A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY EXPLORING BLACK BEGINNING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR PREPAREDNESS TO TEACH RACIALLY DIVERSE STUDENTS

by

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ABSTRACT

RIA CRYSTAL DIANE JOHNSON. A Qualitative Case Study Exploring Black
Beginning Teachers' Perceptions of Their Preparedness to Teach Racially Diverse
Students.
(Under the direction of DR. CHANCE LEWIS)

Beginning teachers are more likely to secure jobs in diverse school districts

(Gagnon & Mattingly, 2012; Holme et al., 2018). Unfortunately, beginning teachers are

also more likely to leave diverse school districts and urban schools due to a number of

challenges (Doran, 2020; Howard & Milner, 2021). Because these schools consist

predominantly of students of color, the high turnover affects students' academic success

(Ladson-Billings, 2022). Additionally, beginning teachers in these specific school

settings have been historically non-proficient in providing students of color with a

culturally relevant education (Ladson-Billings, 1995a) which has caused the educational

system to be centered around a Eurocentric perspective and not reflective of students'

racial diversity (Davis et al., 2022). Using a critical lens, this study explores three Black

beginning teachers' perceptions of preparedness in teaching racially diverse students and

the influences it has on their teaching practices.

Keywords: Black beginning teachers, racially diverse students, perceptions, preparedness

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you. I am so grateful for our friendship and cannot wait to witness what God has in store for you in this next chapter. #ForLifers

Last, but not least, a special thank you to my participants who contributed to this work. I am thankful for their flexibility and transparency during this process. Thank you for helping me contribute to a focus dear to my heart to the larger body of research.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to two special people in my life. First, to my Compass, my

Granddaddy, James Clarence Oates, Sr. Oh how I wish you were here to see how far I've

come, but I know you've seen it all from heaven's porch. I love you Granddaddy.

Love,

Crys

To my niece, Neema Danielle Johnson. Looking through your pictures and watching your

videos is what kept me going throughout this process. You helped me more than you'll

ever know. I pray that every educator you encounter will fully welcome, honor, and

embrace your infectious joy, smile and laughter, natural curiosity and intelligence,

chocolate skin, curly coils, and dash of sass. I will always advocate for you. I love you.

All my love,

Aunt Crystal

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Following the murder of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man who was killed by a white Minneapolis police officer, Derek Chauvin, on May 25, 2020, there was a new surge of American citizens who began questioning the racial injustices in the United States, the origins from whence they came, and the role that they played in eradicating or perpetuating them (Lempinen, 2021; The New York Times, 2020). The following year, U.S. President Joseph Biden signed into law for Juneteenth to become a federal holiday (The White House, 2021). Juneteenth is a commemoration of the emancipation of the remaining enslaved African Americans in the U.S. on June 19, 1865, nearly two years after the Emancipation Proclamation was passed (Smith, 2021). This new act of legislation caused many to think about why they were not taught about Juneteenth in schools, what other hidden curriculum and instruction have been missing from public education, and how stakeholders can ensure that children's education today will be more culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995) than the generation before them.

The misrepresentation of American history has detrimentally impacted the learning of children in schools as well as influenced the marginalization of content that beginning teachers are taught in teacher preparation program curriculums (Sleeter, 2012). For students to have a greater awareness of the non-Eurocentric curriculum in schools, they must have teachers who are prepared to teach racially and culturally diverse students and provide diverse and inclusive instruction. Furthermore, for beginning teachers to create equitable learning environments in schools, teachers must be able to identify the areas in which inequities take place (Lawyer et al., 2020).

Specifically pertaining to racial inequity, teacher education plays a key role in preserving substandard schooling and racial oppression endured by students of marginalized groups in U.S. public schools and society (Leonardo, 2009, as cited in Harris et al., 2019). Research indicates that teachers teach more effectively to students with backgrounds similar to their own (Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Egalite & Kisida, 2017; Redding, 2019), but for teachers to teach *all* students effectively, they must be willing to step out of their comfort zones and challenge themselves to gain knowledge, skills, and abilities to teach all students (Lambeth & Smith, 2016).

In the United States, the teacher attrition rate is twice as high as fellow high-achieving countries such as Finland, Singapore, and Ontario, Canada (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). One hundred thousand classrooms are being staffed by someone who is not qualified to teach. Teachers who are alternatively certified are 25 percent more likely to resign. Schools with high turnover are usually staffed with beginning, inexperienced teachers (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). As of March 2020, 15,404 of the 94,410 teachers in North Carolina are beginning teachers (teachers with fewer than three years of experience). While beginning teachers make up roughly 16 percent of the North Carolina teacher workforce, their attrition rate is higher than those who are not classified as beginning teachers (11.7 percent vs. 6.7 respectively). Beginning teachers who are lateral entry have an attrition rate of 13.6 percent (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2021). Lateral entry, which was replaced by the residency pathway in 2019, was a pathway that allowed candidates three years to complete their teaching licensure requirements (North Carolina Department of Public Education, n.d.). This is important to consider when discussing beginning teachers'

preparedness to teach racially diverse students because many new teachers are placed in

schools that are highly diverse and highly impoverished (Bettini & Park, 2017; Iasevoli,

2018). Poor diverse districts in large cities are more likely to have a higher concentration

of beginning teachers than other districts; thus high poverty schools are associated with a

higher percentage of beginning teachers (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2012). Six percent of

beginning teachers are more likely to leave schools that serve students living in high

poverty, and nine percent are more likely to leave schools serving predominantly Black

and Hispanic students (Boyd et al., 2008). These patterns have led to beginning teachers

avoiding working at schools that predominantly serve students of color in high poverty

(Borman & Dowling, 2008). Because of this, it is critical that beginning teachers are

prepared to teach our most disenfranchised and racially diverse students to prevent

students from having a revolving door of teachers who consistently cause a negative

impact on their achievement.

Statement of the Problem

In a recent study for the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2021),

60 percent of early career teachers working in high poverty public schools felt "well

prepared" to instruct their students in comparison to the 74 percent that worked in lower

poverty public schools. Further, the percentages are disproportionate in the following

areas between early career teachers in high poverty public schools versus early career

teachers in low poverty public schools; preparedness in handling classroom or

disciplinary actions (48 vs. 60) and differentiating instruction (50 vs. 62) (Bowsher et al.,

2018). Haberman (2010b) shared that "overly directive, mind-numbing, mundane,

useless, anti-intellectual acts that constitute teaching not only remain the coin of the

realm but have become the gold standard" (p. 1). He shared further that teaching as described creates no difference between teaching students from diverse backgrounds vs. advantaged backgrounds and teachers will continue to teach skills, concepts, and appreciations using the very same ineffective acts (Haberman, 2010b).

High poverty public schools predominantly consist of Black and Brown students. Pre-service teachers, who are mainly white, female, and middle class must learn to teach cultural relevance and defy social injustice in both the classroom and society (Singer, 1996, as cited in Lewis, 2017). For teachers to effectively teach racially diverse students, they must first know what is culturally relevant to them. This includes recognizing when the existing curriculum fails to build on or acknowledge the cultural knowledge students bring to their learning. Teachers must have knowledge of their students' cultural traditions and practices and move beyond their own worldviews to develop and understand their students' perspectives (Santoro, 2009). This is what pedagogical theorist Gloria Ladson-Billings called culturally relevant pedagogy. Culturally relevant pedagogy is a theoretical model that addresses student achievement, students' cultural identity, and critical perspectives that challenge inequities perpetuated by schools and institutions (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

While improving the effectiveness of teachers serving students from diverse racial and socioeconomic backgrounds is important, it is also equally important to recruit and retain highly skilled teachers to prepare for such effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, 2013). Beginning teachers in their first and second year of teaching are more likely to leave schools that predominantly serve students of color and students in high poverty, particularly Black and Hispanic students (Boyd et al., 2011; Xu et al., 2012). Beginning

teachers are also assigned classes that are predominately comprised of low-income, minoritized, low-achieving students more often than veteran teachers (Boyd et al., 2013; Clotfelter et al., 2005; Kalogrides et al., 2013; Scafidi et al., 2007). The pressure of meeting the needs of these students creates greater instructional loads that may require more than what a beginning teacher's teaching experience can provide, causing many of them to resign (Bruno et al., 2019).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore beginning teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to teach racially diverse students. In 2020, 98,345 North Carolina teachers completed the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey. According to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2020), the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey is "an online, anonymous survey that assesses teachers' working conditions in key areas." The following are percentages of areas in that teachers felt they needed more professional development to teach their students more effectively: differentiating instruction (52 percent), special education (students with disabilities) (55 percent), special education (gifted and talented) (47 percent), English Language Learners (51 percent), closing the achievement gap (52 percent). For clarity, an achievement gap "occurs when one group of students (e.g., students grouped by race/ethnicity, gender) outperforms another group and the difference in average scores for the two groups is statistically significant (i.e., larger than the margin of error)" (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2011).

To prepare beginning teachers to effectively change the lives of students impacted by these areas and build inclusive learning communities in their classrooms, diverse

pedagogical strategies and skills must be taught in their teacher preparation program.

However, many teachers do not receive opportunities to develop the competencies

needed to meet the pedagogical needs of students, including their individual

backgrounds, learning styles, and interests (Anderson & Aronson, 2020; Ishii-Jordan,

2011). Research shows that the teacher education that pre-service teachers receive greatly

influences the dispositions that they have in their classrooms. Teachers' dispositions are

evidenced in their interactions with students, the prioritization of certain groups of youth,

and their habits in professional decision-making (Warren, 2017). These beliefs impact

how teachers effectively and consistently respond to racially and culturally diverse youth

(Haberman, 1991).

  In terms of racially diverse youth, the racial demographic in public schools has

changed over the years. The following is a report from the National Center for Education

Statistics (2018):

   In fall 2018, of the 50.7 million students enrolled in public elementary and

   secondary schools, 23.8 million were White, 13.8 million were Hispanic, 7.7

   million were Black, 2.7 million were Asian, 2.1 million were of Two or more

   races, 0.5 million were American Indian/Alaska Native, and 186,000 were Pacific

   Islander. Between fall 2009 and fall 2018, public school enrollments among

   White students decreased from 26.7 million to 23.8 million. Similarly, the number

   of Black students decreased from 8.2 million to 7.7 million. In contrast, the

   number of Hispanic students increased from 11.0 million to 13.8 million. These

   enrollment trends produced changes in the overall composition of U.S. public

   school students.

Teachers who are not proficient in providing students of color with a culturally relevant education may be keeping systemic oppression intact (Taylor, 2010). With this in mind, it is necessary now, more than ever, for teachers to be competent in providing the best learning environment for the racially diverse students in their classrooms.

Research Questions

To explore the perceptions of beginning teachers' preparedness in teaching racially diverse students, this study will assess the lived experiences of beginning teachers currently employed within Oates County Schools (a pseudonym), North Carolina. To gather meaning of the beginning teachers' experiences, the following research questions will guide the study:

1. What are beginning teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to teach racially diverse students?

2. What are the contributing factors to beginning teachers' perceptions of preparedness to teach racially diverse students?

3. What resources do beginning teachers use to teach racially diverse students and become more competent in teaching racially diverse students?

Expected Outcomes

I had three expected outcomes for this study. The first expected outcome was to gain a clearer understanding of beginning teachers' preparedness to teach racially diverse students. I gathered personal, professional, and pre-service insights, examples, stories, and experiences from participants to capture the true essence of how they determined their level of preparedness in teaching racially diverse students. The second expected outcome was the characterization of factors beginning teachers contribute to their

perceptions of preparedness in teaching racially diverse students. Capturing these contributing factors from beginning teachers better informed me of what beginning teachers consider when determining their perceptions of preparedness in terms of teaching racially diverse students and critically reflecting on whether their perceptions are conducive to providing students with a culturally responsive learning environment. Lastly, the third outcome was to find out what resources beginning teachers are gravitating toward to improve their effectiveness in teaching racially diverse students. Exploring these resources helped determine whether these resources were leading teachers in the right direction when professionally developing their effectiveness in teaching racially diverse students and potentially lead to future stakeholders assessing what they can provide to make beginning teachers' teaching experience with racially diverse students more successful.

Theoretical Framework

This study is positioned in Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Bell, 1995). In education, critical race theory is a theoretical construct that seeks to inform theory, research, pedagogy, curriculum, and policy (Yosso, 2006). Commonly identified tenets include permanence of racism, whiteness as property, counter-storytelling, interest convergence, critique of liberalism, and intersectionality (Bell, 1980, 1992; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1998 as cited in Capper, 2015). Harris (1994) explained that CRT is considered an heir of critical legal studies (CLS) and traditional civil rights scholarship through the lens of CLS's commitment to being radical and traditional civil right scholarship's focus on the liberation from racism (p. 899).

CRT acknowledges that education is not confined to school buildings but provides a critical analysis of the conditions of communities that experience disinvestment, marginalization, and isolation (Omotoso, 2017). It has become a guide for education researchers to examine educational opportunities, school climate, representation, and pedagogy to help analyze students who have been historically marginalized and underrepresented in schools (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015). As detailed in Creswell and Poth (2018), CRT presents stories about discrimination from the perspective of people of color and simultaneously argues for the eradication of racial subjugation while acknowledging that race is a social construct (Parker & Lynn, 2002; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). In this study, beginning teachers were asked to share their personal and professional experiences that impacted their perceptions of preparedness when teaching racially diverse students. CRT provides the foundation to invite beginning teachers to think introspectively about their racial and equity background and how it played a role in their perception of teaching students who are racially different from themselves. This theory recognizes the intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) of racism and oppression and how it can be experienced within and across classism, sexism, ableism, and other margins (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015). In this study, participants from various backgrounds were interviewed to provide me with a more intimate insight into how the different intersections related to the participants affect their perceptions of preparedness in teaching racially diverse students. CRT was used to analyze the participants' experiences and make meaning of ways to provide authentic instruction for racially diverse students in schools.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

While CRT was originally used as a legal term, scholar, teacher educator, and pedagogical theorist, Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) conceptualized culturally relevant pedagogy out of her understanding of CRT (Bhattacharya, 2017). Culturally relevant pedagogy refers to a "more dynamic or synergistic relationship between home/community culture and school culture" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 467). In this study, culturally relevant pedagogy was used as a conceptual framework. Since the 1990s, education reforms that have dominated U.S. public schools have been context-blind, with students across the nation receiving the same curriculum and instruction that centers white English-speakers' experiences (Gutiérrez et al., 2002; Sleeter, 2012). Low expectations, disproportionate placement in special education, and discipline referrals for students of color remain an issue in U.S. public schools (Sleeter, 2012).

Despite the increase in racial diversity in U.S. public schools, teacher educators still avoid conversations about diversity. This affects the education pre-service teachers receive regarding diversity and stifles diversity learning opportunities that would benefit pre-service teachers' teaching practices in public schools (Ellerbrock et al., 2016). Ladson-Billings' (1995) theoretical model, culturally relevant pedagogy has three components—"a focus on student learning and academic success, developing students' cultural competence to assist students in developing positive ethnic and social identities, and supporting students' critical consciousness or their ability to recognize and critique societal inequalities" (California Department of Education, n.d.; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995).

Since the implementation of high stakes standardized testing that accompanied No Child Left Behind (2001), the work of teachers has become largely standardized, causing very little time for teachers to intentionally incorporate culturally relevant pedagogy into their classrooms. Standardized tests have caused non-tested curricula to become obsolete while teachers are heavily surveilled to ensure that they are teaching the mandated curriculum (Sleeter, 2012). Ladson-Billings (2014) argued that it is critical for students to develop sociopolitical consciousness, which she defined as "the ability to take learning beyond the confines of the classroom using school knowledge and skills to identify, analyze, and solve real-world problems" (p. 75). Because very few in-service and pre-service teachers have a sense of their own sociopolitical consciousness, it is less likely that they are equipped to instill sociopolitical consciousness into students (Ladson-Billings, 2006). In-service and pre-service teachers must understand their own sociopolitical consciousness to be culturally responsive in their classroom (Milner, 2011b).

Over the years, the meaning of culturally relevant pedagogy has been distorted. (Sleeter, 2012). State departments, school districts, and individual teachers are now diluting culturally relevant pedagogy with performative gestures such as "adding some books about people of color, having a Kwanzaa celebration, or posting 'diverse' images with the assumption that these notions make one culturally relevant" (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 82). Instead of focusing on one racial group, culturally relevant pedagogy is designed to encompass the intricacies and multifaceted identities and cultures globally that makeup today's youth (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Having more pre-service and in-

service teachers skilled in authentic, culturally relevant pedagogy would better prepare teachers to teach students of diverse backgrounds.

Beginning teachers have the potential to positively impact students' lives and counter the narrative that students of color, their teachers, and their communities are not successful (Borrero et al., 2018). Culturally relevant pedagogy positions students' culture as an asset for learning rather than an explanation of failure (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1995, as cited in Borrero et al. 2018). Additionally, students of color often perceive themselves differently than white students. Because race has historically been used to determine one's intelligence, it is important that teachers understand their own biases by becoming "culturally attuned" (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011, p. 4) to their students' identities as well as their own. Teachers who utilize their students' cultural identities in their classrooms have a greater chance of their teaching practices evolving students' critical consciousness and becoming change agents in their communities (Camangian, 2010; Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Makaiau & Freese, 2013; Picower, 2019):

> Teachers are often missing from the national discussion about students' success: Aspiring teachers need opportunities to reflect on their own educational backgrounds and desires for becoming teachers. They need time to build meaningful relationships with fellow new teachers committed to serving urban youth, and they need opportunities to observe and practice empowering teaching. All of this can happen while being guided by a CRP framework (Kincheloe, 2008). Perhaps most importantly, new teachers must see their students' cultural

identities as assets to be built upon in the classroom context. (e.g., Borrero et al.,

2016, p. 29; Camangian, 2013)

Beginning teachers who are invested in incorporating culturally relevant

pedagogy in their classrooms are already experiencing pressure to prepare their students

for standardized testing, but their presence in school buildings is vital as they can move

beyond the "simplistic and static notions of culture" (Ayers & Ayers, 2014; Borrero et

al., 2018, p. 25). The more teachers help students examine their multifaceted identities,

the more opportunities students have to define themselves rather than being confined by

the assumptions placed upon them (Nieto, 2013 as cited in Borrero et al., 2018).

