's important that everyone gets seen and everyone is heard, and that the content focuses on us as a community. So, I focus my work and the voice of the room on the community as a whole and not necessarily the talent in the room.

Furthermore, Mary H. stated that while she was not planning to become an educator, her life experiences ultimately led her toward her current career path after she found her way back to dance and pursued an advanced degree in the art form. She explained,

I think that once I got that education myself, I was like this is something that I would really love to share with everybody…I got really hungry to teach people what I had been learning. I think that's my why for teaching: I just want everybody to feel like they can move with meaning and they can get their

message out, or their statement out, or who they are in dance. It's a really

beautiful process.

Rue C. explained that she uses her childhood experiences as part of her practice

toward becoming a culturally relevant teacher. For her, making connections between her

childhood and her students' lives is foundational for building relationships to encourage

academic success. She shared,

> They [Rue's parents] valued it [education]. They talked about it. They expected
>
> A's and B's–not even C's– in our home. They wanted us to be the best…I tell
>
> them [Rue's students] a little bit about who I am…I tell them how I was [as a]
>
> fourth grade student and what my responsibilities were and how my parents
>
> pushed me to where I am now. I talk about those small parts of why homework is
>
> important as practice. I talk about why being responsible is important in fourth
>
> grade because that is going to launch you as you go into middle school and junior
>
> high; it's gonna keep you responsible, and how that path just leads you into
>
> organization. We talk about those talks that I had at home to show them what that
>
> looks like.

Professional Development and Continuing Education

While the participants had not received extensive professional development

centered on culturally relevant pedagogy, one participant's professional development and

continuing education courses played an important role in shaping her understanding and

implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy. Mary H. outlined that she used a

conversation protocol from a building level professional development to foster

community in her classroom. As she responded,

Somebody gave me an aha moment protocol and, at the time, I was working on

building community in the classroom. I talked a lot last time how that's really

important to me. It's really important that we see the people we dance with…and

that there's not conflict all the time because sometimes that pops up…Somebody

shared aha protocol with me where we write down aha moments and you're

anonymously giving each other advice as you pass around the papers. That was

something that they all really like doing.

Additionally, Mary H. described that her continuing education encourages her to

investigate her practice and make meaningful shifts as she pursues a culturally relevant

pedagogy. She posited that,

I learned about McCarthy Brown, like that book, specifically through my

professor at [redacted university]. She introduced me to Black Dancing Body and

McCarthy Brown's work. So, that's the path that I got on that I wrote on my

MFA. I was like this is something that I wanna further research and see what's

happening and how to implement this in my own classes and what would work for

me as a teacher. What works with the practice I do?

Classroom Practices and Teaching Strategies

The participants strive to implement classroom practices and teaching strategies

that create inclusive and equitable learning environments. The strategies include

incorporating diverse perspectives, fostering student-centered activities and agency, and

centering students' cultural identities, and culturally affirming practices. The execution

indicates varying degrees of the culturally relevant teaching principles. Katherine L.

discussed that she draws from her parochial school upbringing to determine the types of

skills and strategies she implements in her classroom. She stated that she considers the

parochial experience to be more stringent and rigorous than that of her current students.

She said,

> So, K through eighth was parochial school So, Catholic school back in the
>
> nineties, parochial schools, taught very differently than public schools. I'm able to
>
> bring that into the classroom because it's a little bit more what I would call
>
> stringent…It's [parochial education] impacted the way I teach in the classroom
>
> simply because I know how they're learning versus how I learned. I'm able to
>
> bring in more diversified learning strategies for them. I'm able to teach them the
>
> book and then you find the answer in the book. You go to the paragraph, which is
>
> how I learned. But, then I'm also able, because we're one to one to show them
>
> how to also find the answer on the digital format.

Katherine L. continued to share that her teaching strategies center the parochial

education that she considered to be more rigorous. She discussed her belief that many of

her students lack study skills and how this is the impediment to their academic success.

Her response states,

> I really try to instill–we have to get back to studying because you can't pass the
>
> test if you don't prepare for the test…I believe we've lost this. This nature of
>
> studying and being prepared for a test. So, I try, but they have to believe it within
>
> themselves. They have to see how studying will actually be an improvement to
>
> their grade.

Finally, Katherine L. revealed her stance on rigor and academic success. Once again, she

based her stance on her parochial school upbringing. She responded,

I try not to bring the extensive rigor I went through into the classroom

wholeheartedly because it's not the same student, it's not the same child…I think

I would lose the child if I brought that rigor into the classroom…The amount of

homework–we had hours upon hours of homework and sometimes that homework

could include writing all of the alphabet…that's rigorous for a second

grader…just writing vocabulary words can be rigorous for them–for my students

nine through twelve.

Equally, Mary H. detailed a community-centered approach to her classroom and

teaching practices that are rooted in her experiences from her K-12 education. In

particular she recalled that the isolation she felt after transferring to a predominantly

White school animates how she creates space for her students now. She said,

When I moved districts, I all of a sudden felt not connected to the people…I was

in my teenager phase of I don't feel like I connect with any of these people, so

I'm just gonna try to graduate. I think that it informs my teaching because I have

this intimate sense of who my students are and I really want to get to know them.

I don't want people to feel like outsiders in my room.

Mary H. expanded upon her ideas when she detailed that she works to decenter herself in

her practice and make her classroom a more egalitarian space. She explained,

I use a lot of not centering the front and students in lines or formations. For some

classes we do need that organization because otherwise it gets a little confusing,

but most of my classes, I move around the room and it takes away the hierarchy

of the space. So, we are all on the same level. All learning the same thing. That's

something that's worked well for me.

For Mary H., dance involves movement and study. In the following excerpt, she described that she includes historical context, which fosters cultural competence and academic success. She said,

> Typically, I'll start with a choreographer of a style so we can tag it back to a person. For example, whenever we did Dunham technique…we're doing the technique, the choreographer, and then [I] teach them a phrase based off of that. I always try to bring it back to the music they listen to or music they've chosen. Each class has their own playlist that they've curated over time. I think that's my way of trying to stay level with them…And we just make movement based off of that…I'm pulling from the technique…and then we talk about where it's derived…So, we get to talk about things that are gonna be interesting to them, but are also significant to how the technique came to be.

> Rue C.'s quest toward culturally relevant teaching is evidenced by the myriad ways she implements the tenets in her lessons. In the following excerpt, she recalled that she planned to use figures from Black history in her social-emotional learning lessons. According to Rue C.,

> For Dr. King's birthday, we did talk about, not necessarily who he was, but just some of the changes. I implemented that into positive behavior–why it's important to be peaceful. Why it's important to look out for one another. I looked at some speeches that he did and we went with that. Going forward, in Black History Month, I do plan to take some of those words and connect it with some positive behavior sayings or sentences and show them…that kind of connects with our social-emotional learning piece…kind of talk about that and look at

those key words that some of those pioneers that look different from them, what

they said and how we can all learn from them as well.

Moreover, Rue C. also explored the significance of centering her students' cultural

backgrounds in her classroom. She explained,

I remember when I taught at a Missouri school, one of my students was African

and she was from Africa and she spoke not a lot of English and a lot of

experiences that she brought into the classroom to help…her cultural ties really

helped us to better understand who she was. When we're learning in social studies

about different continents, she really corrected us…in the books, some of the

things we saw was totally wrong and she corrected us and brought in her

experiences with her parents and spoke to the class. That really changed not only

myself, but other students' outlook about that specific topic.

Apparently, Rue C. also shared specific learning activities she implemented with her

students.

We had students choose different continents around the world and they had to

bring in food, and it was just a cultural experience, so to speak, in Missouri. In

Illinois, the cultural experiences was mainly celebrating Black History;

celebrating big functions that go on in school. Just keeping us aware–which also

challenged me to do the same to make sure that I'm abreast with different figures

that we're talking about.

Mentorship

Mentorship is critical to the participants' journeys. All of the teachers detailed the

significant role of mentors and role models. These relationships provide them with

guidance, encouragement, and practical strategies as they continue on their quest to be culturally relevant educators. The mentorship is important for each educator as they all sought certification via non-traditional routes. Katherine L. did not matriculate through a traditional educator preparation process; therefore, she never participated in a student teaching experience that provided the opportunity for her to learn from a veteran educator. In the following excerpt, she recalled soliciting guidance from colleagues who were once her teachers. She said,

> I don't really remember the behaviors of too many of my teachers except for two. Both of which I've had the pleasure of working with in the past three years. Their behavior…was that gentle, no nonsense. You set your expectations at the beginning and you don't waiver…They taught me to set the expectations day one and never waiver…The female always had that kind of motherly role towards me…So, I think I picked what not to do and picked up what to do, in my own little way from those three teachers.

Additionally, Katherine L. shared that she reached out to the veteran teachers in her building after a traumatic experience affected the school. She noted,

> Unfortunately, the trauma related PD doesn't really help or speak to what we deal with culturally every day…when it comes to trauma, you kind of have to, for me, I've had to rely on maybe more seasoned teachers to help with that or ask questions from seasoned teachers.