Culturally relevant pedagogy will support beginning teachers in maintaining high

expectations for their students, as well as themselves.

Overview of Context and Methods

This study utilized a qualitative design with a case study approach. This design is

aimed to explore the lived experiences of three beginning teachers and their perceptions

of their preparedness to teach racially diverse students. The sample population for this

study was retrieved by convenience sampling as well as criterion sampling to obtain

beginning teachers currently employed in an urban school district where there is a

reasonable likelihood that beginning teachers are recruited to teach in schools that have

racially diverse student populations. For this study, selected participants were within their

fourth or fifth year of teaching, had successfully completed their teacher preparation

program, and currently teach within grades kindergarten-sixth grade.

Data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

The interview transcripts, along with artifacts and documents shared by the participants,

were analyzed to identify thematic patterns. This data will be used to provide insight into synthesizing beginning teachers' perceptions of preparedness to teach racially diverse students and determine what further supports are needed to ensure that beginning teachers are successful in this area.

Significance of Study

This study is significant for three key reasons. First, in the study, beginning teachers reflected on their past and present personal, professional, and pre-service experiences to evaluate their perceptions of preparedness to teach racially diverse students. As mentioned previously, beginning teachers are often staffed in the most diverse and high-poverty schools and are more likely to resign from schools of this demographic (Bettini & Park, 2017). High turnover rates negatively impact students' learning and oftentimes leave them with underqualified teachers to fill the vacancies (Bettini & Park, 2017; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Gathering these perceptions of beginning teachers will provide insight for educational stakeholders to make changes on how they can prepare and support beginning teachers in highly diverse schools to increase retention.

It is important to note that while hundreds of beginning teachers of all races were invited to participate in this study, only Black beginning teachers consented. Thus, the three participants in this study racially self-identify as Black. There are many reasons why this may have been the case, including (but not limited to); white fear (Martin & Lakins, 2022), the widespread criticism of critical race theory (Price, 2021), or perhaps implicit bias that portrays me as an intimidating Black woman discussing race. Nonetheless, while a more racially diverse group of beginning teachers could have

resulted in a wider range of insights and experiences, the insights of the three consenting participants were significant because it showcases that Black people are not monolithic, and through their experiences, their intersections across race were similar and different in terms of how they approached teaching racially diverse students through in-depth examinations which coincide with case study methodology.

Secondly, this study is significant because it will better inform teacher preparation programs on how they can provide comprehensive learning experiences in their program to prepare pre-service teachers to teach racially diverse students. Historically, teacher preparation programs in the United States have not been designed to prepare future teachers for social justice in education or culturally responsive teaching (Asher, 2007; Banks, 2019; Hayes & Juarez, 2012). What is commonly included in teacher preparation programs regarding racial diversity is "niceness" (Thelin, 1978). Pre-service teachers are provided with nice, liberal-oriented insights around racially diverse students without being fully engaged in the "arduous, complex, and self-reflection processes culturally responsive teaching requires" (Bissonnette, 2016, p. 10).

Authentic, culturally relevant teacher preparation relies on teacher educators addressing and providing opportunities for students to discuss, examine, and confront the various forms of power, privilege, and marginalization that mark the classroom (Bissonette, 2016; Ellerbrock et al., 2016). Exploring beginning teachers' reflections on how their experiences impacted their preparedness in teaching racially diverse students will provide helpful insight to charge teacher educators to engage in critical reflection (Howard, 2003) and reconstruct their programs to become more culturally relevant.

Lastly, this study is significant in that it will add to the body of research focused on racial diversity in public schools. There is a growing body of literature that calls to support teachers in their knowledge and skill development in racial diversity (Gay, 2003, 2010; Nieto & Bode, 2018). There is also a dire need for culturally relevant teachers. K-12 students are becoming increasingly more culturally, linguistically, ethnically, and economically diverse (Bonner et al., 2018; Hussar & Bailey, 2014). Many teachers lack the cultural knowledge, skills, dispositions, and experiences necessary to provide a quality education for students who represent differing levels of knowledge, skills, and perspectives from their own (Bennett, 2012; Harriott & Martin, 2004; Trumbull & Pacheco, 2006; Warren, 2002, as cited in Bonner et al., 2017, p. 699). Therefore, this study will further the research with the potential of increasing the support needed for beginning teachers to be successful in educating racially diverse students.

Positionality of the Researcher

As an elementary school teacher for seven years and a new teacher support coach for five years, I have witnessed first-hand the inequities that many racially diverse students receive from their beginning teachers. Some of the inequities are deliberate, while some are evidence of teachers not being aware of the intersections that makeup racially diverse students, not receiving support from their teacher preparation program or school to teach racially diverse students, and/or not having had their privilege challenged to open a bridge to understanding the unique needs of racially diverse students.

As a new teacher support coach who has professionally developed, mentored, and coached hundreds of teachers in their first three years of teaching, I have also seen the

increasing number of beginning teachers being staffed in high-poverty schools that predominantly serve students of color. The turnover rate in these schools leaves many students with a long-term substitute from months to an entire school year, causing many students who are historically disenfranchised to plummet in their academic achievement. I believe that these incidences are not coincidental but stem from a long history of racism and privilege in the United States. I am passionate about ensuring that historically marginalized students are served by teachers who see, hear, welcome, acknowledge, include, and fervently teach all students and allow their multiple identities to take center stage in the classroom. Providing insight on what beginning teachers need to better serve racially diverse students will hopefully assist in providing new policies and practices in place amongst teacher preparation programs and school districts to ensure that beginning teachers enter the profession ready to equitably serve all children.

Definitions of Terms

To better orient the reader to the terminology in this study, the following terms are defined and supported by research for clarity.

Alternatively Licensed: Commonly called residency licensed, allows qualified individuals to begin teaching while completing North Carolina licensure requirements. The four "partners" involved are the individual, a recognized Educator Preparation Program (EPP), the Local Education Agency (LEA), and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2021).

Beginning Teacher: A teacher within their first three years of teaching (North Carolina Board of Education, 2020).

Culturally Diverse: Culturally diverse refers to a variety of cultures that exists within a society. These cultural groups include (but are not limited to) religion, ethnicity, language, nationality, sexual orientation, class, gender, age, disability, health differences, geographic location, achievement, etc. Often synonymous with multiculturalism, it is a system of beliefs and behaviors that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context which empowers all within the organization or society (Belfield, 2012; Rosado, 2019).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: A theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm students' cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate. The three components of culturally relevant pedagogy are academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Critical Race Theory: Critical Race Theory (Bell, 1995) is a theoretical construct that seeks to inform theory, research, pedagogy, curriculum, and policy (Yosso, 2006). This theory recognizes the intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) of racism and oppression and how it can be experienced within and across classism, sexism, ableism, and other margins (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015).

Diversity: Diversity is understanding that each individual is unique, thus understanding and acknowledging the differences among groups of people and individuals based on ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionalities,

language, religion, sexual orientation, geographical area, political beliefs, and/or other ideologies (Haihambo, 2020; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008).

Equity: Equity is justice, fair treatment, and opportunity for the advancement of all people across all systems. Specifically, in education, equity is fair, customized support for students to ensure that every child is successful, regardless of the intricacies of their lives (City of Durham, 2021; Haihambo, 2020).

High Poverty: In North Carolina public schools, high poverty describes schools with 75 percent or more students who come from families who qualify for subsidized school meals (Oakes et al., 2021).

Inclusion: Inclusion is providing an environment where individuals have an opportunity to reach their fullest potential, as well as actively inviting the contribution and participation of all people (Ford Foundation, 2019; Gentilini, 2021).

Lateral Entry: An alternate route to teaching, allows a school system to hire someone with at least a bachelor's degree as a teacher, with the assumption that over the next three years, the person being hired will complete a teacher education program through a college, university, or Regional Alternative Licensing Center (RALC) (RALC, 2019).

Pre-Service Teacher: Pre-service teachers, also known as teacher candidates, are student teachers who are enrolled in a teacher preparation program and working towards teacher certification. Their training typically includes supervised field teaching experiences and support and mentorship of university faculty and cooperating K-12 teachers (Swanson, 2015).

Race: Race is not biological but a social construct. Although the belief that race is biological has been proven to be false, race is commonly defined by biological traits (skin color, hair texture, and other physical attributes) (Brown & Barganier, 2018; Morning, 2007; Omi, 2001). Sociologists describe race as a social concept that changes over time as political, economic and historical contexts change and is used to place people in categories. Race is a complex topic that shapes the way people relate to each other based on their beliefs (American Sociological Association, 2003). Historically, race has been used to divide people based on their differences. In the fifteenth century, the Europeans began to use *white* as a symbol of power, privilege, standard, and superiority amongst non-European people. Any color outside of white was deemed the opposite. This paradigm and its implications have influenced the superiority of white people and the inferiority of non-white people for centuries in various systems in the country today (Lehman, 2009).

Racial Diversity: Racial diversity is the acknowledgment and celebration of differences between racial groups. Diversity recognizes and values differences within as well as between racial identities (Howard University, 2022).

Teacher Dispositions: Teacher dispositions are a teacher's professional and moral habits that inform their educator's performance (Council of Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2020). Teachers bring their own experiences, attitudes, perceptions, perspectives, and beliefs into their classrooms (Saultz et al., 2021).

Social Justice: In education, social justice is the instruction that informs the student on how to take social action against systems of power and privilege (Clausen & Logan, 2020).

Teacher Preparation Program (TPP): A teacher preparation program (also known as educator preparation program or EPP) is a state-approved course of study that grants initial certification or licensure for an enrollee to teach in the state's elementary of secondary schools once the enrollee has met all state educational or training requirements (Kim et al., 2015).

Traditional Licensure Pathway: The pathway that requires candidates to gain entry into and graduate from an Educator Preparation Program (EPP) before they begin teaching in a Local Education Agency (LEA) (Public School Forum of NC, 2021).

Urban: Considering the population and the socioeconomic, racial, cultural, and academic context of a city, urban is classified into three categories: *urban intensive*, *urban emergent*, and *urban characteristic* (Milner, 2012; Schaffer et al., 2017). Urban intensive describes school districts within cities with a high population density and size (1 million or more people). Because of the large number of citizens, these areas may experience difficulty meeting the demands for resources. Urban emergent describes schools located in large cities but not as large as those labeled urban intensive (fewer than 1 million people). These areas may also experience resource scarcity, but not to the same extent as urban intensive areas. Lastly, urban characteristic describes school districts within areas that are not located in big or mid-sized cities, but experience the challenges associated with urban intensive and urban emergent areas (Milner, 2012).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of literature provides a critical examination of the existing literature related to beginning teachers' perceptions of preparedness to teach racially diverse

students. This chapter opens with the characteristics of beginning teachers in the U.S.—

including the demographics, turnover rate, teacher-student racial ratio in beginning

teachers' classrooms, and their impact on racially diverse students. Next, the literature

focuses on the pre-service experiences of beginning teachers as well as teacher

preparation programs and how those experiences may have shaped or influenced

beginning teachers' perceptions of teaching racially diverse students, including teacher

self-efficacy and cultural capital. Lastly, the literature review will conclude with a

summary identifying the gaps in the literature and how this study will provide insight into

those gaps.

Beginning Teachers in the U.S.

The United States is experiencing teacher shortages, partly due to the turnover of

beginning teachers (VanLone et al., 2022). The supply of beginning teachers is low and

continues to decrease. Strenuous workloads, little guidance, and support, and several

other reasons cause beginning teachers to leave the profession after only a few years of

teaching (Berry et al., 2021; Darling-Hammond et al., 2022; Oakes et al., 2021). In the

2017-2018 school year, nine percent of teachers in the United States were in their first-

third year of teaching, down from approximately 15 percent in the 2015-2016 school year

(National Center for Education Statistics, 2021; Sutcher et al., 2016). Studies have shown

that up to 44 percent of teachers leave before their fifth year, and 10 percent leave before

the end of their first year (Ingersoll et al., 2014, 2018). These rates increase in schools

that serve marginalized populations such as students of color, students living in poverty,

and students with disabilities (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Sorensen &

Ladd, 2020). Shortages of funds within school districts with a racially diverse school

population make it difficult for schools to compete in the market for qualified teachers. When school districts cannot obtain qualified teachers, they assign the least qualified individuals to students with the least political clout (Darling-Hammond, 2013). This notion normalizes the cycle of marginalized students receiving the least qualified teachers.

Most beginning teachers are young, recent college graduates. However, in the 2017-2018 school year, 36 percent of beginning, inexperienced teachers were over the age of 29, with almost 15 percent over the age of 40. Whether young or older, this booming increase of beginning teachers has been identified by researchers as the "greening" of the teaching force (Ingersoll et al., 2021, p.11). Additionally, the population of beginning teachers remains largely white. Nearly 80 percent of public-school teachers in the United States are white, while 21 percent are comprised of minoritized groups (nine percent-Hispanic, seven percent-Black, two percent-Asian, two percent-two or more races, one percent-Native American/Alaska Native, less than one percent-Pacific Islander) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). Despite these facts, public schools have more teachers who match the racial and ethnic makeup of their schools (Yarnell & Bohrnstedt, 2017). For example, USA Facts (2020) reported that while only seven percent of teachers in U.S. public schools are Black, Black teachers make up 36 percent of the majority of Black student bodies. The same applies to Hispanic and Asian teachers; nine percent Hispanic-33 percent of the majority Hispanic student bodies; two of the percent Asian-27 percent of the majority Asian student bodies.

According to research, placing teachers of color in schools with a higher population of students of color has its benefits, including higher expectations of same-

race students, assessing students' behaviors more positively, and being more apt to stay at their school where there is racial congruence between teachers and students (Downey & Pribesh, 2004; Gershenson et al., 2016; Hanushek et al., 2004; Strunk & Robinson, 2006; Sun, 2018; Wright et al., 2017). Students seem to have more positive attitudes and higher levels of achievement when taught by teachers with similar demographic backgrounds (Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Dee, 2004; Egalite et al., 2015; Egalite & Kisida, 2017).

As alluded to earlier, beginning teachers are more likely to secure jobs in diverse school systems with high needs, high poverty, and high turnover rates (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2012; Holme et al., 2018). Subsequently, these beginning teachers are more likely to leave urban schools than non-urban schools (Freedman & Appleman, 2009; Howard & Milner, 2021; Ingersoll, 2003). High turnovers in such districts continue to be an issue in which beginning teachers continue to be hired and leave due to challenges within diverse school districts (Doran, 2020). Earlier studies show that urban environments appeared challenging to teachers due to complex issues such as cultural diversity and violence, causing an overflow of teachers to leave these schools as well as the profession (Groulx, 2001; Smith & Smith, 2006, as cited in Gaikhorst et al., 2014).

Teachers working in urban environments frequently encounter children and parents from cultures, backgrounds, values, and languages different from their own (Diffily & Perkins, 2002; Redding & Nguyen, 2020; Zeichner, 2003). With this cultural incongruence, beginning teachers enter with their assumptions of how people should interact in the school community (Youngs et al., 2012). These assumptions can be detrimental to the learning opportunities of students of color:

Numerous studies have found that educators create and limit opportunities for students, often unwittingly, along race lines through a number of seemingly innocuous practices—such as calling on students of different racial backgrounds during classroom instruction, posing more challenging questions to White and Asian students and recall-level questions to Black and Latino students (McAfee, 2014), and tracking students into classes in ways that align with racial and class background (Oakes, 2005)—that unfairly constrain or reify privilege. (see for example, Deckman, 2017, p. 2; Delpit, 1995; King, 1991; Minor, 2014; Pollock, 2008)

To support beginning teachers in urban, racially diverse school environments, there must be intentional work to reverse trends of harmful assumptions. Researchers suggest teachers engage in critical reflection to analyze how their implicit beliefs are reflected in their work. This practice should be accompanied with structured modeling and support for beginning teachers, as critical reflection may not have been a part of their training or own schooling experience (King, 1991, as cited in Deckman, 2017).

Concentration of Beginning Teachers in Racially Diverse Schools

High poverty communities have a higher concentration of beginning teachers than low poverty communities (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2012; Lerner et al., 2021). In 2012, districts with the highest poverty had an average of 11 percent beginning teachers versus 8.4 percent in low poverty areas. These high poverty districts have a higher percentage of Black, Hispanic, and Native American populations. Poor, racially diverse, large cities typically have a high concentration of beginning teachers in comparison to other districts (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2012).

Students of color are disproportionately served by less experienced teachers than white students from affluent backgrounds (Mason-Williams, 2015; Palardy, 2015, as cited in Bettini & Park, 2017). Black and Brown students are twice as likely to attend the described schools than their white peers (El-Mekki, 2021). Because nearly 80 percent of teachers are white, beginning teachers often find themselves in a different cultural environment for the first time (El-Mekki, 2021; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). Beginning teachers who are a novice to their cultural school environment often cause an increase for implicit bias to take place in areas such as discipline, instruction, and achievement, among others (Saunders & Wong, 2020). This is commonly due to more assumptions being made without context by beginning teachers who are new to the environment. Also, beginning teachers are more likely to leave schools that have a large number of students that are low achieving, from low-income families, and exhibit discipline problems (Bruno et al., 2019).

Historically, underserved schools have struggled to maintain a racially diverse teacher workforce which affects both the supply of beginning teachers and the retention of veteran teachers (Redding, 2022). Teachers in their first three years of teaching leave the profession at an alarming rate ranging between 46-71 percent (Papay et al., 2017). Many beginning teachers do not feel prepared to engage, support, and teach in segregated schools with high poverty and tend to have more challenging working conditions. Redding and Henry (2018) reported that only 38% of teachers remain at the school where they started their career by their third year (Redding & Henry, 2018). These high rates of turnover,

1) significantly disrupts student learning when replacements, including short- and long-term substitutes, enter the classrooms;

2) forces students to adjust mid-year to a different instructional pace and practices; and

3) disturbs ongoing relationships with students and collaboration with other teachers (Henry & Redding, 2018; Ronfeldt et al., 2013, as cited in Redding & Henry, 2018, p. 206)

Ronfeldt et al. (2016) noted that it is uncertain whether the teacher experience gap in racially diverse schools is related to the " 'systematic sorting' of the least experienced teachers teaching underserved students or the beginning teachers' preference to work in a school that enrolls children from low-income and traditionally underserved racial/ethnic groups" (Redding & Nguyen, 2020, p. 3). Therefore, finding ways to prepare and support beginning teachers in teaching racially diverse students in public schools is imperative to ensure that students are receiving an equitable education with a teacher who is well-versed in the needs of racially diverse children.

Impact on Racially Diverse Students

Underprepared teachers leave at two to three times the rate of well-prepared teachers (Espinoza et al., 2018). There has long been a chronic teacher shortage of qualified teachers, especially in schools with diverse student populations, students of color, and/or children in poverty. Further, teachers who teach in high poverty and high needs schools–schools "whose students are growing up in poverty, belong to racial and ethnic minority groups, are learning English, or have learning disabilities" (Berry, 2013, p. 181; Liu & Ball, 2019) are paid less and generally have lower quality teachers.

Inequitable distributions of qualified teachers have been found to be a strong determinant of students' achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Ronfeldt et al., 2016; Yuan, 2018). Studies show there is a bias in teacher assignments among Black students. Black students are more likely to be assigned to the most ineffective teachers and half as likely to be assigned to the most effective teachers (Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Smedley et al., 2016). When low-income and/or underrepresented students are disproportionately assigned to new teachers, they are more likely to be taught by a teacher who is in the process of developing classroom management strategies and routines rather than prepared to teach effective instructional practices (Grossman, 1990, as cited in Redding & Nguyen, 2020).

Abolitionist and educational reform expert Dr. Bettina Love (2019) insisted that education is an industry that is designed to fail dark (Black and Brown children) children and their families. Struggling schools are staffed with "individuals who have little to no experience, underfunded, high teacher burnout, tests that punish students, and low-quality teachers" (Love, 2019, p. 10). For some educational stakeholders, dark children need to continue to be underserved to support their "feel good" narrative and secure funding (Love, 2019, p. 10). During the era of Donald Trump's presidency, race, among other issues was re-centered. Richard Milner (2019), highly esteemed scholar in urban schools and education, advised that teachers should keep race and other matters (gender, immigration, and social class) at the center of instruction rather than avoiding it. With the pressure of standardized testing, addressing such issues may be difficult, but they can be addressed inside the classroom. Milner (2019) stated, "Until we address the toughest of these realities—particularly race and racism—in our schools and society, we cannot hope to achieve democracy that truly is for all" (p. 57). Unearthing truths, particularly

regarding race that have systemically been buried in society will provide educational stakeholders a better understanding of the urgency of ensuring that racially diverse students are receiving an equitable education.

In the U.S., there are still disparities between white and non-white students in education. Racially and ethnically diverse students are often taught a Eurocentric curriculum with little to no cultural relevancy. Davis et al. (2022) noted that "little is known regarding the day-to-day experiences of these challenges from the perspective of teachers and students of color" (p. 1). Attending racially diverse schools benefits children in the following ways: 1) reducing racial bias and countering stereotypes, 2) seeking out integrated settings later in life at greater rates, 3) improving students' satisfaction and intellectual self-confidence and leadership skills, 4) building meaningful relationships with individuals of different racial and ethnic groups, and 5) reducing anxiety (Berkovitz et al., 2019). Teachers must be prepared to be "culturally sensitive" toward students of color and an educational system that is not centered around a Eurocentric perspective, but reflective of all students (Davis et al., 2022).

Population of Racially Diverse Students in Public Schools

The United States has been a predominantly white nation (Meckler & Rabinowitz, 2019). At the turn of the twentieth century, there was no infrastructure in place for Black public school systems. According to Anderson (1988), nearly two-thirds of elementary aged Black children were not enrolled in school due to a lack of school buildings and space to accommodate a large number of children. The shortage of Black teachers was attributed to the lack of schools developed until there were Black teachers available to teach them--Southern white teachers would not teach Black children. Black teachers were

primarily responsible for teaching Black children (Anderson, 1988). The educational opportunity for Black students has a long history of struggles. During slavery in the United States, Black people were physically beaten and abused for attempting to learn to read to decrease the chances of upward social and economic mobility (Dumas, 2015). A lack of care and urgency on the needs of Black students and their families contributed to the reduction in resources and enrichment from the start of formalized education.

Fast forward to Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court case that ruled racial segregation of public schools as unconstitutional (Duignan, 2018); black students were subjected to violent mobs of white parents who rejected integration and were fearful of their white children being in school with Black children. Since school desegregation, Black children have been seen as the problem (Dumas, 2015; Duncan, 2020; Sexton, 2008). Black people and other people of color were seen as a "detriment to the quality of life and economic stability to which white people were entitled as a result of their skin color" (Dumas, 2015, p. 16). White people went to great lengths to circumvent school desegregation by creating white, well-resourced schools and school districts while demoting Black children to underfunded schools with scarce resources, crowded classrooms, less experienced teachers, and poor-quality school buildings (Dumas, 2011, 2014; Horsford et al., 2013). Below are a few U.S. Supreme Court cases that impacted racially diverse students before and during the twentieth century:

Table 1

U.S Supreme Courts Cases Involving Racially Diverse Students

1896
Plessy v. Ferguson
In a 7-1 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that separate but equal was constitutional and became the legal basis for Jim Crow laws (Saelee, n.d.).

1899
Cumming v. Richmond (Ga.) County Board of Education
The U.S. Supreme Court allows states to levy taxes from Black and White citizens despite Black children not being allowed to attend public schools (Harlan & Supreme Court of the United States, 1899).
1927
Gong Lum v. Rice
The U.S. Supreme Court rules that excluding a Chinese child from a state high school does not violate the 14th Amendment (Taft & Supreme Court of the United States, 1927).
1947
Westminster School Dist. v. Mendez
Serving as a precursor to Brown v. Board of Education case, Lawyer Thurgood Marshall represented 9-year-old Sylvia Mendez in the U.S. Supreme Court case that ruled that it was unlawful to segregate students of Mexican descent and White students in schools (United States Courts, 2011).
1954
Brown v. Board of Education
This historic case marked the end of "separate but equal" and ruled racial segregation in schools unconstitutional (National Archives, 2016).
1964
Passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
The Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed discrimination based on race, sex, religion, color, or national origin. Title VI of The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited discrimination in public accommodations and federally funded programs and strengthened the enforcement of voting rights and the desegregation of schools (The United States Department of Justice, 2015; US Department of Labor, n.d.).
1973
Keyes v. Denver School District No. 1
The U.S. Supreme Court found that the Denver School Board (Denver, Colorado) deliberately segregated Mexican and Black students from White students, ruling de jure segregation as unconstitutional (Horn & Kurlaender, 2006).
1974
Lau v. Nichols
Non-speaking English students of Chinese descent filed a lawsuit against the San Francisco Unified School District for not providing to those with limited English proficiency. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in a unanimous decision that schools receiving federal funds must provide services for English language learners (Wang, 1974).

Between 1955-1960 alone, federal judges held more than 200 school

desegregation hearings (Holland, 2004). Now, for the first time in the United States, the

K-12 student population is less than 50% white, non-Hispanic (National Center of

Education Statistics, 2021b). As of 2016, 97 percent of U.S. children under the age of 18 were born in the United States. Asian, Pacific Islander, and Hispanic were born below that average at 80, 93, and 97 percent, respectively. The following races of children were at or above the national average–Black (97 percent), White (99 percent), two or more races (99 percent), American Indian/Alaska Native (100 percent) (NCES, n.d.).

      The U.S. Census Bureau predicts that by 2060, only 36 percent of students will be white (Colby & Ortman, 2015). In 1995, 45 percent of students attended schools in a racially diverse (dominant race is less than 75% of students) school district (Rabinowitz et al., 2019). The remaining 55 percent attended schools that were either undiverse (dominant race of students between 75%-90%) or extremely undiverse (dominant race of students is more than 90%). In these districts, the dominant race was white. Twenty-two years later, 2,400 U.S. school districts that were primarily undiverse or extremely undiverse are now diverse (Rabinowitz et al., 2019). A large migration of Black, Asian, and Hispanic families is moving to the suburbs as white families seek to gentrify urban neighborhoods (Wells et al., 2016). In five of the ten largest school districts, students of color comprise more than 90% of the total school enrollment (see Table 2 below). This is a dramatic increase in comparison to almost 50 years when only 22% of the U.S. student population were students of color (Liu & Ball, 2019). U.S. public school students tend to attend schools whose student population matches their racial or ethnic background. 79% of white students, 56% of Hispanic students, and 42% of Black attended schools where they shared half of the student population's race and ethnicity (Geiger, 2018; Schaeffer, 2021a).

Table 2

Student Demographic of 10 Largest School Districts

School Districts	Los Angeles Unified School District (2017-2018)	Chicago Public Schools	Puerto Rico Department of Education	Miami-Dade County Public Schools (2017-2018)	Clark County School District (2017-2018)	Broward County Public Schools	Houston Independent School District	Hillsborough County Public Schools	Orange County Public Schools	Palm Beach County School District
% of White Students	9.8	10.2	0.1	6.9	24.5	22.3	8.6	34.9	27.8	32.6
% of Students of Color	90.2	89.8	99.9	93.1	75.5	77.7	91.4	65.1	72.2	67.2

From "Critical Reflection and Generativity: Toward a Framework of Transformative Teacher Education for Diverse Learners" by Liu & Ball. (2019). *Review of Research in Education*, *43*(1), 68–105.

In 2016, Black and Hispanic children under the age of 18 were living in poverty (31 and 26 percent, respectively), significantly higher than White and Asian children, whose percentages were each ten percent (National Center of Statistics, n.d.). Poor and minoritized students are condensed in the least funded schools–mainly in central city or rural areas and funded significantly below neighboring suburban school districts and have fewer instructional resources within these districts. Inequitable finances disproportionately inflict harm on minoritized and economically disadvantaged students. (Darling-Hammond, 2013).

Teacher-Student Racial Ratio

In the 1960s, desegregation was intended to make schools more equitable and responsive to communities of color. However, white people "perceived Black students as inferior, several Black schools were closed, and 40,000 Black teachers and administrators lost their jobs" (Sleeter, 2008, p. 1). According to Anderson (1988), in 1900, in the 16

former slave states, only one Black teacher was available for every 93 Black students. Doubling this ratio would only allow one Black teacher per 46 Black students, which was still well over the one teacher per 30 student ratio in white classrooms. Black teachers faced many challenges due to this high ratio along with poor working conditions (Walker, 2000):

> Black teachers in the South during this period had substantially higher teacher-pupil ratios than did their White Southern (or Northern) counterparts and confronted potentially chaotic classrooms. The problems of overcrowding, irregular attendance, skewed grade distributions, and the general "overagedness" of African American students---compounded by a dearth of supplies and equipment--all contributed to an environment that might "tax the ingenuity of the best trained teachers," as Ambrose Caviler [has] commented. (p. 404) (Anderson, 1988, as cited in Walker, 2000).

Despite the described challenges that Black teachers faced at the start of the twentieth century, Black teachers were exemplary in their teaching style and had high expectations for their Black students. Black teachers' care moved beyond the classroom as it was common for them to host tutoring sessions, visit homes, attend churches, and attend to any outside factors that impeded students' learning at school. Most importantly, Black teachers and principals consistently affirmed students, letting them know that they could "be somebody" (Walker, 2000, p. 267).

Today's research coincides with this style of care when discussing the benefits of teachers and students who share the same race. Studies suggest that students of color could benefit from being taught by teachers of color; thus, the absence of teachers of

color could be a contributing factor to the racial test scoring gap in the United States. There are many theories that explain why students who are taught by teachers of their race influence students' academic achievement, such as teachers serving as role models and reducing students' perceptions that their teacher is viewing them through a negative lens, which subsequently lowers academic achievement and performance (Egalite et al., 2015; Liu & Ball, 2019). When teachers share the racial/ethnic identity of their students, the threat of racial stereotypes can be detained, and students may benefit from identifying deeper within their racial/ethnic identity (Gay, 2018). Teachers can affirm students' identity as "one worthy of success and authority" (Egalite & Kisida, 2017, p. 61).

Although students of color have recently outnumbered white students for the first time in U.S. public K–12 classrooms, teachers of color are underrepresented in American public schools (Egalite & Kisida, 2017; Ingersoll & May, 2011; Kirby et al., 1999; Villegas et al., 2012). A study conducted by Yarnell and Bohrnstedt (2017) that analyzed data from the 2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) showed that while 91 percent of white fourth-graders were taught by a white teacher, only 23 percent of Black students were taught by a Black teacher and 20 percent of Latino/a students were taught by a Latino/a teacher. Racially diverse teachers have the potential to connect with students of similar backgrounds through meaningful cultural understanding and are possibly unencumbered to design culturally sensitive lessons and serve as "cultural translators" (Egalite & Kisida, 2017, p. 62; Vaughan, 2022). Through these forms of cultural instruction, students may experience a better supportive relationship, improve academic and extracurricular performances in school (Luke, 2017; Milner, 2011; Weinstein et al., 2004), and feel more comfortable with asking teachers of their race for

help, which could potentially allow teachers to help them more effectively with students'
learning needs (Kozlowski, 2015).

In relation to Black students, studies show that non-Black teachers have lower
expectations of educational achievement for Black students, with expectations typically
ending after Black students achieve a high school diploma or less (Gershenson et al.,
2016; Gershenson et al., 2017). According to a longitudinal study in North Carolina, 56
percent of Black students have never had a Black teacher (Gershenson et al., 2017).
Cherng and Halpin's (2016) data analysis from the Measures of Effective Teaching study
revealed that Black students felt more engaged with course material and had stronger
relationships with Black teachers than with white teachers. Black students' exposure to at
least one Black teacher in elementary school can reduce the chance of Black students
dropping out of high school (Lindsay, 2020). In 1995, Ehrenburg et al. distributed a
survey to teachers in an effort to learn about how teachers subjectively evaluate their
students. The survey included questions that asked teachers to identify which students
they expected to attend college, would recommend for academic honors, related well to
others, spoke to outside of class, and worked hard (Ehrenberg et al., 1995). This study
revealed that teachers spoke more favorably of students who shared their race, gender,
and ethnicity. To mitigate these potentially harmful perceptions, pre-service teachers
must be exposed to opportunities that allow them to engage and relate to "unique cultural
landscapes" (Irby, 2014) that provide spaces to become culturally responsive to students
of different racial identities (Vaughan, 2022; Williamson et al., 2016).

Pre-Service Teachers' Experiences in Teaching Racially and Culturally Diverse Students

Earlier research shows evidence of pre-service teachers adopting biases that maintain disparities within the educational experiences of non-white and white students (Orfield & Lee, 2005, as cited in Davis et al., 2022). White teachers have perceived Black students as "less well-behaved and lower in cognitive ability" than white or Asian students (Tettegah, 1996, as cited in Davis et al., 2022, p. 2). As the racial and cultural diversity of U.S. public school students continues to increasingly change, all levels of education need reforming to meet the needs of students. In K-12 schools, not all teachers have responded to this urgent need in their classrooms. More often, teachers have low academic expectations of students of color and negative preconceptions and misconceptions of their students and families (Banks, 2006; Boutte, 2012; Delpit, 2003; Gershenson & Papageorge, 2018).

The cultural divide between pre-service teachers and students continues to grow as the diversity of the U.S. student population grows. Pre-service teachers are often unclear on how to approach racial issues in the classroom and cultural discussions with students of color, which usually lands in avoidance. Fortunately, research finds that many pre-service teachers, despite unease, "value teaching students with diverse backgrounds and often learn about themselves in the process" (Baldwin et al., 2007; Villegas, 2007, as cited in Bonner et al., 2017, p. 46). Like the teacher workforce, pre-service teachers are largely white. Because of this, pre-service teachers can expect to teach diverse student populations (Bennett et al., 2019; Milner, 2006). From many pre-service teachers' own experiences, very few were educated by teachers with diverse mindsets in their formative

and adolescent years. To keep these experiences from repeating, it is dire that beginning teachers are prepared to teach diverse students by fostering a growth mindset when it comes to racial diversity.

In a recent study conducted by Sandova, Jr. et al. (2020), pre-service teachers defined equity as "needing to understand students' cultural backgrounds to leverage students' cultural assets during instruction" (p. 5). Although pre-service teachers in this study provided their students with opportunities to share their thinking in the classroom, it did not leverage cultural forms of knowledge nor aligned with their definition of equity. Teachers are more apt to express their support for equity when asked general questions about their teaching, such as "Why do you teach?" but their sentiments are not consistently shown in their practice (Nadelson et al., 2019, p. 36). This lack of consonance between theorizing and acting with equity in mind was mainly attributed to pre-service teachers' varied interpretations of what equity means. Pre-service teachers primarily use students' experience in school, rather than their home and community experiences, to inform their instruction, which limits them from truly getting to know a student's racial and cultural background (Sandova, Jr. et al., 2020).