In her response, Katherine L. also stated that she continued to request assistance as she tried to navigate the tragedy that had taken place at her building. As a new teacher, she

wanted to know how to offer help to her students as they attempted to understand the

trauma that occurred. She explained

> I've had to ask, like, I had a conversation with a seasoned teacher today. What am
>
> I supposed to do if they [students] don't wanna go to social work? Do I,
>
> obviously, allow them the time to cry? But, I also have to teach. So, where do I
>
> find that?... So, what am I supposed to do in this? And, unfortunately, the
>
> seasoned teachers didn't have an answer.

> As a non-traditional educator preparation student, Mary H.'s access to master

teachers was limited. She referred to her college dance teacher as a key role model on her

journey toward implementing culturally relevant teaching practices. She stated,

> College was the first time I had a teacher who looked like me. She was a mentor
>
> of mine. I really respected her. Giving me permission to not be perfect all the time
>
> really changed my perspective on dance as a whole, not just technique. I carry a
>
> lot of her lessons with me today…I've had to unlearn value in dance and then
>
> relearn it in a way that makes me still feel happy at the end of the day. And, I try
>
> to teach that to my students…If you can feel the full reach of your body, it's just
>
> enough.

For Mary H., her college dance professor had an impact on her teaching practice. She

explained,

> I immediately switched her over to my advisor because I was just so heavily
>
> influenced by, not just her work, but what she had to say about dance. I remember
>
> I connected with her because during her interview to be adjunct…I raised my
>
> hand and I was like, wow, I really like tumbling and I really want to do more

tumbling for dancers. I just don't think that my body can do that anymore… She

was like, Don't say that. You can do whatever your body wants to do. She took

the time to unlearn that thing that was in my head… She focused on contemporary

movement that was social justice focused. And, I hadn't been exposed to that yet–

doing movement and meaning altogether, but also using dance as a vehicle for

social change…She helped with my senior project. She was just awesome to work

with and it was nice to have somebody who I could confide in and guide me

through my senior year too.

Rue C. pursued a non-traditional teacher certification program that did not include

a student teaching practice. She detailed that she sought out an additional mentor even

after being paired with one by her school district. According to her,

Even when they paired me with a mentor, I still sought out mentors that I felt was

better suited at relating and being relatable with those students–that population

that we served at that time…I think getting with him during my first couple of

years as a new teacher in Missouri really helped shape my outlook…He really

showed me a lot of examples and how to move in the classroom differently as

well…I remember sometimes I went to his classroom and watched him teach a

lesson and see how students received him…And, so I wanted to mimic some

those qualities…He just created a community…I was always trying to reach for

that–just didn't know how to do it at first. But, just learning from that now, I feel

like, at this stage of my career, I know how to build communities for all students.

I know what I need to do; the steps that I need to take. And, if not, then he's a

phone call away…And, I've taken that to each school that I've been at and [I am] trying to continue to perfect it.

Mindsets and Reflexivity

The narratives document the participants' mindsets and reflexivity as they engage in critical inquiry into their teaching practices. When presented with obstacles and challenges, they persist in their quest toward embracing culturally relevant pedagogy. Their excerpts demonstrate that they practiced inquiry and applied their experiences as a guide toward seeking the dream. For Katherine L., recognizing that all her students had personal experiences that they brought to the classroom was an important part of her practice. In the following passage, she reflected on the types of inquiries she unpacks as she strives to strengthen her culturally relevant teaching practice. She shared,

I definitely try to make sure that I don't pass judgment before even knowing the story and I may never know the stories, and I don't have to know the story, but it's that mindset of don't judge because you don't know what's going on on the backside. You don't know what's going on at home or in the hallways, where you're not present…So, for example, the student may come in and be upset. I don't know who said something to that student prior to getting in my classroom. So, you know, I'm not swift to reprimand right away.

For Mary H., being a dance teacher is about balance. In the following lines, she reflected that her master's work inspired the reflexivity she brought to her pursuit of culturally relevant teaching practices. She said,

I think that in my learning career, specifically before I got to my MAT, it was, well what do you want to learn? What style do you wanna delve into? And, how

can we support you on that journey? And, that's where I've tried to be–balancing

teaching them dance and also giving them the space to learn what they wanna

learn.

Rue C.'s educational experiences in general, and traumatic ones in particular,

have been pivotal as she continues her journey toward culturally relevant pedagogy. She

stated,

I think elementary played a big role in my… more so in my high school years to

impact my education and which spilled over into classroom teaching. So, I think

those two instances really show me exactly what path that I was heading in and

what I was seeking–my searching. And, I think both of those instances really

helped me be who I am–not only in the classroom, but as a student and as a

teacher and as a mother.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand how Black novice teachers become

culturally relevant practitioners through the examination of their cultural identities,

upbringing, elementary and secondary experiences, and teacher preparation

program/process. As such, each participant discussed the impact their upbringing,

cultural identities, K-12 experiences, and their educator preparation programs/processes

have on their adoption of a culturally responsive pedagogy and practice. Five themes

emerged from the narrative analysis: K-12 racialized trauma, racialized awakening and

awareness, the sanctuary of educational and familial spaces, the impact of professional

development, and seeking the dream. Each participant recounted experiences of

racialized trauma in their K-12 experience, as well as incidents that related to their racial

awakening and awareness in those spaces. Additionally, participants spoke of ways in which adults, fellow students, and family members created environments of safety or the lack of safety felt in schools. They recalled experiences related to any coursework during their educator preparation programs and professional development in teaching careers, particularly around culturally relevant pedagogy. They explored effective teaching strategies and ways that foster diversity and inclusion. Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the identified themes and implications of the study.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to understand how Black novice teachers become culturally relevant practitioners through the examination of their cultural identities, upbringing, elementary and secondary experiences, and teacher preparation program/process. A significant body of literature exists that explores the preparation to engage in culturally relevant practices from the perspective of White pre-service and in-service teachers. Each of the researchers have their own experiences with educator preparation coursework (or the lack thereof) and professional development that seems to focus on the need to educate and shift the mindsets of White educators to prepare them to effectively teach children from different demographic backgrounds. However, little attention has been paid to the needs of Black educators related to culturally relevant practices, in addition to assumptions made that Black teachers are innately culturally relevant because of their identities and experiences as part of a marginalized community. Therefore, there was a need to collect data on the lived experiences of Black teachers to explore the ways in which their cultural identities, K-12 experiences, educator preparation process, and current professional realities impact Black teachers' culturally relevant pedagogies.

Chapter 5, provides a summary and discussion of the major findings of the study. Additionally, it covers possible implications for the study for educator preparation programs and school districts linked to the current research. The chapter presents recommendations for further study and ends with final conclusions and reflections.

Summary of the Study

This study investigated the integration of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) by Black novice teachers within diverse classrooms. It delved into how the educators, through their unique cultural lenses and experiences, navigate and seek to implement teaching strategies that affirm and reflect the cultural backgrounds of their students. The objective of the study was to illuminate the paths the Black novice teachers take towards embodying CRP, the challenges they face, and the successes they achieve. This inquiry aimed to contribute to the discourse on enhancing teacher preparation programs and professional development opportunities for fostering educational equity and culturally relevant teaching practices.

Markedly, there is a persistent educational disparity affecting students of color coupled with the lack of diversity within the teaching workforce. As such, there is a critical need for educator preparation programs (EPPs) to adopt resource pedagogies like CRP to bridge the cultural divide between teachers and an increasingly diverse student population. The research problem was articulated against the backdrop of shifting student demographics and the challenges of aligning teacher preparation with the demands of multicultural classrooms. Therefore, through a detailed examination of the backgrounds, experiences, and pedagogical approaches of Black novice teachers, this study sought to understand how the educators navigate and implement CRP within their classrooms. The study findings will to contribute to the broader discourse on educational equity and the empowerment of teachers and students alike through culturally responsive teaching practices.

Methodology Recap

Through narrative analysis, the research sought to uncover the lived experiences of Black novice teachers, focusing on their journey towards embracing CRP, the challenges they encounter, and the strategies they employ to overcome these obstacles, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on educational equity and culturally responsive teaching. Broadly, this study explored the development of culturally relevant pedagogical practices among Black novice teachers. It investigated how the educators, through their cultural identities, upbringing, and teacher preparation experiences, become culturally relevant practitioners. The study aimed to understand the impact of such factors on their ability to implement CRP effectively.

The methodology employed in this study centers on qualitative research method through thematic narrative analysis to examine and interpret narratives or stories of the Black novice educators. This approach particularly focused on understanding the experiences of Black novice teachers in relation to their cultural identities, upbringing, K-12 experience, and teacher preparation processes, and how these aspects influence their practice of culturally relevant pedagogy. Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews and analyzed through a systematic examination of narrative content, aiming to identify emerging themes and patterns. This method emphasized the construction of meaning from participants' stories, rather than the factual accuracy of their recollections, providing deep insights into their experiences and perceptions.

Discussion

The thematic analysis unveiled several key themes from the narratives of Black novice teachers, focusing on their experiences with racialized trauma, racial

awakening/awareness, sanctuary, and professional development. These findings resonate

with Ladson-Billings' (1995a) conceptualization of CRP, which emphasizes cultural

competence, critical consciousness, and academic excellence. The themes capture the

complexity of navigating educational settings marred by racism, the journey towards

racial identity and self-acceptance, the significance of supportive communities and

family, and the evolution of culturally relevant practices. Each theme contributes to a

deeper understanding of the challenges and resilience inherent in the professional and

personal growth of Black novice educators.

To substantiate the identified themes, the study utilized poignant excerpts from

participant narratives. The quotes and examples bring to life the themes identified in the

study, showcasing the complex interplay between personal experiences of racism, the

journey towards racial identity affirmation, the creation of supportive environments, and

the pursuit of professional growth in culturally relevant teaching practices. Drawing from

the narratives and thematic analysis in the provided documents, the following section

utilizes direct quotes to illustrate the themes identified:

K-16 Racialized Trauma. Participants shared poignant experiences of isolation

and overt racism, which deeply impacted their journey towards racial awakening and

self-acceptance. For instance, one educator recounted, "The first day's teacher made me

very aware of my Blackness," highlighting the early confrontation with racial identity and

prejudice within educational settings. The theme of racialized trauma underscores the

importance of critical consciousness among Black novice teachers, aligning with Gay's

(2010) advocacy for culturally responsive teaching that acknowledges and challenges the

systemic structures of inequality.

Racial Awakening/Awareness. The journey towards racial awareness was marked by personal and educational experiences that led to a deeper understanding of their racial identity. A participant reflected, "And that's when I think at that moment, I really knew I was Black. I felt like I knew I was different." This highlight signifies a pivotal moment of self-realization and the beginning of a journey towards embracing their cultural identity. As illustrated in previous literature, lack of awareness among novice teachers, including failure to understand the diverse backgrounds of their students could derail the educators' ability to meet the unique needs of the students or lead to the spread of stereotypical perceptions of such learners (Lawrence et al., 2022; Liou & Rotheram-Fuller, 2019). To boost racial awakening, Paris (2012) suggested that educator preparation programs should emphasize teachers' self-reflection, understanding their individual biases, continuous learning, and the adaptation of culturally responsive teaching practice.

Sanctuary. Creating a sense of sanctuary within the educational environment was crucial for participants, both for themselves and their students. This theme is illustrated through a participant's effort to build supportive communities. That is, "Mission of mine to find people to connect with who I felt safe around." This aspect underscores the importance of finding or creating spaces of belonging and acceptance. The creation of a sanctuary reflects the teachers' efforts towards fostering cultural competence and safe spaces, supporting Paris' (2012) call for sustaining cultural and linguistic pluralism in educational settings. Similarly, Bidwell (2010) recommended the need for spaces for in-service teachers, preservice teachers, and teacher educators to explore and openly debate race issues and challenge racial hierarchies within schools. This novel insight into the

concept of sanctuary within CRP highlights the nuanced ways Black novice teachers navigate and counteract educational disparities.

Professional Development. The narratives reveal a gap in culturally relevant pedagogical training, with educators having to navigate and learn CRP practices largely through personal experience and reflection rather than formal education. A participant noted, "Did not go through the school of education at a university to obtain the teaching certification...Was not introduced to culturally relevant pedagogy." As such, there remains a need for more targeted professional development in CRP. The theme aligns with the study aims by suggesting a need for systemic reform in teacher preparation programs. Therefore, the finding adds a new dimension to the discourse on CRP, pointing to the necessity for more explicit integration of CRP principles in teacher education curricula, as argued by Irvine and Armento (2001).

Seeking the Dream. The data show each participant individually explored a culturally relevant pedagogy in their context. Each grappled with issues of student academic achievement, cultural competence, and critical consciousness, to varying degrees, in practice. One participant spoke specifically of seeking to decenter Western practices in their content area, including not staging themselves at the front of the room. She stated, "when I move around the room and it kind of takes away the hierarchy of the space. So, we are all just like on the same level, all learning the same thing." These examples highlight the multifaceted nature of the participants' experiences, emphasizing the critical role of reflective teaching and supportive networks in fostering inclusive, equitable classroom environments. Seeking the dream encapsulates the ways participants utilize their lived experiences, mentorship, and their own knowledge base to create

classroom spaces that align with culturally relevant pedagogy. Each participants'

narrative gives insight as to how they journey toward engaging CRP to interrogate

"academic injustices in education as an ethical position." (Allen et al. 2017, p. 4).

The themes identified offer novel insights into the complexities of implementing

CRP, particularly highlighting the significance of personal and collective racial

experiences in shaping teaching practices. These insights contribute to a deeper

understanding of the mechanisms through which culturally relevant pedagogy could be

more effectively integrated into the classroom. The findings also allowed the researchers

to examine the original hypothesis that the ontological and epistemological paradigm of

Black novice teachers who seek to be culturally relevant practitioners often includes a) a

deep understanding of the historical implications of white supremacy on education, b)

strong critical consciousness, and c) continuing exposure to and adoption of culturally

relevant pedagogy and practices. The researchers concluded that each participant

displayed varying levels of each attribute which coincided with the levels to which they

sought to engage in culturally relevant practices. Thus, the findings address gaps in the

current literature on Black novice teachers and CRP.

Limitations

Every research undertaking inherently grapples with limitations, and this study is

no exception. The primary objective was to provide a comprehensive understanding of

novice Black teachers' experiences in their readiness to become culturally relevant

practitioners. Consequently, for those who completed the participation survey, the

researchers conducted interviews exclusively with Black educators identifying as women,

inadvertently excluding the perspectives of male and non-gender conforming individuals.

This occurrence might limit the generalizability of the study findings. However, while acknowledging the limitation of representing solely female voices, it illuminates a research gap concerning the experiences of Black females in the American K-16 education system.

The absence of a participant with a traditional educator preparation program background restricted the researchers from fully grasping how this experience influenced their preparedness for culturally relevant pedagogy. In the post-COVID era, increasing numbers of educators enter classrooms through alternative certification methods. Nonetheless, the three participants, although not following traditional paths, underwent diverse alternative certification experiences and programs, providing invaluable insights for the study and addressing gaps in research on how alternative certification programs prepare educators for culturally relevant pedagogy.

Lastly, two participants were employed within the same district as two of the researchers. This issue could limit the participants from openly providing detailed answers about their experiences. Possibility the participants might have approached the interviews with reservations. However, the participants were informed, through the consent form and opening statements of each interview, about the confidentiality measures and the absence of identifying indicators or repercussions for their experiences. The identified limitations in this study create room for further exploration, aiming to comprehend how these experiences influence how Black educators aspire to become culturally relevant practitioners.

Implications

Based on the findings of this study, there are various possible implications for educational researchers, educator preparation programs, and district or school administrators. A teacher's professional development starts before their educator preparation program/process**.** One implication from this study is the acknowledgement that the work that happens with the K-12 students of today impacts the ways of being of tomorrow's teachers. As elementary and secondary schools focus on the academic readiness of their students, it is also important to be mindful of the direct/indirect lessons educators teach them about themselves, belonging in the educational space, and the way effective teaching looks like. The concept of apprenticeship of observation speaks to what teachers learn about teaching simply from occupying educational spaces first as a student (Lortie, 1975; Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014). Teachers are sometimes unaware of the practices and biases informed by their own schooling experiences, possibly creating a tension for what they believe should be and their current professional reality (Coffey & Farinde-Wu, 2016). The data revealed that the participants of this study were impacted by their time as K-12 students and sought to repeat some practices while rejecting others. In light of states like Missouri, reporting critical shortages in elementary education, early childhood education, and special education-the years when student begin to form their ideas about school and about teachers is imperative. Therefore, the findings of this study serve as a reminder that impact of a teacher's work could be long lasting and recruitment of high-quality educators starts earlier than postsecondary education (Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, 2024).

Another implication of this work is the need to make space for teachers to grapple with their early lives and lived experiences to do the self-work necessary to engage with the epistemological and ontological paradigms of culturally relevant pedagogy as equally suggested by Allen et al. (2017). The need for greater reflection on upbringing, cultural identities, and K-12 experiences has the potential to impact teacher openness and approach to CRP. Thus, teachers should continuously reflect on the self to boost their cultural awareness.

This study has demonstrated that relationship and community building are important aspects of engaging with a culturally relevant pedagogy. However, key to teachers doing their CRP work effectively is engaging in their reflective practices to understand their cultural identities and bias (Hammond, 2015; Hollie, 2011). Brown and Crippen (2016) report that a group of science teacher who were asked to engage in metacognitive exercises related to cultural practices in their lives and the wider society saw in increase in respondents engaging their students in sociocultural consciousness development in the life science context. Reflection and metacognition enable teachers to engage critically about the impact one's cultural schema has on their teaching practices, including teachers who share a ethnic identity with the students they serve (Coffey & Farinde-Wu, 2016). Additionally, this level of metacognition helps White pre-service teachers move from resisting CRP to having an awareness of how the historical context of White supremacy impacts contemporary schooling and therefore their practices (Aronson & Meyers, 2022). Educator preparation programs and professional development coursework help teachers become more open to a mindset necessary for culturally relevant teachers (Allen et al., 2017).