The recurring theme in terms of pre-service teachers' experiences of teaching racially and culturally diverse students is that the *intentions* are positive. They believe it is their responsibility to connect with and learn about students' interests and personalities, and believe in their academic achievement (Lambeth & Smith, 2016). However, translating those beliefs and intentions into practice is where more support can be offered. Coffey and Farinde-Wu (2016) offered this suggestion to improve pre-service teachers' experiences:

Research suggests a need for programs that challenge teacher candidates to develop self-awareness and explore biases through extensive prerequisite courses and clinical experiences in culturally, linguistically, economically, and ethnically diverse school settings prior to teaching. Knowledge of culturally responsive teaching alone is insufficient during induction; rather, pre-service teachers must undergo cognitive development and personal experiences that interrupt and dismantle destructive biases before learning and applying culturally responsive teaching. These pre-requisite courses and experiences in teacher education should address issues related to race, equity, social justice, and critical theories. Further, pre-service teachers should learn the variety of isms–racism, sexism, classism, ableism, anti-Semitism, heterosexism, etc. that exist and how to evaluate their own biases. (Coffey & Farinde-Wu, 2016, p. 32)

In a recent study (Berry et al., 2020), researchers found that pre-service teachers of color had "advanced knowledge and exposure to race through their own lived experiences" (p. 393). On the contrary, white female teachers, the majority racial group of the teacher workforce, more than likely grew up in white towns, went to white schools and were instructed by white faculty. This pedigree can create challenges for white teachers to connect to teach racially diverse students without being exposed to multiple racial perspectives (Berry et al., 2020). For pre-service teachers to reconsider their perceptions and assumptions regarding diverse students, teacher educators, and teacher preparation programs should provide a pedagogical experience that explicitly addresses diverse cultures in the curriculum (Cochran-Smith, 1995, as cited in Lenski et al., 2005; Darling-Hammond & Oakes, 2019).

Racially Diverse Preparedness through Curriculum and Instruction in Teacher Preparation Programs

Teacher preparation programs are struggling to prepare teachers with teaching practices that meet the needs of the increasingly diverse student population in the United States; especially the needs of students who are historically disenfranchised (Allen et al., 2017; Haberman, 2010a; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Milner, 2011a). Many teacher preparation programs proclaim their dedication to preparing teachers to be culturally responsive toward diverse students, but research demonstrates a disconnect between the desire to address equity in the curriculum and instruction of teacher preparation programs and the actual implementation (Jez, 2020). It is highly important that teacher educators self-examine their practice because their influence can affect teachers and students in classrooms (Bonner et al., 2018; Milner, 2010). Many teacher educators struggle with engaging pre-service teachers in quality learning experiences regarding diversity and avoid the topic altogether. This avoidance is aided by little to no understanding of creating inclusive classroom environments, pedagogical practices needed to discuss diversity at the collegiate level, and a lack of skills or training in handling inflammatory remarks (Anderson, 1999; Ellerbrock et al., 2016; Grant, 2021; Hickey & Lanahan, 2012; O'Hara & Pritchard, 2008).

For teachers specifically working in urban, diverse school districts, Allen et al. (2017) shared the common errors that teacher preparation programs make when addressing efforts to achieve success in urban, diverse school districts:

Teachers in urban settings often need advanced knowledge of pedagogical content that incorporates diverse languages, cultures, and communities into the various

contexts of learning (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Unfortunately, teacher education

programs that rely on one-stop-shop diversity classes, glossed-over multicultural

training, and ineffective field experiences often perpetuate teacher-educator and

teacher-candidate implicit bias (Cross, 2005; G. Gay, 2000; Hayes & Juarez,

2012), rather than producing culturally relevant and social justice-committed

educators. (Allen et al., 2017, p. 2)

Teacher preparation programs play a significant role in growing teachers. It is

where pre-service teachers are expected to complete rigorous coursework and participate

in field experiences. Curriculum and instruction in teacher preparation programs can be

strong determinants of teacher effectiveness in diverse school environments (Grant, 2021;

Williams III & Glass, 2019). Multicultural and diversity courses are especially important,

with a continuous increase of racial and cultural diversity in U.S. public schools

(National Center of Education Statistics, 2021b; Williams III & Glass, 2019). These

courses, for many teachers, could easily be the first time that they have been exposed to

discourse centered around "institutional racism, White privilege, meritocracy, implicit

bias, social inequalities and their own dispositions towards students of color" (Williams

III & Glass, 2019, p. 156). Particularly for pre-service teachers of color, it is important

for teacher educators to know their realities so that they can produce counter-narratives to

white supremacy (Berry et al., 2020). Providing rigorous coursework and curriculum in

the areas of diversity will benefit not only the cultural competence of students but

teachers as well.

A term often used in education to describe a teacher who is doing well is "highly

qualified." Nieto (2006) argued, however, that this common term does not consider the

"sociopolitical context of education, which includes the tremendous diversity of language, social class, ethnicity, and race, among other differences, that is a fact of life in many school systems in our nation" (p. 1). For teacher preparation programs to be successful, there must be a strong balance between instruction and practical application. Providing pre-service teachers with experiences in diverse schools can be limited for several reasons, such as a lack of partnerships with such schools and/or the availability of mentor teachers (Doran, 2020). Collaborations between teacher preparation programs and urban school districts with diverse student populations are necessary to prepare teacher candidates to potentially work in such school settings (Smith et al., 2018). White dominance is embedded in the structure and policies of teacher education programs. When teacher preparation programs' diversity plans are executed through "add-on" courses, it sends a message to pre-service teachers that diversity must be added to the curriculum in a way that does not disturb the existing white curriculum. This subsequently dilutes the importance of diversity to pre-service teachers (Li et al., 2021). The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) (2020) mentioned that "diversity must be a pervasive characteristic of any quality preparation program." Strong teacher preparation programs encourage pre-service teachers to use students' life experiences to make connections in the classroom (Smith et al., 2018).

Nieto et al. (2012) believed that successful teacher preparation programs ensure that cultural and linguistic diversity is at the center of teaching and learning versus passive professional development. Further, pre-service teachers should be viewed as co-constructors of their own learning with multidimensional roles—"curriculum developers,

researchers of their own practice, and as learners of their students' lives" (p. 32). Doing

so allows pre-service teachers to develop their teacher identity and leadership skills.

In North Carolina, the state in which this study took place, Williams III and Glass

(2019) have found that prospective students endeavoring to become certified teachers in

elementary or middle school education have a 53 percent chance of taking a multicultural

education course. Table 3 details the number of courses and hours offered at the 15

University of North Carolina (UNC) teacher preparation programs that have a

multicultural focus:

Table 3

*Teacher Preparation Programs' Number of Required Courses and Course Hours
Addressing Diversity (2014-2015)*

Institutions	No. of hours	No. of courses
Appalachian State	3	0
East Carolina University	0	0
Elizabeth City State University	0	3
Fayetteville State University	3	3
NC A&T State University	2	0
NC Central University	3	3
NC State	3	0
UNC-Asheville	0	3
UNC-Chapel Hill	0	0
UNC-Charlotte	6	2
UNC-Greensboro	0	3
UNC-Pembroke	0	0
UNC-Wilmington	3	3
Western Carolina University	3	6
Winston-Salem State University	0	0

Notes: UNC = University of North Carolina; NC = North Carolina, NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) (2016), Effectiveness of Program Graduates, NCDPI, Raleigh, NC
Table 3. Adapted from "Teacher Education and Multicultural Courses in North Carolina" by Williams III, J.A., & Glass, T. S. (2019). *Journal for Multicultural Education*, *13*(2), 155-168.

Despite the urgent need for diverse and multicultural courses in teacher

preparation programs, there are still many who have not considered offering a semester's

worth of classes or courses that address race specifically (Williams III & Glass, 2019).

Further, even if teacher preparation programs adopted these suggestions, it still would not

"significantly impact teacher candidates' dispositions towards students of color, nor does

it assist teacher candidates with gaining a deeper understanding of their own ideas about

race" (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Milner, 2006; Reiter & Davis, 2011; Williams III & Glass,

2019, p. 156). Pre-service teachers are often pressured by external factors such as

standardized testing and curriculum mandates. These pressures undermine the attempts to

provide a space for cultural responsiveness for teachers. Many pre-service teachers teach

the lesson plans provided by the district with little to no modifications to meet the

cultural needs of their students during field experiences (Starker & Fitchett, 2013).

Multicultural education is important for all students, not just those a part of minoritized

groups. Banks (1995) offered five dimensions of multicultural education:

> (1) *Content integration*, incorporating curriculum course materials that reflect a diversity of cultures and groups;

> (2) *Knowledge construction process*, teachers helping students understand biases and perspectives and how cultures frames perspectives in order to build knowledge;

> (3) *Prejudice reduction*, teachers and administrators actively working to reduce prejudice and stereotypes in the school through explicit curriculum and instruction in order to help student develop positive attitudes towards different racial and ethnic groups;

> (4) *Equity pedagogy*, references pedagogies that are specifically modified in order to teach in ways that increases the academic performance of low performing students and increases equity between students;

> (5) *Empowering school culture and social structure*, transforming the school as an organization of the school is transformed in ways that empower students and focuses on dismantling institutionalized racism in school practices.

> Racial discussions can cause people to react in different ways, including having

negative racial views and triggering unpleasant emotions when in mixed-race situations.

Teachers are no exception (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020). Studies show that when there are

course discussions in university classrooms about the rights and treatment of minoritized

students, pre-service teachers begin to question their own emotions and beliefs (Lee &

Lee, 2020; Taylor et al., 2016). Other studies show that pre-service teachers shut down

when asked to self-reflect on issues of race and racism. With the awareness of white

racial supremacy, white teachers can potentially recreate white racial supremacy in their

classroom from unconscious discriminatory beliefs. This can affect students' learning,

which makes a willingness to actively engage in understanding racially diverse students

more critical (Leonardo & Boas, 2022; Shim, 2017). Cultivating a safe learning

environment for pre-service teachers with teacher educators knowledgeable in facilitating

racial conversation in curriculum and instruction will better prepare pre-service teachers

to provide better learning experiences for racially diverse students.

Teachers' Influences and Perceptions When Teaching Racially Diverse Students

Most teachers have good intentions for the students they teach—they want the

best for them and support them in being successful. However, that is not enough. Black

and Brown students and students living in poverty are drastically underserved across the

United States (Milner & Laughter, 2014). Rokeach's (1968) seminal work describes the

relationship between values and beliefs. Personal beliefs and truths shape how people

view themselves, others, and the world (Rokeach, 1968). Nelson and Guerra (2014)

claimed that in education, reliance on personal beliefs over professional knowledge could

be problematic, especially as it relates to educating diverse learners:

> Negative beliefs about diverse students and their families lead to lower
>
> educational expectations and blame. Educators frequently cite inadequacies

within culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students and their

families as the source of educational failure. (p. 71)

Teachers readily discuss content and teaching practices surrounding poverty and

socioeconomic status than race and feel more comfortable with teaching students living

in poverty than Black and Brown students (Milner & Laughter, 2014). Milner and

Laughter (2014) offered five mindsets that are common among teachers:

- Mindset 1: If I acknowledge the racial background of my students or myself, then I may be considered racist.
- Mindset 2: I treat all my students the same regardless of their racial or ethnic backgrounds.
- Mindset 3: I focus on teaching children and ignore the race of my students because race is irrelevant.
- Mindset 4: Race does not matter in my teaching because racism has ended.
- Mindset 5: We live in a post-racial society and my classroom practices are, will be, and should be post-racial. (p. 343-344)

Most teacher preparation program cohorts are 80% white, even though white

students make up less than half of the K-12 student population. In general, white teachers

are not well equipped to provide racially diverse students with a strong, culturally

responsive education (Sleeter, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016; Utt &

Tochluk, 2020). Bell (1989) attributed this lack of preparedness to the fear that white

people have against people of color advancing and that systemic changes for people of

color will threaten them personally, hence the resistance (Crowley & Smith, 2015) and

fatigue (Flynn, 2015) when discussing and working with race. White teachers, instead,

adopt colorblind ideologies (Manning et al., 2015), which eliminate the racial identities

of students (Milner & Laughter, 2014).

Teacher Self-Efficacy

Psychologist Albert Bandura (1997), who coined the term *self-efficacy,* defines it as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3). Self-efficacy is a telling component when determining teachers' success in instruction and student achievement and has predicted teachers' beliefs about teaching and their behaviors and motivations (Miller et al., 2017). Teachers' self-efficacy influences students' learning and behavior. Studies show that teachers within the majority ethnic group who exhibit biases towards marginalized students have lesser relationships with these students than students within the majority ethnic group. Additional studies show that teachers can have differing levels of self-efficacy with different students (Geerlings et al., 2018).

As the ethnic diversity of schools grows, so does the importance of teacher self-efficacy. Cultural conflicts can, and more than likely will arise when teachers do not acknowledge the cultural differences of their students. Teachers who do not have self-efficacy in working with diverse students oftentimes inappropriately deem such students as "difficult to teach" due to cultural misunderstandings. This can cause long-term misjudgment, overrepresentation of Black students in special education, and disproportionate numbers of disciplinary actions towards Black and Brown students (Bondy et al., 2007; Gay, 1981, 2000; Siwatu & Starker, 2010).

Cultural Capital

Lisa Delpit (2006) mentioned a common statement made by many middle-class liberal educators—"I want the same thing for everyone else's children as I want for mine" (p. 28). Delpit (2006) argued that this creates a culture of power—in which some

students have more cultural capital than others. Cultural capital is the "knowledge or resources unique to a particular cultural group that gives social advantage to members of that group" (Lareau & Horvat, 1999, as cited in Wegmann & Bowen, 2010, p. 7). Although all groups of people possess cultural capital, it is not equally valued. In schools, the cultural capital of the dominant group works as a filtering system in deciding which students get what type of curriculum and instruction and often conceals the advantages that it provides for groups that already fit within the dominant culture of the school-- typically white middle-class (Apple, 2018; Bourdieu, 1986; Delpit, 2006; Wegmann & Bowen, 2010).

According to Gay (2000), culturally responsive teachers have "unequivocal faith in the human dignity and intellectual capabilities of their students. They view learning as having intellectual, academic, personal, social, ethical, and political dimensions, all of which are developed in concert with one another" (p. 43-44). She explained the cultural roles of a teacher according to Diamond and Moore (1995) --cultural organizers, cultural mediators, and orchestrators of social contexts for learning:

Table 4

Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice

Role	Meaning	Benefit
Cultural Organizer	Teachers who understand how culture operates in daily classroom dynamics, create learning atmospheres that radiate cultural and ethnic diversity, and facilitate high academic achievement for all students.	Students from different ethnic backgrounds have free personal and cultural expression so that their voices and experiences can be incorporated into teaching and learning processes on a regular basis.
Cultural Mediator	Teachers who provide opportunities for students to engage in critical dialogue about	Creates communities of culturally diverse learners who celebrate and affirm each other and work

	conflicts among cultures and to analyze inconsistencies between mainstream cultural ideals/realities and those of different cultural systems. They help students clarify their ethnic identities, honor other cultures, develop positive cross-ethnic and cross-cultural relationships, and avoid perpetuating prejudices, stereotypes, and racism.	collaboratively for their mutual success, where empowerment replaces powerlessness and oppression.
Orchestrator of Social Context for Learning	Teachers recognize the important influence culture has on learning and make teaching processes compatible with the sociocultural contexts and frames of reference of ethnically diverse students.	Helps students translate their cultural competencies into school learning resources.

Adapted from "Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice (3rd ed.)" by Gay, G. (2000). *Teachers College Press*, (pg. 42-43).

Teachers who embody these cultural roles provide racially diverse students with an inclusive learning environment that positively impacts student achievement (Gay, 2000).

Beginning Teachers' Experiences in Teaching in Racially Diverse Schools

For beginning teachers working in urban school districts, there is a high demand for "effective teachers knowledgeable of the affirming aspects of cultural differences and the role they play in the classroom" (Adams & Starker-Glass, 2018, p. 8). It is problematic to think that white teachers (who make up most of our teacher workforce) are equipped to teach students different from their backgrounds without any cross-cultural background knowledge or experiences (Anderson & Aronson, 2020). Assuming that white teachers are equipped to teach students different from their backgrounds requires teachers to have a sociopolitical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1994) which is not an easy feat, as it requires teachers to "incorporate the required curriculum and associated academic responsibilities with issues of social justice" (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 120).

Far too often, when teacher education ends, so does the education of a teacher (Darling-Hammond et al., 2006, as cited in Aronson, 2020). Twenty percent of all beginning teachers in urban schools leave the profession within their first year, and more than half of the staff by their fifth year of teaching (Simon & Johnson, 2015). These rates of attrition have a severe impact on already underfunded school budgets, especially in urban communities serving students of color. Particularly for beginning teachers working in urban schools, research has shown that their work conditions are more difficult in comparison to beginning teachers working in white, affluent school districts, which leaves beginning teachers feeling overwhelmed. Some of this teacher attrition is attributed to urban schools being underfunded and having limited resources (Bettini & Park, 2017). These and other contributors impact beginning teachers' perceptions of teaching racially diverse students in urban school districts.

Beginning teachers' experiences are heavily influenced by their school's culture. As they begin teaching, their beliefs, values, and norms align with their school community (Youngs et al., 2012). Studies show that first-year teachers' value of culturally responsive instruction was consistent with their principal's value of it (Bergeron, 2008; Khalifa, 2020). In other cases, many beginning teachers have discussed race, class, and privilege in their classrooms without the support of fellow teachers and administrators—some even opposed. For some, their schools provided little support in understanding the social context of their students (Achinstein & Aguirre, 2008; Rautanen et al., 2020). This created costly decisions and consequences for beginning teachers who advocated for equity for students in their school buildings (Achinstien & Ogawa, 2006; de Oliveiria & Athanases, 2007; Ezzani, 2020). The support surrounding beginning

teachers' navigation of teaching racially diverse students is pivotal in their perceptions of success and preparedness.