Clearer standards for the integration of CRP into educator preparation and teacher quality expectations should be formulated. State standards for educator preparation programs and teacher quality have an impact on how new teachers become prepared for the classroom and how in-service teachers are developed and evaluated. The data suggest there is a need for policymakers to be clear and explicit about the expectations from teachers related to culturally relevant pedagogy. For example, the Illinois State Board of Education (2022) adopted culturally responsive teaching and leading standards that address self-awareness, systems of oppression, valuing students identities and funds of knowledge, opportunities for students to co-create in educational spaces, leveraging student advocacy, and family/community collaboration. However, Missouri is yet to adopt a set of standards specifically related to culturally responsive practices and the standards for educator preparation refer only to cultural relevance in early education and elementary literacy (Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, 2023). The policies that states enact often represent the values policymakers hold. Thus, there is a need for clear and explicit standards to create a narrative that equitable education for all students is important and could help create more uniformity in teacher preparation related to culturally relevant pedagogy.

There are studies that suggest that alternatively certified teachers are leaving the profession at faster rates than their traditionally certified counterparts for a variety of reasons, including lack of support and preparation (Callahan & Brantlinger, 2023; Redding & Smith, 2019). Although the amount of CRP related development provided through traditional university programs varies, in some cases teachers certified though alternative means may be receiving even less. Therefore it becomes incumbent upon

school districts to provide all novice teachers, especially those who have matriculated through alternative programs, a) mentor teachers who display proficiency in engaging in culturally relevant practices; b) targeted and intentionally professional development in CRP that is structured to promote internalization and implementation of culturally relevant practices; and c) extra classroom assistance, including coaching and feedback related to their implementation of CRP (Redding & Smith, 2019).

As this study has shown, making space for Black women teachers to (re)member in order to embody a culturally relevant pedagogy is equally essential. In each participant's narrative, there existed moments of harm. While none spoke directly to the topic of healing, it is possible that they, like other Black teachers, are in need of development, connection, and healing for themselves in order to best serve the communities in which they teach. Dillard (2021) invites specifically, Black women educators to (re)member, or bring back together, who they are in connection to their ancestry and the African diaspora by:

- (re)searching - seeking and searching for things about Black heritage and culture that will teach them something new.
- (re)visioning - expanding their worldview of Black people, culture, and knowledge.
- (re)cognizing - changing their thinking and minds about who they are, as a people, and what they have accomplished.
- (re)presenting - presenting their understanding of themselves, their identities and their culture in new and more expansive ways.

The practitioner who has (re)membered is arguably positioned to impact their students' academic achievement, cultural competence, and critical consciousness, thereby embodying a culturally relevant pedagogy (Dillard, 2021). This study's design provided the opportunity for the participants to reflect on the pieces of themselves that are part of their (re)membering. EPPs and school districts could develop systematic and intentional ways of helping Black women teachers (re)member, engaging in not only self-reflection, but self and cultural exploration for themselves and their students.

Recommendations for Further Research

Because the aim of narrative analysis is to examine the meaning making process of the participants rather than creating and understanding of a generalized population, further study could be done to understand the journey toward a culturally relevant pedagogy (Josselson & Hammock, 2021; Riessman, 2008; Yin, 2016). This study examined the lived experiences of three Black novice teachers who are early in their careers and therefore still developing the mindset and skill set needed to fully become culturally relevant practitioners. Therefore, there are multiple possibilities for further study in this area.

One possible future study could be a longitudinal, panel study of novice teachers over the course of their first five years and beyond. This would allow the researchers to examine how additional personal and professional experiences, professional development, and reflection impacts a group of teachers' development, of culturally relevant pedagogy and practices (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Another possible study would be to collect data from other teachers of color, as well as White teachers. While no racial or ethnic group is monolithic, each group might speak of different lived

experiences that might have a different impact on how they approach culturally relevant practices.

Given the evolving nature of classroom demographics and societal norms, continuous exploration of how CRP could be understood and implemented by educators at all stages of their careers is essential. Future research could examine the long-term impact of CRP on student outcomes, particularly in terms of academic achievement, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. Additionally, studies exploring the role of digital technologies in facilitating culturally relevant learning experiences warrant further investigation.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand how Black novice teachers become culturally relevant practitioners through the examination of their cultural identities, upbringing, elementary and secondary experiences, and teacher preparation program/process. Through comprehensive narrative analysis, the study illuminates the intricate processes by which educators, amidst their initial years of teaching, navigate, interpret, and integrate culturally relevant pedagogy into their classrooms. The findings reveal that novice teachers' development of culturally relevant practices is deeply influenced by their cultural identities, upbringing, and the nature of their teacher preparation programs.

This research highlights that Black novice teachers who engage with culturally relevant pedagogy do so through a complex interplay of personal reflection, professional development, and practical application. The narratives shared by participants underscore the importance of self-awareness and critical reflection on one's cultural identity and

biases as foundational to becoming culturally relevant practitioners. Furthermore, the study points to the critical role of educator preparation programs in equipping novice teachers with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to implement CRP effectively.

The implications of the study findings extend beyond the individual teacher to the broader educational landscape. By demonstrating the nuanced ways in which novice teachers embrace CRP, this research contributes valuable insights into the design and delivery of teacher education programs. Specifically, it underscores the necessity for such programs to incorporate comprehensive, experiential learning opportunities that allow preservice teachers to critically engage with their cultural identities and understandings of diversity.

This research supports existing theories on culturally relevant pedagogy, particularly the work of Ladson-Billings (1995a, 1995b), while also extending the conversation to include the specific experiences of novice teachers. Unlike prior studies that primarily focused on the practices of seasoned educators, this study sheds light on the unique challenges and opportunities faced by teachers at the beginning of their careers in adopting and adapting CRP.

While the study provides significant insights into the development of culturally relevant pedagogy among novice teachers, it is not without limitations. The reliance on narrative data from a relatively small sample of teachers limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research should seek to include a broader, more diverse sample of educators to explore the applicability of the study conclusions across different contexts.

This study underscores the need for ongoing professional development opportunities focused on CRP for in-service teachers. Educational stakeholders, including school leaders and policy makers, should consider integrating CRP principles into curriculum standards, assessment practices, and school culture initiatives. This aspect would foster environments where all students feel valued and empowered.

Indeed, this research study underscores the profound impact of culturally relevant pedagogy on the professional development of novice teachers and the learning experiences of their students. By embracing CRP, educators not only affirm the cultural identities of their students, but also challenge and dismantle systemic inequities within educational institutions. This research serves as a call to action for the continuous, intentional integration of culturally relevant pedagogy across all levels of teacher education and professional development.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Demographic Survey

Demographic Survey

An Analysis of Culturally Relevant Pedagogical Development Through the Perspective of Black Novice Teachers

-Email

-Age (Type "Prefer not to say" if you decline to answer)

-What race do you identify with? (Type "Prefer not to say" if you decline to answer)

-What ethnicity do you identify with? (Type "Prefer not to say" if you decline to answer)

-Do you practice a specific religion? (Type "Prefer not to say" if you decline to answer)

-Do you identify as neurodivergent? (Yes or No)

-Do you have any physical disabilities? (Yes; No; Prefer not to answer)

-What is your gender identity? (Female (Cis or Trans); Male (Cis or Trans); Gender non-conforming, genderqueer, or non-binary; Other; Prefer not to answer)

-What is your field of study?

-Briefly describe your educational background from pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade.

-List what extracurricular/school programs you participated in?

-How long have you been a teacher? (1 year, 2 years, 3 years, 4 years, 5 years, Prefer not to answer)

-What was your certification process? (Traditional; Alternative)

-Rate the type of student you were (1-Excellent to 5-Poor)

-How valued was education in your household? (1-Very Valued to 5-Not Valued at All)

-Overall, rate your enjoyment of K-12 school experience? (1-Thoroughly Enjoyed to 5-Did not enjoy at all)

-Participant Pseudonym:

Appendix B – Informed Consent Form

University of Missouri–St. Louis
Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

Project Title: An Analysis of Culturally Relevant Pedagogical Development Through the Perspective of Black Novice Teachers
Principal Investigator: Christina Grove
Department Name: Educational Leadership & Policy Studies
Faculty Advisor: Thomasina Hassler, PhD
IRB Project Number: IRB #2099168 SL

1. You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this research is to capture the experiences of Black novice teachers regarding culturally relevant pedagogy.

2. Your participation will involve two video-recorded interviews and a video-recorded focus group discussion. The interviews and focus group will last approximately one hour each. The data will be analyzed by researchers at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. The findings may be used for conference presentations and publications in journals. This study is in no way associated with your district. Your decision to participate in this study will have no bearing on your employment.

3. There is a loss of confidentiality risk associated with this research. This will be minimized by keeping all information from this study strictly confidential. Your name will be replaced with a pseudonym. All digital recordings will be stored securely in password protected folders on the researchers' laptop and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless participants specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. The video recordings will be used outside of this study only with your expressed permission. Any outside transcriber will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement, if used.

4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study.

5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or withdraw your consent at any time. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or withdraw.

6. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication that may result from this study. In rare instances, a researcher's study must undergo an audit or program evaluation by an oversight agency

(such as the Office for Human Research Protection) that would lead to disclosure of your data as well as any other information collected by the researcher.

7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Christina Grove, at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. You may also ask questions or state concerns regarding your rights as a research participant to the University of Missouri–St. Louis Office of Research Compliance, at 314-516-5972 or irb@umsl.edu.

Appendix C- Interview Transcript

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1   **I1:**   OK. OK. So, like I said before, we are looking to understand how Black

2   novice teachers become culturally-relevant practitioners. So, in our first step, can you kind of

3   tell us about your cultural identities? What are, what would you say that your cultural

4   identities were?

5   **P:**   So by cultural identity, what do you mean? Can you give an example?

6   **I1:**   How would you identify yourself to the world? Like what would, what would

7   be those things that you would say were identifying markers of yourself?

8   **P:**   I am Black --African American woman.

9   **I1:**   And because of how you identify yourself, how did that culture impact your

10   time in elementary school and your time in secondary school?

11   **P:**   It impacted greatly because I went to elementary and secondary school,

12   predominantly both White schools, minorities, we were -- Black students were the minorities.

13   And so moving from a small town, Black, all Black town to a bigger city with not a lot of

14   people that look like you was a very big impact into my experience, my educational

15   experiences.

16   **I1:**   Were there any experiences that stood out to you that helped shape the way

17   you show up in your classroom from elementary or secondary school?

18   **P:**   I don't think so much as shaped. I wanted, I always wanted -- I didn't know

19   that there were teachers that looked like me until I went to college. And so seeing other

20   friends at other school districts that had teachers that looked like them that had posters in

21   their classrooms of figures that looked like them -- being taught culturally about who I was --

22   that really helped launch me into discovering past high school, who I was, who I was and

23   who I wanted to be as an adult.

24   **I1:**   So in talking, in talking, you stated that you moved from a smaller town and,

25   and moved to a different school, a different place in your younger years. Can you kind of

26   share with us your upbringing and how even that helped you to become and impact your

27   practices as a culturally-relevant practitioner?

28   **P:**   Coming from a two-parent home where you have grandparents that are still

29   alive and active in your life and being around family and people that you know, and coming

30   to a place where you don't know anyone, you have to gravitate to those that look like you

31   and/or sound like you or have some type of home background like you and try to be --

32   befriend them in those early elementary and middle school -- which they were trying years;

33   and still trying to identify who I was at the time and who I wanted to be played a big role in

34   my high school education because it really taught me that it's ok to be by myself. It's ok to

35   research and, and find who I was. So I think just that break away from small to, to, to big, to

36   me, but I guess to others it was a mid-level of population -- really helped launch me into

37   choosing the college that I wanted to go to as well as my education -- how I valued my

38   education, which was valued in my home.

39   **I1:**   Can you tell us a little bit more about how it was valued in your home? What

40   are some of those things that your upbringing -- how did they value that in your home?

41   **P:**   So my parents are both high school graduates. They believed, even though

42   they didn't consider going to college -- they had good government jobs. So that is really what

43   impacted their lives. And so going to college really wasn't an emphasis from their parents.

44   But when my brother and I, who, he's seven years older than me, he got a scholarship to go

45   play football at a university. That is when college was really booming in my home, it was get

46   a scholarship, get good grades. This is why you either need to be active in, in school, either

47   through a club or sports so that you can get a scholarship. We don't have to worry about

48   financial burden and then you can get an education beyond what we have done. And so I

49   think that my parents wanted better than what they had, even though their, their jobs paid --

50   they had the money but just not the education. So they valued it and they, they talked about it.

51   They expected no, As and Bs not even Cs in our home; they wanted us to be the best. So they

52   went to every parent-teacher conference. They didn't really buy it -- buy like workbooks or

53   extra things. They just knew that this is what your teacher said you had to have. They went

54   with their word and we were expected to have some type of schedule at home. You come

55   home, you get a snack, you watch a little TV, and then you get to the table and you start your

56   homework and so checking our homework was something that my mom really trusted us. We

57   kind of knew how to do. So I had to be responsible in that area and gain the trust from her

58   that I was doing what I was expected to do. So that when she saw the results of report cards

59   or progress reports or parent-teacher conferences she knew that what she instilled in me was

60   being valued also and that kind of trickled down to my family as well.

61   **I1:**   Oh, that was great. Thanks for sharing that. And with those experiences, just

62   how you show up in your classroom and in your space kind of how have those experiences

63   both with your elementary-secondary experience, your upbringing and how you identify, how

64   is that shown in your classroom? How, how are you, how is that impacting your practices in

65   your classroom?

66   **P:**   Day one -- this is a conversation that I have with students. I have expectations

67   and I tell them a little bit about who I am as we're going around introducing each other. And I

68   tell them how I was fourth grade student for instance and what my responsibilities were and

69   how my parents pushed me to where I am now. So I talk about those small parts of why

70   homework is important as practice. I talk about why being responsible is important in fourth

71   grade because that is going to launch you as you go into middle school and junior high; it's

72   gonna keep you responsible, and how that path just leads you into organization. And so we

73   talk about those talks that I had at home to show them what that looks like. So I showed them

74   a backpack and I showed them the importance of keeping an agenda and a schedule and

75   checking off those things that you have done already and then focusing after school or in

76   school on the things that you need to do. So we have a motto like do the things that you have

77   to do so that you don't have to worry about it later. And so I tell parents that also during

78   parent-teacher conference. I let them know how important organization is and how important

79   showing up every day is also in the classroom and confidence. And so that is just continued

80   with a rotation in class. And I celebrate students that are doing it all the time and, and send

81   emails to parents that I see that are, are practicing those expectations. And I just feel like

82   because I was taught at a young age that they are being exposed to it and hopefully as they

83   grow and, and, and know they'll have those same inputs and see the, the success at the end.

84   **I1:**   Were there any experiences in your K 12 time that impacted how you are as a

85   culturally-relevant practitioner? Like they -- it showed you some of those things you didn't

86   want to happen or was there a negative experience that you had in your K 12 experience that

87   also impacted your way that you show up in the classroom and as a culturally-relevant

88   practitioner?

89   **P:**   Sure. I think in middle school we had a principal that we said he was

90   prejudiced but we were -- (we meaning all Black students) sat at a lunch table together

91   knowing that we weren't supposed to and he came up to our table and said, distinctively, I

92   don't think I assigned an all-Black table and so just at that instance all of us were just jaw-

93   dropping in awe. And it was at that moment where you heard things about the school being

94   how the teachers -- we just didn't see it in teachers as much as we did in administration. So

95   you heard about it, but just to actually see it firsthand. And that's when I think at that moment

96   I really knew I was Black. I felt like I knew I was different. And I wanted to be white at that

97   time. I wanted to, I listened, I had white friends but I wanted to talk like them. I wanted to be

98   like them so that I can erase what other people's perception of, of all-Black table or what

99   other people's perception of being Black was. And it wasn't until high school that I was OK

100   with who I was and really wanted to learn: who am I? where do we come from? -- just the

101 history because you did really -- didn't get it in the history books. There was only a small part

102 that told you about Black history and we only learned just snippets of it during February. You

103 always hear about Doctor King from time to time when you're teaching about values or when

104 you're teaching a PBIS lesson but, you don't hear about Malcolm X. You don't hear about

105 some of the other pioneers that should be implemented in our classrooms or should be taught

106 and so that was taught at home. My parents taught that at home. They told us beyond people

107 than what we hear about all the time. And so also getting that from them and then from

108 friends that went to an all-Black school, it was something to hear -- I, I was embarrassed that

109 they knew a little bit more Black history than what I knew just scratching the surface and that

110 just went on even through high school and college. That was all -- I just remember going

111 through history books and just seeing just snippets about people that look like me or people

112 that came from different cities or states that my family lived in. And I just thought, you know,

113 there had to be something bigger, a bigger role that we played in America or across the

114 world. So it was then that I just kind of knew that I was different and; I kind of looked at my

115 hands and you evaluate yourself and see, you know, maybe he is right. You know, my name

116 is, is, uh, White. So, I mean, I just think that I just wanted to, to be somebody that I wasn't

117 and I knew that I couldn't erase that. So I had to start making some, some strides myself and

118 do some internal searching and then passing that on to my sons -- those stories and having

119 them to research people and talk about that and being ok with that and, as they as well, they

120 go to a predominantly-White school. So being ok with being who you are culturally, being ok

121 with that your hair and how that looks and, and if it crinkles or if it's twisted or braided being

122 ok with who you are. And so I think I learned from that and that seventh-grade year really

123 was a turning point for me just individually and then me culturally.

124   **I1:**   Can you talk a little bit about what that process was for you? You talked about

125 there was -- in that seventh-grade year, you, you -- your eyes were open to some things that

126   may not have been open to early on and then you did some of these things on your own. You,

127   you, you looked at that. So what did that process look like for you being where you were?