Summary

The existing literature informs us of the magnitude that beginning teachers have on racially diverse students in public schools. As the racial footprint of the U.S. student population continues to change, students need now, more than ever, teachers who are culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1994) to meet their unique needs. Teacher preparation programs play a large role in beginning teachers' level of preparedness to teach racially diverse students (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2012; Lerner et al., 2021). Having meaningful and rigorous multicultural curriculum, coursework, and field experiences (Allen et al., 2017; Williams III & Glass, 2019) can better prepare pre-service teachers and potentially curb the turnover in schools where the level of students of color and poverty is high.

While there is extensive research about the pre-service experience of beginning teachers, there is less research on the "now what?", meaning now that beginning teachers have completed their teacher preparation program and begun their in-service career, how have they managed to navigate teaching racially diverse students over their first three years of teaching? How have schools picked up where teacher preparation programs left off in terms of preparedness for teaching racially diverse students? What in-service support has been provided to help increase beginning teachers' cultural responsiveness in their classrooms? Lastly, what impediments (if any) cause apprehension for beginning teachers when teaching racially diverse students, and where does the root of that apprehension reside? Beginning teachers bring their own stories, experiences, and

perceptions that shape the decisions that they make in the classroom. This research will

enable the reader to learn what beginning teachers believe informs their preparedness to

teach racially diverse students by reflecting on past and present experiences.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

The purpose of this study was to engage in a constructivist approach to explore beginning teachers' perceptions of preparedness in teaching racially diverse students. The research questions of this study explored these perceptions, the contributing factors (specific causes that influenced beginning teachers' perceptions), and resources used to teach racially diverse students and become more competent in teaching racially diverse students.

Research Questions

1. What are beginning teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to teach racially diverse students?

2. What are the contributing factors to beginning teachers' perceptions of preparedness to teach racially diverse students?

3. What resources do beginning teachers use to teach racially diverse students and become more competent in teaching racially diverse students?

A qualitative case study was used in this study. A qualitative case study invited me to engage in an in-depth examination of participants with diverse experiences and perspectives and draw inferences on how the case speaks to a broader population or issue (Saldaña, 2011). This methodological design allowed me to explore the lived experiences of beginning teachers as they reflected on their preparedness to teach racially diverse students. The participants selected were beginning teachers in their fourth-fifth year of teaching who taught within grades kindergarten-sixth grade and who had successfully completed their teaching licensure requirements. Participants' responses were analyzed and organized to create essential characteristics to address the research

questions and synthesized given the literature on teaching racially diverse students. This chapter begins with an overview of the qualitative research design. An overview of the population and sample of the study is discussed to provide an accurate description and rationale for the selection of participants. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the data collection, analysis procedures, and protocols, subjectivity statement, and the delimitations, limitations, and assumptions in the study.

Research Design

The study was informed by a qualitative case study research design. Case studies provide an in-depth contextual approach (Bhattacharya, 2017) for understanding beginning teachers' sentiments regarding their perception of preparedness in teaching racially diverse students. Yin (2018) described case studies as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') within its real-life context" (p. 45). A case study allows the researcher to hone in on a specific phenomenon in an effort to understand it completely. This is done by observing variables, interacting relationships, and the contextual conditions that are highly pertinent to the phenomenon of the study, and embracing a variety of data sources (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Flyvbjerg, 2011; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2018). This study explored the lived experiences that influenced beginning teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to teach racially diverse students. This research design connected to the theoretical framework, CRT in several ways, but frequently interacted with tenets *counter storytelling* and *intersectionality*.

Storytelling is one of the oldest human art forms and has served as a critical tool amongst oppressed people, from oral history to enslaved narratives (Delgado &

Stefancic, 2022; Ladson-Billings, 2022). Exploring beginning teachers' personal and professional lived experiences through counter storytelling would prompt diverse participants to tell stories that have shaped their perceptions. Intersectionality was a major tenet in this study because the stories that the beginning teachers shared regarding their perceptions of teaching racially diverse students were influenced by the individual identities that they each encompass. Further, while this study focused specifically on racially diverse students, we know that students also bring different identities to the classroom in which race intersects. Culture overlaps with both race and ethnicity and refers to the shared values, beliefs, customs, and experiences of any group of people. Culture does not, by definition, have to apply to either race or ethnicity, but members of the same racial or ethnic groups oftentimes share common values, beliefs, and experiences, while also having distinct cultures that differ amongst the intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) of multiple identities (Urdan & Bruchmann, 2018).

Research Context

This next section provides an overview of the community and school district in which the study took place, and the participants involved in the study.

Community

The participants involved in this study were fourth and fifth year teachers who taught in a school district within an urban emergent community that was racially, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse. Milner's (2012) seminal work described urban emergent as schools located in large cities, but not as large as those labeled urban intensive (fewer than 1 million people). These areas may also experience resource scarcity, but not to the same extent as urban intensive areas. The school district used in

this study is the largest employer in its county. This community has several colleges and universities and community colleges. There are nearly 20 parks in the community which makes outdoor leisure common. The community has several Black history landmarks, including a Civil Rights Museum and Black owned businesses that were listed in the Green Book (Green, 1936) and are still in operation. Many students enjoy going to local skating rinks, amusement parks, and pools, and playing on sports teams at one of the ten local YMCAs. In recent years, the names of public schools and college buildings have changed names due to the original name attached to the structures being named after people who advocated for segregation and white supremacy (Rezae, 2017; WFMY News 2, 2016). The following are the demographics of the community according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2021):

Table 5

Demographics of Community (as of July 1, 2021)

Population	Race and Hispanic Origin	Education	Income & Poverty
542,410	**White:** 54.8%	**High school graduate or higher (persons age 25+ years):** 89.6%	**Median household income:** $54,794
	Black or African American: 36.2%		**Persons in poverty:** 13.3%
	American Indian and Alaska Native: 0.8%	**Bachelor's degree (persons age 25+ years)** 36.6%	
	Native American and Other Pacific Islander: 0.1%		
	Two or More Races: 2.7%		
	Hispanic or Latino: 8.9%		

The School District

The school district chosen for this study was Oates County Schools (a pseudonym), located in an urban emergent city in the Southeast United States. Per data published by the district, Oates County Schools serves approximately 70,000 students in grades preschool-twelfth in 126 schools. The following are the demographics of the district as of the 2021-2022 school year:

- K-12 student count for 2021-22: 68,202
- 2021-22 Student Demographics (20th Day)
  - American Indian - 0.32%
  - Asian - 6.79%
  - Black – 41.92%
  - Hispanic – 17.79%
  - Multi-Racial – 4.85%
  - Pacific Islander - 0.16%
  - White – 28.16%
- Number of Advanced Learners: 11,049
- Number of Special Education students: 9,135
- Number of students in transition:1,643
- Student poverty rate: 62.92%
- Number of languages spoken: 120
- Top Five Foreign Languages Spoken: Spanish, Arabic, Urdu, Vietnamese, and Nepali

- Graduation Rate (2021) 91.5%

(To preserve the confidentiality of participants, the specific citation for this data will not be shared.)

This study was conducted in this school district due to its large range of diversity in race, language, socioeconomic status, etc., amongst the student population and families. Out of approximately 5,000 teachers, 1,032 were beginning teachers in their first through third year during the 2020-2021 school year while 230 beginning first year teachers joined the district over the Summer of 2021.

Participants

Three participants were chosen from the population using convenience and criterion sampling. Convenience sampling is, as explained by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) "a sample based on time, money, location, availability of sites or respondents, and so on" (p. 98). The participants were conveniently chosen from a list of beginning teachers that I have coached in the past as their new teacher support coach. Criterion sampling is, as explained by Patton (2015), "to review and study all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance" (p. 425). The criteria for the participants were: a) beginning teachers in their fourth-fifth year of teaching, b) teaching in grades kindergarten-sixth grade, and c) successful completion of a teaching licensure program at the time of data collection.

The first criterion for the beginning teacher participants was intentionally stated to differentiate the participants from other teachers in the school district. This served to explore the unique lived experiences that beginning teachers had that informed their perception of preparedness to teach racially diverse students during their first three years of teaching. The second criterion was to ensure that the participants had successfully

completed their teaching licensure requirements so that participants could include their

completed teacher preparation program experience when reflecting on their preparedness

in teaching racially diverse students. The third criterion focuses on beginning teachers

teaching in grades kindergarten-sixth grade to provide beginning teacher insight within

the elementary school level of education. This school level was also derived from

convenience sampling.

Participants who met the criteria and consented to participate were selected. Three

participants were chosen for the research to have an in-depth exploration regarding their

perceptions of preparedness to teach racially diverse students. Consent to participate in

the study included a) availability for two, 90-minute virtual interviews that would be

audio-recorded and transcribed, b) availability for post-interview follow-up inquiries, c)

share, via email, artifacts/resources used in the classroom when teaching racially diverse

students and to become more competent in teaching racially diverse students, d)

notification of intent to use data for the study. During each component of the study, I

reiterated the purpose of the study, including potential benefits and confidentiality of the

study. I also informed participants that some questions might evoke personal experiences

and cause emotional discomfort. Participants had the choice to skip such questions.

Data Collection and Procedures

Data was collected for this study using two methods: interviews and document

analysis. These methods provided an opportunity for me to listen to the participants'

stories and experiences that influenced their perceptions of preparedness to teach racially

diverse students and cross-examine how elements from these conversations surfaced in

the artifacts that they used to teach racially diverse students and build their competency in

teaching racially diverse students. Each participant completed two interviews for this study. Interviews were conducted virtually. In between interviews, artifacts were virtually sent to me and discussed in the last interview. Follow-up interviews and questions were utilized as needed. During the interviews, three components of CRP (academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness) were used to conceptualize the data collected. CRT was used to make connections between the data collected and its connections to the CRT tenets.

The Interview Process

The primary instrument used for data collection in this study was participant interviews. Creswell and Poth (2018) described interviews as follows:

> An interview is considered to be a social interaction based on a conversation (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Warren & Xavia Karner, 2015). According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), an interview is where 'knowledge is constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee' (p. 4). The qualitative research interview is further described as 'attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experience, to uncover their lived world.' (p. 3, 230)

After the participants signed the informed consent form, the interview process consisted of scheduling and conducting the participants' interviews. The interview site, date, and time were reserved for the participants' convenience, privacy, and comfortability. Participants were informed that they would be participating in two interviews that would last approximately 90 minutes and would be audio-recorded for the purpose of transcription and analysis and used for published research. The interviews were semi-

structured, one-on-one, and open-ended, as outlined in Creswell and Poth (2018), and took place virtually on a web-based platform. Through in-depth qualitative interviewing, researchers are able "to explore in detail the experiences, motives, and opinions of others and learn to see the world from perspectives other than their own" (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 3). Based on the data collected from the interviews, I conducted follow-up interviews with select participants as needed to critically examine significant statements and solicit the view of participants on findings within the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Interview Protocol

Questions for the interviews were determined by the development of an interview protocol. The protocol began with introductory questions to build rapport with the participants and increase the level of comfortability and trust between the researcher and the participant. The interview questions were organized based on the research questions of this study, which inquired about participants' perceptions of their preparedness to teach racially diverse students, contributing factors to these perceptions, and resources used to teach racially diverse students and to improve competency in teaching racially diverse students.

Data Analysis and Procedures

As mentioned in Merriam and Tisdell (2016), Flick (2014) described the process of data analysis as "the classification and interpretation of linguistic (or visual) material to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is represented in it" (p. 5). Data analysis began with the following steps: transcription, analytic memoing, coding, and member checking. The data from the interviews were transcribed using the online transcription tool, Grain. I used

descriptive and in vivo coding to code the responses to the interview questions, along with analytic memos to help document immediate thoughts and connections that I made while analyzing the data. The computer assisted qualitative data analysis software, NVIVO was used to assist in the coding process. The artifacts shared through data collection were analyzed to make connections to the data collected in the interviews.

Analytic Memoing and Coding

Analytic Memoing. Immediately following transcription and editing for readability, I began to make analytic memos in the margins of each transcript. Saldaña (2021) described analytic memos as a place to "dump your brain" about the participants, phenomenon, or process under investigation by thinking and writing. "Memos are 'notes to self' about anything to do with the project" (Clarke et al., 2018, p. 106; as cited in Saldaña 2021, p. 108). Doing this gave me a rough idea of preliminary codes within the interview data. Some examples of analytic memos included short phrases such as: "building relationships with families," "trauma," "has trust issues dealing with white people," "experiences that influenced teaching" and many others.

Descriptive Coding. Once I concluded my "brain dump" through analytic memoing, I began to gather descriptive codes from my data to help categorize the data. Descriptive coding consists of primary nouns that summarize a topic that is used to categorize data (Saldaña, 2014). Considering that this study seeks to name specific contributing factors that affect beginning teachers' perceptions in teaching racially diverse students, descriptive coding provided an opportunity to analyze the frequency in which specific nouns were mentioned to allow the contributing factors to surface.

Examples of descriptive coding from this study included: "bias,' "important people,' "racism,' "TPP," and others.

In Vivo Coding. In vivo coding, by definition, "is a form of qualitative data analysis that places emphasis on the actual spoken words of participants" (Manning, 2017). As mentioned earlier in this study, the CRT tenet, counter storytelling, is an integral part in this study because beginning teachers is sharing their personal and professional lived experiences, many of which triggered an array of emotions. The direct quotes in this study are what really captured the essence of understanding beginning teachers' perceptions in teaching racially diverse students. Because of this, it was important that beginning teachers' truths were preserved in their vernacular and in the way in which they recounted them. Examples of in vivo coding from this study included: "Why don't we ever learn anything about us?" "You know, Beverly Hills…I could have been in Crenshaw. It doesn't matter, you know, approach it the same way." "I became the token Black woman at my school."

Document Analysis

Document analysis is a "form of qualitative research that uses a systematic procedure to analyze documentary evidence and answer specific research questions" (Frey, 2018). When used to triangulate findings, document analysis helps to corroborate or refute findings across other data sources, which helps to guard against bias (Frey, 2018). As mentioned earlier, participants provided me with artifacts via email to support questions asked in Research Question 3: What resources do beginning teachers use to teach racially diverse students and become more competent in teaching racially diverse students? In between the first and second interviews, I requested participants to share

artifacts that they use in their classrooms to teach racially diverse students as well as artifacts used to increase their competency in teaching racially diverse students. Participants were invited to use their own interpretations of what artifacts to share. Each participant shared, on average, six to eight artifacts. Artifacts such as photographs, questionnaires, posters, and text were submitted for analysis. The participants and I were able to look at the artifacts together during the second interview; they explained the artifacts, how they are/were used, and their reasoning behind them. I then used the artifacts and the two interviews from each participant to triangulate the findings to begin categorizing codes and creating themes.

Categorization of Codes and Themes

After analytic memoing and descriptive and in vivo coding were complete, the NVIVO software was used to synthesize the codes into categories across interview transcripts. During this process, several categories developed. The categories with the greatest number of codes as well as intriguing outliers were used as the themes that are addressed in this study:

- Research Question 1:
    o Introspection
    o Student-Centered Teaching
    o Teacher Preparation Program (TPP)

- Research Question 2:
    o Negative Encounters with White teachers,
    o Relationships with Students
    o Color the Curriculum

- Research Question 3:
    o Texts and Media and
    o School and School District Support

These themes will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Member Checking

Member checking is a technique used between the researcher and participants to explore the credibility and/or validity of data. Data or data results are returned to the participant(s) to check for accuracy and to see if what is presented resonates with their experiences (Birt et al., 2016). I sent each participant their transcripts and encouraged them to ensure their accuracy and that we had a shared understanding of meanings within the data.

Subjectivity Statement

As a child, you know what I loved more than anything when it came to art class? Crayons. Not just any crayons…brand new and most importantly, *sharp* crayons. Before I was even school age, I remember my mommy taking me to the public library for story hour with Ms. Gail. Story hour typically went like this; Ms. Gail read a book while all the children sat on the carpet (except for me, I would not leave my mommy's side during the reading of the story), then we would color a coloring page, and last, end the hour with a piece of candy to enjoy. After a few weeks, once I gradually began to unwrap myself from around my mommy's leg, I started coloring the coloring page and enjoyed it. I liked how the sharp point could be used to get into the crevice of a figure that I was coloring without going past the line and just simply coloring in general.

Let's fast forward to third grade. In third grade, we went to art class once a week. Each week, I would sit beside my friend and the art teacher, Ms. Jackson would take out a fresh new box filled with small 24 count boxes of Crayola crayons. The "story hour Crystal" in me would get overjoyed with excitement. This excitement was short lived because when the art teacher passed out the brand new and most importantly, *sharp*

crayons, she would pass them out to only one side of the classroom…the white side. Our side (consisting of Black and Brown students) was left with the nubs—old, short, hard to hold, label missing, and most importantly, <u>not</u> *sharp* crayons. After weeks of this treatment, I slipped a note to my friend that read, "We don't get the new crayons because we're Black." Ms. Jackson saw this exchange, stormed over, snatched the note, read it with menacing eyes, looked at me, and screeched, "I can give supplies to whomever I please!" My homeroom teacher, Ms. Hutchinson usually picked us up from art class, but on that day, Ms. Jackson escorted us back to class. I sat at my desk while I watched her talking to Ms. Hutchinson, but looking at me the entire time with a flushed face and ominous eyes. In that moment, I saw two things; Ms. Jackson was mad at me when I (in my opinion) did nothing wrong and my homeroom teacher was not standing up for me. This is my first vivid memory of racism. I was 8 years young. Since then, my life as a Black girl, student, and woman has been filled with racist and culturally insensitive encounters that often occur daily.

Now that I'm older and can see this incident more clearly, I was not given the brand new, but most importantly *sharp* crayons because Ms. Jackson's perceptions of me dictated what she thought I did and did not deserve and how I was viewed in her segregated classroom. Ms. Hutchinson's silence sent a message that I was not worth advocating for. I view everything from the lens of that little Black girl in art class. As a new teacher support coach, educator, Black woman, and a first time aunt to a one year old Blacknificent niece, I work hard every day to ensure that other students whose identities have been pushed to the margins do not experience a Ms. Jackson or Ms. Hutchinson and, for teachers who share similar perceptions as these two teachers, I work

to challenge them in a way that will hopefully influence them to change for the better when working with racially diverse students. I am a firm believer that students of all races and identities take note of what is said and what is not said in the classroom and the effects can be long lasting (take it from me, that was over 25 years ago). This study is particularly focused on perceptions because perceptions are what influence people's actions. Listening to beginning teachers' stories and explanations of how they teach (and treat) racially diverse students is the crux behind how their actions play out in the classrooms. I hope to bring these stories to light from the cases in this study and in future research with teachers.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to starting the study, I satisfied all requirements as outlined by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct research with human subjects. With IRB approval for this study, I received informed consent forms from all the study's participants. The informed consent form detailed the purpose of the study, the expectations of the participants, the potential benefits of the study, the possible emotional discomfort of the study, the method of ensuring confidentiality, and the explanation of how the data will be used. Participants received notice that they could withdraw at any time during the study. Additionally, prior to signing consent documents, participants were informed of the audio and transcription device that would be used to collect, code, and analyze data. Lastly, participants were ensured that all raw data would be locked and secured for five years after publication, under the University's Policy Statement #306 (University of North Carolina at Charlotte, 2019).

Delimitations

This study was delimited by focusing on one public school district that is situated in an urban emergent area where there is a reasonable likelihood that beginning teachers are recruited to teach in schools that have diverse student populations.

Limitations

As outlined in Creswell and Poth (2018), limitations included resource limitations (time and financial) and the study of more than one case, potentially diluting the overall analysis and decreasing the level of depth of each case. As mentioned earlier in my research positionality statement, as a new teacher support coach who has witnessed several instances where racially diverse students have been treated poorly, my heightened awareness of inequitable practices may have projected bias toward the participants' data. Also, I was each of the participants' former new teacher support coach. This relationship may have caused participants to not be as truthful or open in their responses because of the dynamics of our relationship.

Assumptions

The implementation of this research design was anchored in key assumptions. The first assumption was location. This study assumed that selecting participants from a culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse urban school district would capture beginning teachers who are currently working with racially diverse students and, thus, be able to share lived experiences, stories, reflections, and examples throughout their teaching careers. This leads to the second assumption of completion of licensure requirements. It was assumed that beginning teachers who have completed their teaching licensure program would be able to include their TPP experiences along with their

professional and personal anecdotes that inform their perception of preparedness to teach racially diverse students.

Summary

This chapter introduced the guided methodology for a constructivist approach to exploring beginning teachers' perceptions of preparedness in teaching racially diverse students. The study identified its sample population using convenience and criterion sampling. Through a qualitative case study research design, I identified data collection and analysis tools to address the research question of the study. The chapter concluded with an organizational plan for presenting results and a review of ethical procedures for the study. The findings of the study will be detailed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore beginning teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to teach racially diverse students. This study provides insight on how beginning teachers' personal and professional experiences manifest in their preparedness to teach racially diverse students. This study also contributes to the existing research that emphasizes the importance of preparing all teachers, especially beginning teachers, to teach racially and culturally diverse students (Borrero et al., 2018). There is a need for this study to support beginning teachers in their understanding of how racial diversity is a key element to center in their teaching practices (Bonner et al., 2018; Gay, 2000). Curriculum and instruction in public schools remain overwhelmingly centered on whiteness, with other races scantily included after being heavily vetted to remain palatable for the white audience that it represents (King & Swartz, 2018). With U.S. public schools becoming more racially and ethnically diverse (Schaeffer, 2021b), equipping teachers with long-term, effective tools and resources to teach racially diverse students is desperately needed to advance success for all students.

This study has three research questions: 1) What are beginning teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to teach racially diverse students?, 2) What are the contributing factors to beginning teachers' perceptions of preparedness to teach racially diverse students?, and 3) What resources are beginning teachers currently using to teach racially diverse students and become more competent in teaching racially diverse students?

Research Question 1 explored beginning teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to teach racially diverse students. This question was designed to capture the participants' interpretations of their preparedness when teaching racially diverse students through reflection on their first three years of teaching. Inviting beginning teachers to answer this question prompted them to consider the personal and professional experiences in their lives that shaped their perceptions. Within these experiences, teachers were also asked to share what they have learned in their teacher preparation programs regarding teaching racially diverse students.

Research Question 2 provides an extension of Research Question 1. Participants were asked to share the contributing factors that informed their perceptions of their preparedness to teach racially diverse students. Apart from self-assessing their perceptions of preparedness in Research Question 1, the participants guided me through different time periods that held *specific* causes or events in their personal and professional lives that impacted their perception of preparedness to teach racially diverse students. These stories ranged from childhood to adulthood.

Lastly, Research Question 3 examined the resources beginning teachers used to teach racially diverse students and become more competent in teaching racially diverse students. These resources supplemented the participants' responses shared throughout the interview process. Participants also shared what resources they would like to have in their classrooms to help support their preparedness to teach racially diverse students. Participants' resource requests provided implications on ways schools, and school districts can equip beginning teachers with resources needed to effectively teach racially diverse students.

This chapter is organized in the order of the research questions. I have organized the findings to address the major themes identified in relation to each research question. Several themes were developed within each research question throughout the data analysis. Each theme highlighted similarities across the participants' experiences as well as drew attention to distinct outliers that were intriguing. Through integrated experiences and reflections, the themes described in this chapter offer insight into beginning teachers' perceptions of teaching racially diverse students.

Participant Descriptive Data

Before detailing the findings in this chapter, I have provided participant descriptive data of each participant to provide more context for each case in this study.

Table 5

Participant Descriptions

Pseudonym	Gender	Race	Years of Teaching Experience as of 2021-2022 school year	Grade taught in the 2021-2022 school year	Teaching License Pathway	Racial Makeup of Student Population at School Taught
Melissa	Female	Black	4	Kindergarten	Alternatively licensed from an institution of higher learning	Am Ind/AK Nat 0.6% Asian 9.5% Black 56.4% Hispanic 12.4% Nat HI/Pac Isl 1.0% Two or More Races 2.3% White 18.0%
Giselle	Female	Black	4	5th grade	Alternatively licensed from an institution of higher learning	Am Ind/AK Nat 0.5% Asian 9.3% Black 57.8% Hispanic 23.6% Nat HI/Pac Isl 0.2% Two or More Races 2.4% White 6.2%

Harry	Male	Black	5	3rd grade	Alternatively licensed from an institution of higher learning	Am Ind/AK Nat 0.9% Asian 3.8% Black 61.3% Hispanic 20.5% Nat HI/Pac Isl 0% Two or More Races 4.0% White 9.5%

Legend: Am Ind/AK Nat: American Indian/Nat-Alaskan Native, Nat HI/Pac Isl: Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

Participants

As outlined in Table 5, three participants served as the three cases in this study. The gender, race, years of teaching experience, grade taught, and teaching license pathway for each participant were gathered during interviews in this study. The percentages for the racial makeup of the student population at the school where the participants teach were retrieved through the Office of Civil Rights Database (2017). In North Carolina, an alternative licensure pathway begins after a candidate is

hired by a North Carolina LEA and affiliating with an EPP, to obtain a Residency License (RL), which is a one-year license that is renewable twice prior to obtaining full licensure and allows candidates with bachelor's degrees to teach while striving to meet all licensure requirements in order to become fully licensed. (Public School Forum of NC, 2021)

Interestingly, all three participants graduated with a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) from the same university in Southeast North Carolina, which satisfied their teaching licensure requirements. They also earned their bachelor's degrees from this university. This similarity provided an additional layer of insight, particularly when discussing teacher preparation program experiences during data collection. A pseudonym was used to protect the identity of the participants.

Participant 1: Melissa

Originally from South Carolina, Melissa is the proud mother of two girls, 10 and 13. She currently teaches kindergarten at a Montessori school (Montessori et al., 2017). Before becoming a teacher, she worked as a teacher assistant for five years. All of her teaching experiences have been in a Montessori school setting in which she is certified. In this current school year, she is serving as a mentor to another teacher, a role that she is excited about. Melissa earned a bachelor's degree in psychology. As a child, she remembers going to the Greek festival, which she credits for making baklava one of her favorite desserts. She enjoys cooking and event planning. Growing up, her parents instilled in her to treat everyone how she would want to be treated and to be respectful.

> I will say that my mom and dad, they always taught me to be accepting of others and to get to know people for who they were and to give people a chance. I lived in South Carolina, so racism down there is still very prevalent, so there were things that I was taught, kind of like survival tips and things that I should be careful of. However, I was not taught to hate anybody or to treat people differently. I was taught to treat people, you know, as I wanted to be treated and to always be respectful.

Her parents were hands-on in her education and attended every school field trip. It was important to them that Melissa experienced the world around her and provided her with what Melissa describes as

> things that were not necessarily what you would stereotypically think an African-American woman or a young lady should be in or whatever. I was definitely

afforded lots of opportunities to experience life on a very real level at a young age.

These opportunities included going to Governor's school, attending the Gullah festival in Beaufort, South Carolina, attending different summer camps, and traveling with the school band. Melissa's kind personality shined throughout the interviews and spoke to her passion for serving her students.

Participant 2: Giselle

Giselle is the daughter of a pastor and a proud mother of two children: a son and a daughter. As a child, she lived in different states while living with her mom. Her pre-school-twelfth grade schooling experience took place in New Jersey, Virginia, and North Carolina. She earned her bachelor's in liberal studies and is currently working on her doctorate degree in curriculum and instruction. An interesting fact is that she teaches in the same school district where she graduated from high school. In high school, she was viewed as the "token Black girl," meaning white students liked her and would often use their friendship with her to contest the idea that they could be racist. When her high school's neighborhood jurisdictions changed, there was an influx of Black and Brown students who started to attend Giselle's majority-white high school. This caused outrage among many white families, and many of them showed up at the school with racist paraphernalia, such as the Confederate flag. Giselle's white "friends" tried to reassure her that the flag simply meant "country living." Experiences such as these were one of many instances that Giselle shared during our interviews together when reflecting on past experiences.

Prior to teaching, she became an after-school group leader through the school district's after-school program and eventually became one of the after-school program directors. Immediately in the first interview, Giselle shared her passion for helping students of color succeed, even if society tells them otherwise:

I'm passionate about doing for my students of color and my students, making sure they can achieve and be successful in this society that doesn't look at them as if they can do it. So that is pretty much me.

For the past three years, Giselle has had the opportunity to move up with the same group of students from second to fifth grade. She describes herself as the "cool teacher" because she knew certain songs that were popular amongst her students, and she creates an environment that was welcoming for them.

Participant 3: Harry

Harry also hails from South Carolina and is the married father of one daughter. Coming from a family, as he describes, "full of teachers," he was raised by his grandmother and moved to North Carolina when he was 17. His teaching career started as an exceptional children's assistant before becoming a classroom teacher. For most of his teaching years, he taught reading, math, science, and social studies, but this past year, his grade level was departmentalized, and he taught only math. Harry earned his bachelor's degree in sports science, fitness, and management. When reflecting on South Carolina, he too, remembers racist encounters:

I'm from South Carolina, so that's a hot racial state. You get your typical, your stereotype. Sometimes just because of your color, you might get looked at or presented or assumed to be a certain way, judged. In my neighborhood, we had

like these mopeds and a lot of Black kids started getting mopeds and scooters,

which it costs to get those. And we had about 10 or 11. And I remember the white

cops used to pull us over and mess with us all the time because we would be

riding in groups and you got these young Black boys riding these nice scooters.

He continued, saying, "Columbia (SC) had the Confederate flag hanging for years at the capitol. You know, certain parts have slavery roots."

Having been reared in a religious household, Harry's Christian faith was very important to him. Treating people equally was how he describes his foundation. In the classroom, Harry prides himself on the relationships that he builds with students.

Each participant spoke openly about their childhood through adulthood experiences and how they shaped their decision to join the teaching profession. While every story is not included in this study, the context that the participants brought provided a special perspective on Black beginning teachers' perceptions in teaching racially diverse students.

Perceptions of Preparedness to Teach Racially Diverse Students

Research Question 1 asked participants to share their perceptions of preparedness to teach racially diverse students. As previously mentioned in the purpose of this chapter, participants were asked throughout this study to consider both their personal and professional experiences when reflecting on their perceptions of preparedness to teach racially diverse students. When simply asked if they felt prepared to teach racially diverse students, each participant responded yes. The themes explained in this research question will deeply examine this claim. The themes that developed from this research question

were 1) Introspection, 2) Student-Centered Teaching, and 3) Teacher Preparation

Program (TPP).

Introspection

In this theme, introspection refers to how one learns about themselves by using

different mental and emotional practices to understand different contexts. This can

include (but not limited to) examining your own thoughts, feelings, and motives

(Schwitzgebel, 2010). When listening to the participants explain the reasoning behind

whether they were prepared to teach racially diverse students, each of them spoke on

what they did to mentally and/or emotionally prepare to teach racially diverse students.

Thinking introspectively revealed different ways that participants prepared themselves

when it came to teaching racially diverse students. Melissa, for instance, spoke in depth

about being aware of her own biases:

> I feel prepared to teach racially diverse students because I am intentional about
>
> making sure I check my personal bias. The intentionality of making sure that I am
>
> teaching about different races and incorporating that into my lessons and not
>
> avoiding those topics. I stay informed about my school community and climate, I
>
> stay aware of societal issues, norms, and abnormalities. I try to ensure that my
>
> classroom environment is welcoming to all and I support inclusion of all students
>
> and families.

Melissa continued that it is important that she treats all of her students fairly and not

allow any personal bias or experiences to change how she teaches because she does not

want to create those types of memories for her students. During our interview, she said:

Making a conscious effort to not allow those bias to affect how I teach, but also being open to learning more about different things and being aware of the different situations and scenarios that our children are experiencing in their home lives and in the community and being open to educating myself as well as educating my colleagues on the different things that are happening in today's society.

Melissa's responses revealed that being prepared to teach racially diverse students involves thinking introspectively to identify the implicit and explicit biases that we mentally carry within us so that they can be combated to prevent negative teaching and learning experiences for racially diverse students.

Giselle's feeling of being prepared to teach racially diverse students stems from her emotional childhood school experiences. "I just knew to come into it (teaching) with love and patience. I think it comes from my own experiences even triggering back to the fifth grade, when school was hard for me." She feels prepared to teach racially diverse students because she knows first-hand what it is like to be misunderstood as a student.

I feel prepared to teach racially diverse students because I was once that child who needed patience and understanding and to be taught in ways that were understanding of who I am and my background. It influences how I'm able to build relationships. Like I was kind of the cool teacher, because I knew certain songs and elicited an environment that was welcoming for students. Storytelling my own personal experiences also helped me transform how I teach. It informed how I can make students feel included and not feel like they're set apart because learning a certain way isn't easy for them. Teaching them to have a voice within

the classroom where their voice matters. Like I was big on discussion and respect as far as what they had to say, because a lot of times being younger, it was always the "Do as I say" mentality and I wanted to be a better example for them. I wanted them to be able to come to me even when they left my classroom because they knew I was going to advocate for them. They knew she'll listen to me and get the full story and then maybe she can help me in tough situations. So that was definitely important for me–for them to feel like they had an ear while they were in school. It made them want to come to school because they knew they had somebody there that actually cared.

During the interviews, Giselle went into detail about several instances during her kindergarten-twelfth grade experiences that negatively impacted how she viewed school and how her teachers viewed her. Reflecting on these experiences and how they made her feel played a significant role in her preparedness to teach racially diverse. One way that prepared her to teach racially diverse students was learning from the mistakes that she believed her teachers made when teaching her. As alluded to in her quote, this included building relationships, sharing her own personal experiences, providing positive support for students when learning gets challenging, and cultivating a space where her students felt that they mattered and could come to her any time to express how they felt.

Differing from Melissa and Giselle, Harry expressed an alternative view when it came to being prepared to teach racially diverse students. While he shared that he felt prepared to teach racially diverse students because of his "prior and daily experiences with encountering diverse students," being a novice teacher brought on other demands that took precedence over his preparedness to teach racially diverse students:

I'm gonna be honest, my first three years, I didn't care about who was in front of me. I mean, I'm being honest, my first three years, it was more like, let me learn content, learn how to manage a classroom. And, I've just learned as I go. I think I was just teaching, just trying to get the hang of everything, but I didn't have any problems as far as connecting with the students. I think it was just a natural ability to be able to just, you know, connect with students, regardless of what they looked like, you know what I mean?

Harry's feeling of preparedness in teaching racially diverse students was heavily connected to his natural ability to connect with students and build relationships. However, the demands that come with being a beginning teacher new to the profession caused him to mentally focus on what he considered the foundations for successful teaching—learning the required content and classroom management.

Student-Centered Teaching

The next theme that aided in the participants' perceptions of preparedness to teach racially diverse students was student-centered teaching. Giselle shared that while she is adamant about student-centered teaching, she struggles to balance it with her school's required curriculum demands.

With the ever-changing curriculum, we have to learn it quickly and are not allotted a lot of time to incorporate any outside thoughts which sometimes puts us in positions to not fully help every child. They don't prepare or train us to know how to differentiate and a lot of times our mindset in differentiation is based on how easy or how hard it is, not how do we make it relevant to different cultures.