128   P: Just going home -- I remember going home just talking to my mom about, I

129   just can't believe he would say that. And she said, well, why not? And I'm like, you know,

130   there's things that you would think people would say to colleagues or not to students. And she

131   said, well, Jenny, you're right, you are Black. And she -- and I remember just looking again at

132   myself. Well, I am but why would he say that, you know, that hurt. And so -- so we kinda

133   had that, that conversation about the way he said it and the tone he said it in and the meaning

134   and I start to go over like words, how important words are. The next day, of course, parents

135   went to the school, of course, they wanted to talk to school boards. Of course, there were

136   channel two news and channel four news and of course, parents were talking about how that

137   affected kids. But I wondered why my mom never went. And I, I remember talking to her

138   like, you know, you're not gonna take off work and, and go and talk about it and she really

139   told me like, you know, this is what racism is, this is what prejudice is and you're gonna have

140   to deal with that and I'm gonna help you through that process, but you're still gonna get up

141   every day and go to that school. You're still going to, I'm still gonna hold you to these

142   expectations and these responsibilities, you're still gonna sit in that classroom and you're

143   gonna do the best that you can do and then we'll go from there. And so, the next day just

144   going back into the school building and hearing the apology. And from that, it was just like,

145   you can't take that back. And I just wondered how could I forgive someone for meaning -- for

146   saying words that -- to hurt you? Not wondering. It wasn't a wonder question. Like I wonder

147   if I did this. It was more of I -- this is built up and this is what I'm saying, and this is how I

148   feel. And so those feelings started to really resonate and he apologized and he would walk

149   down the hallways and just that, that's, that was something that you just always heard. And so

150   she told me it was ok and I think us talking through it and I think of her just showing me

151 pictures of people and women and men and kids, that have went through something similar or

152 even worse and telling me, you know, they continued, I remember Ruby Bridges. She would

153 tell me about that, you know, she continued to walk. Look at her head held up. She can

154 because she wanted something and she would tell me, you know, you want something, right?

155 So this is what you're gonna do. And so that really showed me that, at an early age, that you

156 know even though I don't feel like it or I don't want to and even though it hurts, I gotta get up

157 every day because this is what I have to do. And so that was really the process of getting

158 through that time and through others.

159   **I1:**   Well, listen, thank you for sharing and, and I have asked some questions. So

160 I'm gonna open the floor to my colleagues for them to ask some probing questions and/or for

161 some clarity on things that you said. So thank you so far -- so much so far ███████████.

162   **I2:**   Thank you so much for sharing ███████████. I'm wondering how has any

163 of the identity work that, that you've done and that your parents did with you -- has any of

164 that shown up in your classroom and in your practices? And if so, how so? Have any of them

165 been anything you've replicated with your students or is it -- are there other ways that show

166 up in your classroom and in your practices?

167   **P:**   So recently I just changed schools and something very different than what I'm

168 used to as far as classroom environment -- how students look different than I do -- majority.

169 And I really struggled with that. And I think it was more of me because those thoughts --

170 those identity thoughts popped back up in my mind of how was I going to be received --

171 being again a minority in this situation -- which I thought I had those thoughts buried years

172 ago because now you're an adult, you went -- you went through college, you're going to

173 Walmart, you -- the integration process -- you should be over with. But in this situation, it

174 seems like -- it seemed like everything just kind of zeroed in on me. And although everyone

175 was nice and they were warm and helpful and even the students, I still felt like I stuck out.

176   And so I had to go back and talk to my mom again and rework those identity issues. And I

177   think, I had to get back comfortable with me and I -- and it's amazing how you think that

178   you're over something and it really comes back and you have to rework it. And something

179   that the school has done is implement a mindfulness message every morning. And I tell my

180   students all the time, this is not just for you, it's for teachers also. And some of those

181   messages that pop up that are embedded in those slides have to deal -- deal with identity.

182   You're enough. It's OK. You can do anything. And so just those words sometimes, it, it's just

183   at the moment that I need it -- a lesson, a pop up and I'll really drone or drill into my students.

184   But I also tell them, you know, this was for me because, you know, I was really struggling. I,

185   and I didn't mean to tell them, but it was a good discussion because we always have good

186   discussions about our mindfulness morning. But I kind of told them how just being different -

187   - it was a diff -- the slide was dealing with being different. It's OK to be different. And I was

188   just telling them like, you know, have you ever felt that it's ok to be different? Have you ever

189   felt like you stuck out in situations? This past week I feel like I have stuck out and I really

190   need to go back and reflect -- and what do you do? And we kind of bounced ideas and that

191   has really helped. But, that would be the most recent time that I felt like that I, I thought

192   something was buried and, and it wasn't. And so I had to look back at my hands again and

193   look back at myself and put that confidence back into myself and tell myself that it's OK that

194   even if there will be a situation of someone saying I didn't assign you to this classroom

195   because you were Black or I didn't assign you to come to the school because you were Black.

196   I had to tell myself who I was and that I was enough. And so it's just ironic how 20 years later

197   that comes back and I still have to use those same words that my mom told me and look back

198   through old history and see those identity stories and just kind of nod my head and say that

199   you know, I can work through that, that process all over again.

200   **I2:**   Thank you for sharing that. I'm also wondering if that identity work has shown

201   up in any way in the academic practices in your classroom -- including the -- not only what is

202   taught, the content, but also like rigor levels.

203   **P:**   So is the, the identity being shown up in the academics?

204   **I2:**   All of the identity work. All of the -- so those upbring – those issues of

205   upbringing and K 12 experiences, all those things. I'm hearing you speak to how they show

206   up in the social-emotional development of your students. I'm wondering if, if you see any

207   connections to how it shows up in the academic work with your students as well?

208   **P:**   Academically, I have not seen, I haven't seen a pop up yet. We are just now

209   ironically going through February, or before at another school that I taught it, it showed up.

210   Definitely. Presently, I'm gonna say presently no. In the past schools that I have been at

211   which are all Black schools definitely. Academically, we look around everywhere we see us.

212   We talk about us. We are looking to find out more about who she is, who he is, how we're

213   alike and how we're different. We are researching and finding where, where did they grow up

214   and we're finding, looking at that history and looking at pictures, doing Google searches. And

215   so, these past couple of years at a all-Black school, definitely. I was empowered to see that

216   we were learning more beyond just basics of, of, of people that look like us.

217   And so, especially with February, Juneteenth. I mean, it was just always in, in anything in

218   between that celebrated someone of color, we were on it. And so presently that has not

219   showed up academically, but in the past that has, and just seeing students identify and, and

220   want to know more, and myself included, has been a great help. But I just hope to continue

221   some of that going forward. I don't want to lose that because sometimes you can with the

222   change of environment or change of situation and change of receiving also because those

223   students received it because they're used to it. That's something that they've been brought up

224 in. And the school has really built upon and included in academics. So I would say the past,

225 yes, but the present not yet.

226 **I2:** Thank you so much. And I will yield the floor to Ms. Becoat.

227 **I3:** Actually, the question that I was going to ask you kind of answered it. I was

228 going to ask, do you see yourself doing that sort of work in this new space that you're in

229 now? And, and you already started to answer that one. But, I, if you wanted to elaborate, are

230 there any specific things that you feel like you might begin doing in this space where the, the

231 student demographic might not include like a lot of racial diversity? But are there some

232 strategic things that you feel like you plan to do?

233 **P:** Yes. I know for Doctor King's birthday before we got out, we did kind of talk

234 about not necessarily who he was, but just some of the changes. We – I kinda implemented

235 that into what like positive behavior, why it's important to be peaceful, why it's important to

236 look out for one another. And so I kind of looked at some speeches that he did and we kind of

237 went with that. Going forward, now that we're in Black-History Month, I do plan to take

238 some of those words and connect it with some positive behavior, sayings or sentences and

239 kind of show that to them too. And that kind of connects with our social-emotional learning

240 piece of our morning mindfulness and kind of brings that out as well. Because they also need

241 to see -- in which we don't too much talk about in social studies too much because of the way

242 that our curriculum is we only have social studies one semester. So they, they don't get that

243 for the other three semesters, which is the third, the second going into the third semester. So

244 they won't get the social studies part. But I do plan to implement that into our social-

245 emotional section as well as our morning mindfulness and kind of talk about that and look at

246 those key words that some of those pioneers that look different from them, what they said and

247 how we can all learn from them as well.

248 **I3:** Thank you.

249   **I1:**   OK, ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. The last piece that we have is just really making sure --

250   we want to make sure that we gave you the opportunity in this space to share with us how

251   your cultural-identity upbringing, as well as your K-12 experience impacted the practice of

252   being a culturally-relevant practitioner. And so we wanna give time and space for you to just

253   reflect and think is, is there anything that you would like to share that maybe didn't come up

254   or you want to expound upon in, in answering that big -- so we just took that big question and

255   broke it up into chunks. So giving you an opportunity to share with us, if there's anything else

256   that you wanna share, share with us about how your cultural identities, upbringing, as well as

257   your K 12 experience impact your practice in the classroom of being a culturally-relevant

258   practitioner?

259   **P:**   No, I think I pretty much, I think elementary played a big role in my -- more

260   so than elementary and middle school -- played a big role more so in my high school years to

261   impact my education and which spilled over into classroom teaching. So I think those two

262   instances really show me exactly what path that I was heading in and what I was seeking, my

263   searching. And I think all of both of those instances really helped me be who I am -- not only

264   in the classroom but as a student and as a teacher and as a mother.

265   **I1:**   Awesome. One last thing we have before we look at our schedules and

266   calendar. Is there any person or group of people that kind of helped you or mentored you

267   throughout your time -- that could be from your home life all the way to a teacher or, or

268   anything in between -- that kind of helped you on the journey through finding who you were?