Giselle felt that schools view differentiation in more of a straightforward way (ex: "do students 'got it' or not") versus viewing it as a method to incorporate students' unique cultures. In these conversations, it appears that Giselle is conflating two related, but not identical concepts: differentiation and CRP. While differentiation and CRP are both student centered and reject the idea of standardized mass produced instruction for students, differentiation primarily focuses on using different learning modalities to engage students at different learning levels to take ownership of their learning. In differentiated classrooms, teachers work as diagnosticians to provide the best instruction possible for students (Tomlinson, 2008, 2014). Though CRP encompasses many of differentiation's hallmarks, it is distinguished by its synergistic relationship between home/community culture and school culture and the multiple identities and cultures that make up today's youth. Along with academic success, CRP includes cultural competence and critical consciousness as its three main components (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Both concepts are vital in the classroom. Referring to CRP as differentiation may suggest that Giselle is not as prepared to differentiate her teaching for her racially diverse students as much as she is prepared to incorporate CRP strategies.

Harry focused on "understanding that every student learns differently and how to differentiate instruction," regardless of race, while Melissa strives to incorporate as many opportunities as possible for her students to explore different races and cultures in school:

> My personal view is I feel that students should be very well-rounded in everything, every aspect. I have been exposed to many different cultures, many different races, and have interacted with these different cultures and races and through personal experiences that gave me, I guess kind of like a starting point in

general so I think that just being open to new experiences and new people and

new cultures has allowed me to be better prepared to service my students and to

make them aware of the world around them.

Once the participants saw that there was a disconnect between the students and what they

were required to teach, they worked to become more prepared throughout their first three

years of teaching to provide different approaches, strategies, and opportunities to center

their teaching around the students in their classrooms.

Teacher Preparation Program (TPP)

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 3, each participant received a residency license

through an alternative license pathway after successfully completing their Master of

Teaching degree from the same university in North Carolina. When participants were

asked whether their TPP prepared them to teach racially diverse students, the question

was answered with a resounding "No." Participants expressed that the program focused

more on pedagogy and multiple intelligences than any other topics. Giselle mentioned

that "it (TPP) was a lot of pedagogy, which is important and how to teach students, you

know, the multiple intelligences." In terms of diversity in general, there was some

evidence that diversity was addressed, but it was geared more towards how students are

diverse in their learning styles without the inclusion of diversity in race and culture.

Harry explained,

They (TPP) didn't really, it didn't really hit on so much of the racially diverse. It

was just more just, making sure that you are able to meet the needs of all the

students, because everybody learned different.

Melissa felt that she learned more about racial diversity from trainings and professional development offered through her school district than from her TPP.

I had already received some training through [school district] on racial diversity, that didn't have to do with my teacher prep program. And so I was already experiencing that, having trainings and professional developments on that within the school district. I can't like just say that had to do with my teacher prep program just because I was already in the classroom. And so those were things that I'm already being aware of and trying to be intentional about.

All three participants felt that their time spent hands-on in the classroom was the most valuable in preparing them to teach racially diverse students. Giselle and Harry mentioned that the TPP was helpful in passing the licensure tests but not much more than that. Giselle wished that her TPP had "more conversations on how to be culturally responsive."

This section addressed the first research question by exploring the developing themes from the participants' perceptions of preparedness to teach racially diverse students. First, participants described the self-work that took place to feel prepared to teach racially diverse students by thinking introspectively about their biases, past schooling experiences, and approach to typical beginning teacher foundational skills. Secondly, we explored the value that the participants placed on student-centered teaching, and lastly, although, the participants shared that they did feel prepared to teach racially diverse students, they agreed that their teacher preparation program did not play a role in their preparedness.

Contributing Factors

Research Question 2 asked participants to reflect on their personal and professional experiences to share specific causes, events, and/or experiences that played a role in determining their perceptions of preparedness to teach racially diverse students. Participants were prompted to share experiences centered on the following topics (but not limited to): PK-12 schooling experiences, family and community influences, and college experiences, their teacher preparation program, in-service teaching, etc. After analyzing detailed accounts from the participants, three themes developed: 1) Negative Encounters with White teachers, 2) Relationships with Students, and 3) Color the Curriculum.

Negative Encounters with White Teachers

Across some cases, participants' perceptions of preparedness to teach racially diverse students drew heavily upon not wanting to be like the white teachers that mistreated them and to protect their students from similar experiences. Participants in the study shared numerous negative experiences with white teachers during their preschool-twelve schooling experience that remain crystal clear in the present day. As mentioned in Research Question 1, Giselle felt prepared to teach racially diverse students because "I was once that child who needed patience and understanding and to be taught in ways that were understanding of who I am and my background." She shared an example of one of those times as a fifth grader when she needed that teacher the most:

> I ended up going to school in Virginia. Yeah. My mom moved a lot. And from there, I hated the school. I found myself having anger issues within that school and that I had this teacher–Ms. McDonald (pseudonym) was her name. School was kind of hard for me and the teacher really didn't help me. That teacher did not

help me. I struggled so bad and my anger came out because I was so frustrated, but she didn't want to listen to my struggle. It was just kind of like, "Well they can do it, why can't you do it?" talking about the white students. Ooh, that's triggering. But yeah, it affected me a lot. From there I was like, I want to live with my dad. Like I'm tired of moving. I want to be in a set space. So I moved to North Carolina.

This experience and others shared during the interviews played a key role in how Giselle interacts with her students. As shared earlier, she is intentional about making sure that her students know that they matter and that she is always there to support them.

Melissa shared a similar experience as a high school student with a white math teacher that changed her feelings about math from confidence to disdain:

I had a math teacher who was a white woman who seemed to have the attitude of, "Well, I have my degree and you're going to have to get yours." I remember failing her class because she just didn't care whether or not we did well and I remember having to go to summer school. It kind of dampened my spirits as far as wanting to try. So I didn't put forth as much effort because I felt like, you know, it's not going to change how she see it, or it's not going to change what she do or how she grade my work because she just don't like me or she don't want to see me get better. So I think that made it harder for me to grasp the concepts that were being taught to me because I just didn't like math anymore. And it wasn't just me. It was other students as well. And we all were saying the same thing. She doesn't want to help us, she don't want to help us, and we knew it was because we were Black.

Prior to this experience, Melissa shared that she and her mother remembered how much she loved math up until that point. The teacher's interactions (or lack of) negatively impacted Melissa's academic success, which accordingly to Melissa, unquestionably stemmed from how she viewed people of her racial background.

Harry assumed a different approach toward his teachers. Apart from one Black teacher in the seventh grade, Harry's first through twelfth-grade experience consisted of all white teachers. He was not concerned about his teachers' view of him. Throughout his education, he adopted this approach when it came to learning from his teachers:

> The main goal was, regardless of who's teaching you, you need to get this information. That was my mindset, that's my background. Green, purple, yellow, regardless where you come from, you need to know how to add. You need to know how to read. So that was my whole focus. And that's what I guess, that's what I stand on as a teacher now. Regardless if you like the teacher, you don't like the teacher, the teacher don't like you, regardless, you need to get what you need to get so you can be successful.

While Harry's approach to learning from his predominately white schoolteachers was to ignore how he was treated, fairly or poorly, and just focus on being successful, this could possibly be a coping mechanism that is commonly rooted in Black and Brown students by their families since the fair and equitable treatment of Black and Brown students by white teachers has been historically unguaranteed. Students and others with this mindset or learned behavior could greatly benefit from a teacher who creates a learning environment and climate that does not require them to choose between learning and being accepted but rather, be a member of a learning community where they are

learning *and* being valued as an individual. For Giselle and Melissa, their negative encounters with white teachers were a critical contributing factor in terms of their perception of teaching racially diverse students, as it motivated them to be more conscious as to not repeat the same behaviors with their students and improve a system that has not adequately served them as students, especially regarding race.

Relationships

Relationships were the most heavily discussed theme in this study. All three beginning teachers were proud of the relationships that they have been able to cultivate with students and described it as the main contributing factor that influenced their perceptions of preparedness to teach racially diverse students and one of their main strengths as a teacher. Melissa described her relationships as what fuels her classroom:

> Building relationships with my students is really what fuels my classroom because I want to know that child as an individual and get to learn them and what's best for them so that I can help them. We have sidebar conversations–asking them how their day is, what did they do over the weekend–allowing time in the classroom for them to talk about things outside of the classroom. I've gone to student performances and sports things to make sure that I'm present not only in the classroom, but also outside of the classroom, in the community as well, so that they can see that, you know, yes, I'm your teacher, but I'm also here to support you in all areas of your life.

When sharing what increases her preparedness to teach racially diverse students in her classroom, Melissa consistently shared the importance of knowing and supporting her

students inside and outside of the classroom. She described this as learning about the "whole child" so that she can utilize their everyday lives and interests in her teaching.

Giselle described the relationships that she has built with her students as one of her strengths as a teacher:

> My strength as a teacher is the way that I built relationships with my scholars and embraced them, by making myself an inclusive asset in their learning; meaning, I take the time to show them that who they are and how they are in the classroom is normal. And, they kind of relate to my background stories that I tell, you know, how I was as a student, different things I went through in my experiences in each grade level and it brings comfort. So I think just the ability to relate and embrace them, which helps me to build relationships with them.

Sharing personal anecdotes with her students has helped Giselle build trust with her students and allowed them to feel comfortable with taking risks in the classroom. Harry also named building relationships with students as one of his strengths as a teacher when teaching racially diverse students.

> I think one of my strengths as a teacher is the ability to build relationships with students; by building those relationships and connecting with them. You can't assume that if you have students that are the same race that they have the same background. You got to take the time to get to know every individual.

Collectively, the participants believed that the best way to teach students is to know them. Building relationships allowed them to know their students as learners and as individuals which better prepared them to teach them.

Color the Curriculum

Melissa, Giselle, and Harry recognized early in their teaching careers that the curriculum that they were responsible for implementing did not reflect the students that they were teaching. Melissa shared that she understands the importance of making sure that every student feels included and seen in the classroom. She gives her students opportunities to share their cultures so that her students can have those experiences:

As a teacher, I understand the importance of making sure that everybody feels included and that I am giving all my students the opportunity to share their culture and to be seen in the classroom and experience everybody's culture and things in the classroom.

Melissa's inclusion of her students' cultures was important to her, especially since she grew up exploring different cultures from an early age.

Harry was adamant that the content that he is required to teach in schools and the state standards tests do not reach and are not reflective of all cultures. "All the reading passages are always something that's not adapted to their prior knowledge. And prior knowledge is the key to success." While Harry mentioned his awareness of his school's curriculum not being reflective of all cultures, his focus on prior knowledge may or not be linked to culture and race, given that incorporating students' race and culture was not a major concern of his at the start of his teaching career. For Giselle, this past year, her fifth graders asked a question that made her rethink how she taught the curriculum:

They were like, "Why don't we ever learn anything about us?" That's when I was like okay, I have to modify my curriculum and how I'm teaching them. It somehow clicked; maybe this is why they're not learning how they should,

because it doesn't relate to them. I have parents who come to me and say, "He

can't relate to the curriculum. It's boring. That's why he's falling asleep in class."

Like, they're so bound by what we're giving them (curriculum), that they really

don't know their true selves.

Noticing the lack of racial diversity in their required school curriculum impelled the

participants to begin looking at ways in which they could reach students in a way that

included who they are; their backgrounds, interests, etc. In the next research question, we

will learn more about the resources that the participants used to color the curriculum for

their students.

In this section, we examined specific experiences and strategies that contributed

to the participants' preparedness to teach racially diverse students. We started by

detailing how negative school encounters that participants had with white teachers

inspired them to make systemic changes in their classrooms to prevent their students

from having the same encounters. Next, we discussed how building relationships were an

integral part of embracing students as individuals, inside and outside of the classroom,

and being a safe space for them. Lastly, we discussed the effects that a non-racially

diverse curriculum had on the participants' students and how finding ways to change that

was a contributing factor in how they became more prepared to teach racially diverse

students.

Resources

Research Question 3 examined the resources beginning teachers used to teach

racially diverse students and become more competent in teaching racially diverse

students. These resources supplemented the participants' responses shared throughout the

interview process. For this research question, document analysis was used in addition to the coding methods (Saldaña, 2021) used to analyze the interviews. Developing themes included: 1) Texts and Media and 2) School and School District Support.

Texts and Media

Melissa and Giselle use a variety of texts and videos to teach racially diverse students and to help them become more competent in teaching racially diverse students. Harry emulates figures from movies and uses a text closely tied to his religious beliefs when it comes to teaching racially diverse students. Each year, Melissa hands out a questionnaire to her parents. She considered this resource as one of the attributes of her success in teaching racially diverse students in her first three years of teaching:

Having a relationship with your families and having a better understanding of the environment that your students are in and the backgrounds that your families come from. I try to make sure that, you know, when I'm introducing myself to parents, even at open house, I try to get a better understanding of who they are as parents, as well as people. I have a parent questionnaire that I send home that kind of allows the parents to share more about the child, but it also shares information with me about parents as well.

Figure 1

Parent Questionnaire Shared by Melissa

Melissa also tries to "incorporate books that support different ethnicities, different racial backgrounds, and different situations" into her instruction and has a "cultural area" that stays in her classroom year-round that is always available for students. Teachers and students add to the cultural area throughout the year:

Definitely having literature in the classroom about different cultures that are specifically in my class. Some of our families travel and go visit their home countries and so when they travel, I do ask students to bring back something that I can keep in the classroom to share their culture with everyone. So I've had students bring things back from their trips. I've had families donate different things to the classrooms so that I can share with future classes. I personally, if I travel or if I have friends that travel, I, again, try to have different things in the classroom, in my cultural area, so that all cultures are represented in the class and we can talk about those different cultures.

Figure 2

Books Shared by Melissa

Figure 3

Melissa's "Cultural Area" in Her Classroom

In terms of building her competency in teaching racially diverse students, Melissa seeks

out professional development and diversity courses offered by her school district, colleague recommendations of different books, articles, TED (Technology, Entertainment, and Design) talks as well as resources from family members in education that talk about racial diversity.

Giselle admitted that many of her resources did not come until after her third year, which coincided with the year that George Floyd was murdered (Lempinen, 2021). To build competency in teaching racially diverse students, Giselle started from within with self-reflection and read books by highly respected scholars in race and education; *We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom* by Bettina L. Love, *Revolutionary Love: Creating a Culturally Inclusive Literacy Classroom* by Kamania Wynter-Hoyte, Eliza Braden, Michele Myers, Sanjuana Rodriquez, and Natasha Thornton, and *Teaching Reading to Black Adolescent Males: Closing the Achievement Gap* by Alfred W. Tatum. Giselle specifically credits Love's (2019) text for encouraging her to "reflect on how I handle certain things or I speak up, you know, when stereotypes are happening, you know, for our scholars." The Wynter-Hoyte and colleagues' (2022) text helped her make her classroom more culturally responsive:

> Amazing, amazing, amazing, amazing book. It helps set the tone for the norms, it has you look at yourself, when setting the norms, and it gives you the norms that are given within school and how you can make them culturally responsive. This led into my teacher transparency and giving scholars a place to feel comfortable in speaking up, that you had a collective voice where you were valued and your opinion was valued.

Figure 4

Giselle's Books
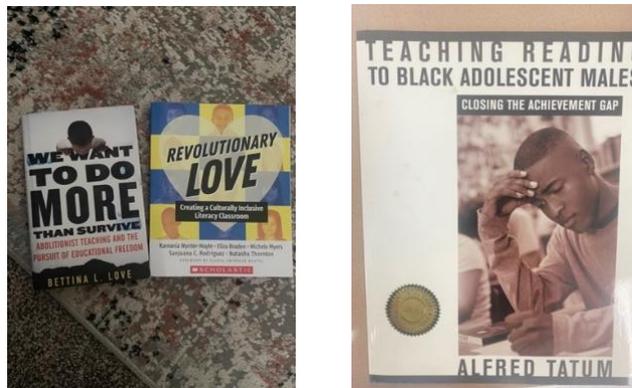
In terms of resources used to teach racially diverse students, Giselle chose books that reflected her students and their lived experiences. One particular book that stands out to her was a book she read last school year; *Ghost Boys* by Jewell Parker Rhodes. The following is a summary of the book from the author's website:

> Twelve-year-old Jerome is shot by a police officer who mistakes his toy gun for a real threat. As a ghost, he observes the devastation that's been unleashed on his family and community in the wake of what they see as an unjust and brutal killing. Soon Jerome meets another ghost: Emmett Till, a boy from a very different time but similar circumstances. Emmett helps Jerome process what has happened, on a journey towards recognizing how historical racism may have led to the events that ended his life. Jerome also meets Sarah, the daughter of the police officer, who grapples with her father's actions. (Rhodes, 2016)

Giselle shared that her students were highly interested in this story, and it encouraged students to ask questions about themselves and develop their love for reading. Her

students' confidence grew, and they began wanting to join book clubs and read the announcements.

Figure 5

Books Shared by Giselle

Throughout the study, Harry has mentioned that he treats every student the same regardless of race. When asked, "How do you think your experiences have influenced your perceptions of preparedness to teach racially diverse students?", he shared:

> I believe that everything that I went through and the way I came up, my
>
> perception…I believe it prepared me by viewing, putting on the lenses or the
>
> glasses to just reach all students regardless of their color, regardless of their race.
>
> Those are the lenses that I see from. And, I can't change that.

A testament to his religious upbringing with his grandmother in South Carolina, when Harry was asked to share a resource that he uses to build his competency in teaching racially diverse students, he shared the text of his Christian faith, the Bible. He explained,

> I would not exist if it were not for the Word of God. This is where I receive my core values and beliefs in life. The Bible is the foundation of where I developed to treat people with love regardless of race. Also, being able to connect, listen, and understand and respect everyone's differences.