269   **P:**   Of course, of course, my parents, my brother also who, just playing football

270   and going from -- also being ripped from a small town and, but he continued to use those

271   values that he taught and take that to Springfield, Missouri and, and played sports. And he

272   also came through those same difficulties that I did in, in college as well as K through 12.

273   And then I had a couple of teachers that were in my middle school that when that incident

274   happened, they really came and talked to us, especially me individually and wanted to hear

275   my perspective and I'm friends with them today on Facebook. And so we really connect still.

276   And so I appreciate that, that relationship and that's pretty much it. High school is just, you

277   know, you feel like you're on a lonely boat in high school. It's just you versus you. But I

278   would say that group of people really pushed me to see who I was and to really stand up and

279   be ok with who I am.

280   **I1:**   Well ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮, we definitely appreciate you sharing with us your

281   narrative and your story in the early -- the early times of your, your experience with

282   education. So we know that we're gonna have a subsequent interview. We know that that

283   interview is really going to be focusing on that teacher-preparation program or process and

284   your beginnings of your teaching -- your teaching career. So that's what we'll kind of hit on.

285   Although obviously, we're open to go back and forth because, again, this is your narrative.

286   This is your story. There are no right or wrong answers. This is just how you are coming from

287   your perspective. So, and looking at your calendar, we really are working on your time

288   schedule. We, we appreciate you saying that you'll help us out and it's having it this week. So

289   looking at your schedule, if you could give us date and time we'll definitely put that out and

290   send you a Google alert again.

291   **P:**   Is there a specific date like that you're trying -- that you're shooting for or no?

292   **I1:**   No, just this week, whichever day he is working for you.

293   **P:**   What about Thursday?

294   **I1:**   Ok. Thursday would be the first and let us know what time works for you.

295   **P:**   The same time if I -- .

296   **I1:**   Ok. Well we will send out that message to you. And again, we say thank you

297   so much for giving us this time. And, again, telling us your story and being vulnerable. We

298   appreciate that, that work. So we will see you Thursday at 5 p.m.

299	P:	All right, thank you.
300	I2:	Thank you, ███████████. Have a good evening.
301	P:	You too,
302	I3:	Very much. Thank you.

Appendix D – Transcriber Pledge of Confidentiality

Transcriber's Pledge of Confidentiality

An Analysis of Culturally Relevant Pedagogical Development Through the Perspective of

Black Novice Teachers

     As a transcribing typist of this research project, I understand that I will be hearing tapes of confidential interviews. The information on these tapes has been revealed by research participants who participated in this project on good faith that their interviews would remain strictly confidential. I understand that I have a responsibility to honor this confidentially agreement. I hereby agree not to share any information on these tapes with anyone except the primary researcher of this project. Any violation of this agreement would constitute a serious breach of ethical standards, and I pledge not to do so.

_____

Transcribing Typist   Date

Appendix E – Narrative Plot (Mary H.)

Questions	Narrative Segments (Theme): Interview 1	Line #'s
Opening Question- How your cultural identities impact our practice of culturally relevant pedagogy	Grown up as the minority in the room, not the image of what people were seeking out as far as a dancer (RACIAL AWAKENING/AWARENESS)	9-12
	Mindset walking into those learning spaces: I must fight for my spot, prove myself, show up no matter how I feel or my qualification. (RACIAL AWAKENING/AWARENESS)	13-16
	Early experience shapes the environment I want to create for my students (SANCTUARY; SEEKING)	18-19
	Important that everyone gets seen and everyone is heard and that the content focuses on us as a community. Community not talent (SANCTUARY; SEEKING)	19-22
How would you say that you upbringing impacts your practice	Grew up in the ▮▮▮▮ School District, diverse district, "not othered." Moved to ▮▮▮▮▮, "became aware of my race" "aware of the person I chose to be in the room and how I was perceived," "Self-conscious" "All of a sudden turn with it all within one year where I am gonna be proud of the person I am. (RACIAL AWAKENING/AWARENESS)	31-40
	Race was never talked about in my family, not until I brought it up in college to my mom, who is a Caucasian woman. (RACIAL AWAKENING/AWARENESS)	41-42
	Mom did not have a lot to say or guidance in that area to kind of help up or guide me and my siblings. (RACIAL AWAKENING/AWARENESS) Self-discovery (RACIAL AWAKENING/AWARENESS)	42-43
		44-47
How about your K-12 experience as a whole? How do you feel that impacted your practice of culturally relevant pedagogy?	Community in the K-12 Experience, ▮▮▮▮ there was connection Moved Districts there was no connection to the people in class and I was not trying either (SANCTUARY)	51-57
		57-58

	Teenager phase.. not feeling like there was a connection. Just want to try and graduate (SANCTUARY)	59-66
		66-77
	Experiences of no connection informs teaching	67
	Don't want people to feel like outsiders, personable approach (SANCTUARY/SEEKING)	69-72
	Took a lot of learning and unlearning (SEEKING)	
	Grew up with learning dance in a technique heavy school	
	Try to teach from that lens of being perfect and being right isn't always what you can get from this environment. It's more that they walk away knowing that this is an art from that you get to express yourself with. (SEEKING)	75
	Want you to feel like a "human being" (SEEKING)	
Can you speak to some examples of what a community looked like—felt like—ways that you felt like a community was cultivated in your first school district?	Elementary and Middle school teachers very connected and it felt like family	82-94
	Teachers leaned into the diversity aspect of the district	
	Students has the same household demographic, single mom, single parent household	93-94
	Never felt like that was a loss or that not having two parents in a household was a loss because that was the standard or the normal (SANCTUARY)	
		96-97
	Moved districts, driving age 16 or so	
	Seemed as though everyone kind of came from a wealthy background	
	Everyone had two parents at home	100-101
	Felt a shift where you kind of felt because of the absences of all these things all of my pers now have, I feel less than (SANCTUARY)	
		102-104
	Racial disparities, in most classes I was pretty much the closet thing to black (K-12 RACIALIZED TRAUMA)	104
	First day teacher, made me very aware of my blackness (K-12 RACIALIZED TRAUMA)	106-107
	Very sad and I found community in my brother and didn't make very many friends (SANCTUARY)	
Are there other examples that you can think of, the	Eating lunch where I never felt like I had to look for a spot in elementary school and middle school, and a	112-118

difference between how the community showed up in your first district and or the lack of it looked, in your second district?	brief stint at High School. Not Clicky (SANCTUARY) ███████ (new school), opposite Did not eat in the cafeteria because it was "A" pretty segregated, "B" very clicky. Couldn't find a place to sit Took business internship to leave school early to combat the feeling. (SANCTUARY)	118-125
I'm wondering if there are any things that showed up in dance school that impacted how you show up as a culturally relevant teacher or a teacher working to be culturally relevant in your own classroom now.	Family could not afford to put me through 18 years of dance by any means. I had a full scholarship from 4 until I graduated high school and we were in ████. (SANCTUARY) Danced with the same type of similar demographic and economic statuses that I went to high school with at that point. (SANCTUARY) Dance school in ████ the form of Ballet is isolating, and some teachers made it feel that way (SANCTUARY) Had a few teachers that kind of sent that message throughout. (SANCTUARY) Few teachers sent that message throughout the studio and then it was really balanced by the non-ballet classes Good Community at the dance studio (SANCTUARY)	136-140 143-154
And how do you think that shows up in your classroom and how you show up as a classroom teacher now, or has it had any impact on how you show up as a classroom teacher now?	One teacher who was just ok the entire construct of ballet is stupid because why are you bending your body a way it's not supposed to bend when you could do it this way? Somebody give me permission to allow myself to not try to reach my leg up past 90 degrees (SEEKING) First time to have a "teacher who looked like me" was in college (RACIAL AWAKENING/AWARENESS) Mentor of mine- gave permission to unlearn Carry a lot of her lessons with me today Learn, unlearn the value in dance and relearn it in a way that makes me feel happy (SEEKING) Dance—I had to rebel from it first. Over the structure in my senior year, quit dancing.	159-165 166 167-176 192-202

	Rebel against all the rules. Wanted a different dance experience so traveled to different studios without sharing with the director. (SEEKING)	
What are some things that you would say you had to unlearn in terms of how you show up in a space? What did you relearn?	Went to college—did every other major except dance. Came back to dance- I missed it. (SEEKING)	203-207
	Learned a lot about myself through dance that I was missing, How I wanted to teach. Realized that I wanted to share with everybody the celebration, got hungry to teach people. Beautiful process and doesn't always have to be line and tutu and points (SEEKING)	207-223
	▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆ program has credit for pushing out of shell a program found through ▆▆▆▆ (first school district). Kept ties with ▆▆▆ (first school district) even though she attended ▆▆▆▆ (second school district) due to the group.	227-237
	Came to see her and took her to camp. Trauma Bonding from those experiences at the camp (SANCTUARY)	240-245
	Identity seek and finding and happenings when we moved to ▆▆▆ kept me motivated to seek out the community that I felt myself in. (SANCTUARY)	253-259
Talk us through what it looked like at ▆▆ ▆▆▆ as you were learning about your identity.	It was isolating. The first day's teacher was not so nice.. Jokingly Walked into personal finance class and he stopped me at the door and says "well you can't come in class, we are at our limit for the amount of colored kids in a class. (K-12 RACIALIZED TRAUMA)	260-263
	This was in 2012 or 2013… I joked back with him and looked in class and there was another biracial kid in there and I was like actually we made one and I walked past him into the class. (K-12 RACIALIZED TRAUMA)	264-269
	Had to get comfortable calling myself biracial- I may have identified as black. (K-12 RACIALIZED TRAUMA; RACIAL AWAKENING/AWARENESS)	

	Had to get comfortable being the only one there and not connecting with people. (K-12 RACIALIZED TRAUMA; RACIAL AWAKENING/AWARENESS; SANCTUARY)	270-271
	It was easy because I've never grown up in a dance where people looked like me. Never uncomfortable around large groups of people who don't look like me or don't share commonalities with how I would necessarily identify myself. (RACIAL AWAKENING/AWARENESS; SANCTUARY)	274-277
		282-284
	When called out about it…makes me feel, like, I have to be defensive about it.	
	Talk about the situation at home with brothers first how they were feeling, if they had the same experiences, really identifying experiences. (RACIAL AWAKENING/AWARENESS; SANCTUARY)	293-298
	Brothers' response, we are where we are, it's the area we live now	
	We have to take these precautions potentially.	
	One friend, a year older, devastated when she graduated.	
	Mission of mine to find people to connect with who I felt safe around. (RACIAL AWAKENING/AWARENESS; SANCTUARY)	
If I'm not mistaken, I believe you said this person was one of the first of the first teacher you had that also shared, the same identity as you. Is that throughout your whole K-12 experience?	First dance teacher, Junior year of college, immediately switched over to advisor, heavily influenced by not just her what but her actions. (SEEKING) During the interview…I just don't think my body can do that anymore. She stopped the interview and said that you can do whatever your body wants to do. A lot of socially-motivated work took us through the process of how to create work that can really be representative of a movement. (SEEKING)	303-332
Did you see any examples in your K-12 teachers of a focus on, social justice in any of the content	Not in ▮▮▮▮▮▮ I remember a leadership class at ▮▮▮▮▮▮.. taught us how to have a voice in school, current events, political voice, teaching us politics and kind of how to take more action. (SEEKING)	340-349

areas. Were there any examples of that in your K-12 Experience?		
Do you have examples of K-12 that sort of had high expectations for you and your achievement?	Hard on myself Prove myself to them Mantra- I have to show up as this really good student and I had a really solid GPA until I moved. I don't remember having teachers really take interest in that (SANCTUARY; K-12 RACIALIZED TRAUMA)	354-365
▮▮▮ and teacher expectations or lack of teacher expectation in your K-12 experience are there any connections to you or for you in how that then shows up in how you show up as a teacher now? Did any of that have any impact on how you show up now?	Like my approach to my students and their motivation for not just my class but school is something that I didn't experiences as a student and sometimes it feels invasive for me Having conversations with them even if they feel I'm being nosey or pushy (SEEKING; SANCTUARY) Genuinely care about their well roundedness I didn't go into a classroom out and proud about myself and my identity or like things I had to say I mostly like head down try to get my work done and it makes me sad for when I was struggling in school because I didn't know how to speak up or advocate for myself . (K-12 RACIALIZED TRAUMA; RACIAL AWARENESS/AWAKENING; SANCTUARY)	370-386
Questions	**Narrative Segments (Theme): Interview 2**	**Line #'s**
In what ways can you tell us about that process and in what ways it impacts your practice of being or becoming a culturally-relevant practitioner.	Teacher preparation program through ▮▮▮ (currently still in the program) Didn't go into undergrad with the intent of becoming a teacher Teaching found me and you kinda know when you like sign up for dance that you're gonna be a teacher. (SEEKING) Program doesn't focus on the content of dancing specifically	9-15

	Had a pretty sound idea of the teacher I wanted to be or the teacher that made me feel comfortable in the classroom enough to kind of take that information into my own spaces (SANCTUARY; SEEKING) Taught through undergrad at a dance studio, very different than what I grew up in, not too far off from like technique and styles.. Then content did not transfer well into the competition environment	15-22
	Learned to navigate in that environment and then kind of took that information into teaching for my master's degree. MFA you have to do a mentor-teaching experience which isn't really mentored that is where I got to mold, the approaches in the classroom (DEVELOPMENT)	22-30
	First time introduced to culturally-relevant teaching strategies was through Nyama McCarthy Brown. Took that research into thesis practice and in current classroom practices (SEEKING)	33-40
	Not centering the front of the dance classroom Moving around the classroom as the teacher Taking away the hierarchy of space All just on the same level Instead of spitting out a lot of steps, complete 2 to 4 count, check back, make sure they're good and then keep going or go back (SEEKING)	40-53
Have you had any current teaching experiences both your experience and thinking through professional development that have impacted your practice as a culturally-relevant practitioner?	I got professional development through ▮▮▮, hard time connecting with the material because it wasn't so like black and white	58-60
	You dig through and see what's gonna apply to you what's gonna work for your classroom and specifically when you teach like an elective Social emotional vs CRP	62-70
	It clicks for me depending on like what the content of the professional development (DEVELOPMENT) Aha moments protocol for building community and that is important to me (DEVELOPMENT; SEEKING)	71-77
	Important that we see the people we dance with to see the people that we should (share?) space with and that there's not conflict all the time (SEEKING)	83-93

Can you think of any of those job embedded sort of relationships with other teachers and what impact those may or may not have had on your practice of culturally-relevant practices?	Important to relate to other teachers in the first year. Student-teaching cohort has been beneficial. How are are connecting, how we are not connecting to students, strategizing together on concerns (DEVELOPMENT) School PLC has been helpful even though we teach different content we can share ideas about motivation, conflicts, issues. There are newer teachers, older teachers, novice and tenure all on one team. That has been helpful (DEVELOPMENT)	101-104 108-112 113-123
Are there any other examples in your coursework that you feel like have translated into your class/dance studio?	In undergrad there was a movement to decenter Eurocentric styles. They would have to take 3 Ballet classes and 3 modern classes in order to take a class in Jazz or West African dance. There is a shift to dismantle that process and let dancers choose their path. (SEEKING) MFA I got to be a part of implementing that part into the curriculum and course maps for ███████ Having teachers and colleagues constantly having that conversation and supporting that movement have influenced my career and it provides reinforcement that my style and path are okay Creating a safe place for the students in my. In my thesis around how we share vulnerable emotionally-vulnerable spaces with students and safely coaching them in and out of spaces. Example: consent- asking students if it is okay to correct their position or maneuver through a dance. (SEEKING)	132-142 142-154 158-179
Was your school purposefully using language that explains to the students that we are being purposeful with moving toward a more inclusive or diverse program?	Started with student voices sharing their desires and what was helpful and what wasn't' helpful anymore. (SEEKING) This also filtered down to hiring practices. Getting the right people teaching Tug and War How do we codify some of these modes of dance? Is it even possible? (SEEKING)	196-203 203-218
Has the district or school been able to	Little nuggets are taken from those spaces with art, pe and social sciences. It's almost like translation to	229-258

provide culturally relevant pedagogy practices?	see how this would work in science space vs. dance space. (DEVELOPMENT)	
In your first year have you received any feedback about your practices in the classroom? And if you have received feedback, has any of that really talked about your– the way that you are with your students, in terms of that culturally-relevant practitioner?	I get observed weekly by the university just because I'm in my student teacher semester. Have not had an observation from my actual school. Most of the feedback is "yeah that was right, that's a plie or, that's right My advisor, from ▇▇ her feedback is really positive- you have really positive relationships with your students and then I think she gets lost in how/why She kind of just pops in (DEVELOPMENT)	263-276
What historical context and cultural context are taught when you teach students various dance styles?	Teach who the choreographer of the style is and learning about them Showing the style of dance "flat backs" place of the pelvis if joy and should be over sexualized Always try to bring it back to the music they listen to currently or music they've chosen. We make movement based on how the music makes them feel Beginning of the year personal statements, made their own phrases based off personal statements (SEEKING)	281- 303
Is there anything else that you can think of or that you wanna add related to your teacher-prep program and your current teaching experiences and how that impacts your practice of culturally-relevant pedagogy?	Information is coming in in mass amounts of things that are not relevant to me at the moment (DEVELOPMENT) How to make sense of the information and make it relevant for dance. How to teach literacy without reading a book or count without breaking out the math book Still learning how to be a teacher while like knowing how to dance and it's a balancing act (DEVELOPMENT; SEEKING)	332-339
Do any courses specifically use the phrases like culturally relevant or, decolonizing practices or do they offer any courses to you all like	Teaching program no but the MFA program, Professors are trying hard to do it, Methodologies course in dance One teacher is the pioneer of this mission at ▇▇, she took over for the MFA program (DEVELOPMENT)	358-366

that even similar phrases where students would know that or is it multicultural education or something like that?		
Was there any coursework about teaching strategies and methods of just teaching practice like best practices for teachers?	Not in my current teaching program. I've learned teaching by either having been taught or doing and trial and error. McCarthy Brown through my professor at ▮ Black Dancing Body and McCarthy from Azaria Hogans Trying to decenter my own contemporary practices They gave the space but we had to research on our own (DEVELOPMENT; SEEKING)	373-387