Reaching all students and treating people with love regardless of race, but being able to "connect, listen, and understand and respect everyone's differences" is contradictory given that the difference between someone or a group of people could, in fact, be race. Throughout conversations with Harry, he oscillated between connecting with and knowing his students as individuals to providing a blanket way of teaching that did not consider race at all, which is an identity (out of many) that makes up an individual.

In addition to the Bible, Harry shared two movies that "played a major part" when it came to teaching racially diverse students, *Lean on Me* and *Dangerous Minds*. In each of these movies, there is a protagonist who is tasked with making drastic changes to an inner-city school/classroom that struggles particularly with drug use, gang violence, and poverty (Avildsen et al., 1989; Smith et al., 1995). Harry pointed out that the protagonist in each movie had to adapt to their environment and build relationships regardless of race which is an approach that he uses in his classroom. Aside from the Bible and movies, Harry observes peers, uses restorative practices (nonpunitive approaches to handling conflict) (Fronius et al., 2016, as cited in Augustine et al., 2018) and integrates social

emotional learning strategies (CASEL, 2021) in the classroom with students to make sure that students are feeling accepted.

Overall, participants used a variety of texts and media as well as colleague recommendations and school district trainings for resources to support them in teaching racially diverse students and building their competency to teach racially diverse students.

School and School District Support

After listening to the participants share each of their artifacts and their significance, I asked each of them if there were any other resources or support that they needed when teaching racially diverse students. All three participants answered yes, and their responses centered heavily around ways their school or school district could support them. Melissa focused on tangible resources such as interactive smartboards with different programs and websites to provide students more hands-on activities such as virtual field trips. She also proposed that schools allocate funds to grade levels or teachers to buy things to incorporate into their lessons to have "full out experiences." She believes having more resources to go along with lessons would highly benefit her students:

> I would like a smartboard or something like that. That's interactive for the
> students to be able to interact with that, because I do know that there are a lot of
> programs and websites that we can share with them that they could actually go up
> to the board and interact with it and like move something around and you know, it
> feels like they're really in there. That'll be cool…I guess, you know, money or the
> schools being able to purchase materials to go along with some of the things that
> we're teaching in the units and maybe each teacher being allotted a certain amount

of money that can go towards buying things where we can incorporate active lessons for students to use in the different units that we're studying.

Another form of support that Melissa suggests is professional development that is reflective of the families served within the school district:

I think if we, as a district, could provide more training on the specific families that we have in our district that would be helpful because even if you never have a student from that ethnicity, it's still good to know, because your colleague may have a student that is coming from that background. And if you took that training, it may be something that you picked up out of that training that they didn't, or that they may have forgotten or something, and you can help them to better deal with that family or that student specifically. So I think just being more aware of the cultures and the races that we have in our district and providing professional developments, or information sessions to staff as to where we can maybe just go online and pull some things about students that may have come from this background. That would be helpful.

Melissa's suggestion of school district's providing information on families specific to the school district can be helpful, but could also lead to stereotypes being cast on the different populations if the trainings are reduced to what the internet says about these different races, ethnicities, and countries. Learning from someone or a group people who are a part of the culture or has heavily interacted with the families can provide more customized support to the educational stakeholders within the school district. This should not, however, replace building authentic relationships with students and families as there are several differences within cultures that a blanket training cannot address.

Harry believes that money should be allocated for students to have experiences that allow them to experience more than their everyday environment. Using school districts funds to create more jobs for instructional assistants to help in the classroom was another form of support that Harry recommended:

> The more money you have, the more you can do. You got money, you can take trips, you know, you get kids out of [city name]. You know, you can take them to Washington D.C., you know, instead of just looking at it on the internet or video, we can actually go there and go to the new museum that they built. Let's take it outside of [city name]. Let's take these kids and travel somewhere…We need more bodies in the classroom, meaning we need more assistants, more teachers, like you got 26 students to one teacher, you know, if you had extra teachers or an assistant in the classrooms, then you can get more done.

Harry's thoughts around school funding experiences for students came from observing over the years how many of his students have never left their city. He believes that having more instructional support in the classroom would allow him to better meet the learning needs of his students through methods such as small group instruction.

The support that Giselle would like from the district is more intangible. The following bullet points that summarize her suggestions along with quotes that further explain her reasoning:

- **Having roundtable discussions/conversations with other educators who have had similar experiences in the classroom to get different ideas.** "I feel like that's the biggest resource I can have. Having those conversations with other educators who have that experience or who've

been through similar things and talking our way through to get different ideas that we can try."

- **Professional development on how to be culturally responsive.** "They (school district) tiptoe around it. They talk about the equity aspect of it instead of the actual strategies that help with student success."

- **Have a diverse group of curriculum developers.** "Especially in creating the curriculum, you need to have a person from different demographics and teaching levels to really give you a full view of how this may work for this school."

- **Opportunities for school and district leadership to listen to educators' viewpoints when discussing meeting the needs of students.** "They need to listen more to understand because we are in the actual classroom teaching it (the curriculum) and we do it enough for them to know that we can do it. But, not in the aspect of, are we doing it in a way that's helpful or conducive to our students' learning."

Giselle's requests for resources come from a place of not being heard over the years when advocated for more culturally responsive instructional support. She feels that having conversations with other teachers who share similar values and being a part of curriculum discussions will provide the school district with a better perspective of what teaching the current curriculum looks like in practice.

In conclusion, the resources that the participants used to teach racially diverse students and to become more competent in teaching racially diverse students came from a variety of places and influences; books, TED talks, movies, colleague recommendations,

and professional development sessions offered by the school district, among others. In terms of what resources they wished they had, some participants thought about expanding the experiences of their students by having funds in place to provide opportunities and field trips that expose them to experiences outside of their everyday norms. Funds also were mentioned to afford technology and instructional support. Lastly, having an open dialogue with other educational stakeholders within the school district was a need that was expressed in hopes that teachers and district leaders would become more in sync with the racially and culturally diverse needs of students in their classrooms.

Summary

In summary, the findings from this study illuminated several components that informed the participants' perceptions of preparedness to teach racially diverse students. Participants Melissa and Giselle shared negative personal school experiences that prompted them to be careful as not to recreate those same experiences for their students. Once in the classroom, participants' teaching experiences continued to evolve in terms of teaching racially diverse students by challenging curriculums, building relationships, and gathering resources from various sources that give more insight into how to teach racially diverse students. While Melissa and Giselle seemed more interested in tailoring their instruction and interactions with their students by including their respective races and cultures represented in their classrooms, Harry adopted more of a blanket approach to teaching, regardless of race, capitalizing more on teaching and building relationships.

Research Question 1 explored beginning teachers' perceptions of teaching racially diverse students. When asked the question, "Do you feel prepared to teach racially diverse students?" each candidate answered yes. Melissa recognized that her

preparedness stems from the importance of introspection and being cognizant of her biases so that they do not impede how she viewed or taught her students. Giselle's preparedness was fueled by triggering childhood school experiences that caused her to rethink how she taught and reached students. While each participant felt that student-centered teaching was needed to make course content relevant to students, many of Harry's shared experiences dismissed the importance of teaching in a way that is reflective of the racial diversity within his classroom, which suggests that he is underprepared to teach racially diverse students. Although the participants expressed that they felt prepared to teach racially diverse students, one place where they did not attribute that preparedness is their TPP. While, according to the participants, diversity was mentioned in some sense during their TPP process, it focused more on different learning styles (i.e., multiple intelligences) versus preparing beginning teachers on how to utilize students' race and culture as an asset in their curriculum and instruction. The findings also suggest that the participants have received little to no training in culturally relevant pedagogy specifically which is why it is often conflated with other educational terms such as differentiation.

Research Question 2 required participants to expand on their initial perceptions of preparedness to teach racially diverse students by reflecting on specific factors, personal or professional, that contributed to their preparedness (or lack of) to teach racially diverse students. The details of the negative encounters that Melissa and Giselle experienced as students with white teachers had lasting, triggering effects on how they learned and how they were treated as young Black students. Melissa and Giselle used their experiences as Black students to inform how they approached their own classrooms when working with

racially diverse students. Harry approached learning from his predominately white teachers that it did not matter whether his teachers liked him; his main focus was learning the material he needed to be successful, a practice that he emulates in his teaching today.

Every participant shared that they believed they had created strong relationships with their students, which has helped them in creating a positive learning environment. Melissa describes her relationships with the students as what "fuels" her classroom. Giselle uses relationships in her classroom to affirm her students, letting them know that they matter and always being a safe space for them. Harry spoke on his natural ability to connect with students and the importance of getting to know every individual. Seeing the lack of racial and cultural diversity in their school's required curriculum prompted the participants, particularly Melissa and Giselle, to prepare themselves further in teaching racially diverse students by creating opportunities for students to see themselves in the content that they are teaching. This was partially addressed by using the resources mentioned in Research Question 3.

Research Question 3 examined the resources that the participants used in their classroom when teaching racially diverse students as well as resources used to build their competency in teaching racially diverse students. The resources ranged from books to professional development to colleagues' suggestions to movies. Melissa's "Cultural Area" is a permanent fixture in her classroom that students interact with and add to throughout the year. Giselle reads books authored by top race and education scholars and intentionally selects books that students can "see themselves" in. Harry couples his religion with movies to promote the message that all people should be treated equally, regardless of race.

In terms of what other resources they needed to better teach and support racially diverse students, Melissa and Harry pushed for more funding to provide experiences, instructional support, and technology for students. Giselle felt that more communication between teachers and school/district leaders is needed to discuss the curriculum and instruction and how it can be better improved to be more representative of the racially diverse students that they teach.

In the next chapter, I will discuss how these findings align with the existing literature, its implications in the field of education, and recommendations for future research and educational stakeholders.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore beginning teachers' perceptions of preparedness to teach racially diverse students. Using the theoretical lens of CRT (Bell, 1995) and the conceptual lens of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995a), I investigated beginning teachers' perceptions of preparedness to teach racially diverse students by engaging in an in-depth examination of the personal and professional lived experiences and reflections of three beginning teachers. This research sought to understand how beginning teachers gauge their preparedness, the specific contributors that shaped their perceptions, and the resources they used to teach racially diverse students and become more competent in teaching racially diverse students. Through the stories and themes shared in Chapter 4, we learned that beginning teachers' past and present experiences profoundly impacted their perceptions of preparedness to teach racially diverse students. This chapter will begin by analyzing these shared experiences through the literature shared earlier in Chapter 2, followed by the study's implications, and conclude with recommendations for educational stakeholders and future research

Beginning Teachers in the U.S.

Contrary to the existing research shared in Chapter 2, the three beginning teachers of color in this study were in their fourth and fifth years of teaching at the same school where they began their teaching careers. According to North Carolina's data regarding teachers of color who have achieved their license through an alternative pathway, teachers who meet these qualifications are at a greater risk of failing to meet their licensing requirements and leaving the school or the profession (Darling-Hammond et al.,

2022). Perhaps the fact that the participants had teaching experiences at schools with racially diverse student populations while earning their teaching license allowed them to feel more prepared and influenced their retention in comparison to teacher candidates who have little to no experience or knowledge of their school environment and culture prior to completing their licensure requirements. Exploring the lived experiences of beginning teachers who have beaten the odds provided special insight into not only their perceptions of teaching racially diverse students but also their reflections on the successes and challenges that they have experienced as teachers of color new to the teaching profession.

Concentration of Beginning Teachers in Racially Diverse Schools

Earlier research claimed that high-poverty communities have a higher concentration of beginning teachers than low-poverty communities (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2012; Lerner et al., 2021). Beginning teachers who are a novice to their cultural school environment often cause an increase in implicit bias to take place in areas such as discipline, instruction, and achievement, among others (Saunders & Wong, 2020). Also, the literature indicates that beginning teachers have the potential to positively impact students' lives and counter the narrative that students of color, their teachers, and their communities are not successful (Borrero et al., 2018). Race has been historically used to determine one's intelligence; thus, it is important that teachers understand their own biases. Teachers who utilize their students' cultural identities in their classrooms have a greater chance of their teaching practices evolving students' critical consciousness and becoming change agents in their communities (Camangian, 2010; Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Makaiau & Freese, 2013; Picower, 2019). Negative beliefs

about diverse students and their families lead to lower educational expectations and blame (Nelson & Guerra, 2014, p. 71).

This study supports this literature through several narratives throughout the study. Melissa, for instance, shared that becoming more cognizant of her biases and being mindful not to allow those biases to cause negative experiences for her students was one of the key reasons why she felt prepared to teach racially diverse students. From their negative encounters with white teachers, both Melissa and Giselle described what it was like as a student for their teachers to have negative beliefs about them. Academic success, one of the main components of CRP, insists that culturally relevant teaching requires that "teachers attend to students' needs, not merely to make them 'feel good.' The trick of culturally relevant teaching is to get students to 'choose' academic excellence" (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 160). These beginning teachers utilized their students' cultural identities in their classrooms as an asset rather than a deficit in their learning. In the theme, "Color the Curriculum," found in Research Question 2, participants expressed their frustration with the noticeable absence of Black and Brown people's representation in their school's required curriculum. This compelled some of them to use the resources shared in Research Question 3 to create a more racially and culturally inclusive curriculum in their classrooms.

While Melissa and Giselle were creative and intentional about their culturally relevant activities and resources used in their classroom, the findings do not suggest that culturally relevant instruction was comprehensively used in the classrooms on a daily basis. Gloria Ladson-Billings described having a few culturally relevant lessons as *heroes and holidays*. This phrase is a catchall term that refers to the legacies of people of color

smushed into a few themed lessons and celebrations throughout the year instead of

students' cultural identities being at the center of their learning each day (Borrero et al.,

2018). The lack of daily culturally relevant instruction in teachers' classrooms is

common, as many teachers, especially beginning teachers, do not know where to begin in

making their classroom culturally relevant, let alone have considered it. Like Giselle's

case, there may be teachers who have a desire to learn more and implement culturally

relevant instructional practices, but the power dynamic between themselves and school

leaders could cause them to surrender to maintaining the required standardized

curriculum, which CRT views as an "artifact designed to maintain a white supremacist

master script" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 18). Swartz (1992) asserted that "master

scripting" legitimizes dominant, white, upper male voicings as the standard that students

need to know, while all other accounts and perspectives are omitted from the master

script unless they can be disempowered or *mastered* through misrepresentation (p. 341).

Preparing beginning teachers to take a centric approach toward teaching racially diverse

students will help students' race and other identities become less abbreviated and more

fluid throughout the school year.

Teacher-Student Racial Ratio

Today's literature suggests that students of color could benefit from being taught

by teachers of color, with many beliefs suggesting that students who are taught by

teachers of their race influence students' academic achievement, such as teachers serving

as role models and reducing students' perceptions that their teacher is viewing them in a

negative lens, which subsequently lowers academic achievement and performance

(Egalite et al., 2015; Liu & Ball, 2019). Particularly for Black students, North Carolina

research shows that 56 percent of Black students have never had a Black teacher (Gershenson et al., 2017). Black students having exposure to at least one Black teacher in elementary school can reduce the chance of Black students dropping out of high school (Lindsay, 2020). In other words, a high teacher-student racial ratio amongst teachers and students can be powerful.

In Melissa and Giselle's cases, this study confirms the benefits that students can receive from having teachers of color. They each took great strides into making sure that each of their students felt included and incorporated race and culture into various activities: reading texts that had characters that were reflective of the students in their class, being conscious of personal biases, collaborating with parents and students to add cultural artifacts to the classroom, getting to know families, etc. In Harry's case, he had a firm stance on treating every student the same "regardless of color." This was expressed during many of his anecdotes and reiterated through his artifacts when sharing the Bible and movies to support his belief in treating everyone the same, regardless of race. While a teacher of color representation can produce benefits for students of color, having one that recognizes their students' racial identity and uses it as an asset in academic success is more valuable than one that does not acknowledge race at all.

Harry's belief lends itself to the CRT's tenet, critique of liberalism, which critiques the notions of color blindness, meritocracy, and neutrality which subsequently "submerge, marginalize, and perpetuate racism" (Capper, 2015, p. 796; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Teachers who are not proficient in providing students of color with a culturally relevant education may be keeping systemic oppression intact (Taylor, 2010). While Harry is one of three cases in this study, his beliefs are representative of many teachers.

Many teachers struggle with acknowledging and unlearning their biases and assumptions and have perhaps never been asked to. Despite Harry sharing that he *is* prepared to teach racially diverse students, his color-blind approach to teaching suggests that he is not prepared.

Impact on Racially Diverse Students

Studies show that when low-income and/or underrepresented students are disproportionately assigned to new teachers, they are more likely to be taught by a teacher who is in the process of developing classroom management strategies and routines rather than prepared to teach effective instructional practices (Grossman, 1990, as cited in Redding & Nguyen, 2020). This literature is supported by Harry's mentality that he described during his first three years as a beginning teacher. He did not care who was in front of him; he was mainly trying to manage his classroom and learn content. This is why beginning teachers' preparedness to teach racially diverse students is so critical. With the high likelihood of racially diverse students being taught by beginning teachers, students are becoming less centered in their learning as their teachers are trying not to drown in a new, demanding profession. This connects to Love's (2019) description of struggling schools being staffed with "individuals who have little to no experience, underfunded, high teacher burnout, tests that punish students, and low-quality teachers" (Love, 2019, p. 10). The many stressors that come with teaching allow for little time to be spent on getting to know students, which could potentially cause a child to go through their entire schooling experience without anyone ever getting to know their identity beyond a student.

Racially Diverse Preparedness through Curriculum and Instruction in Teacher

Preparation Programs

Based on the existing literature shared in Chapter 2 regarding teacher preparation

programs (TPP), it was unfortunately not a shock when the participants shared that their

TPP experience did not prepare them to teach racially diverse students. As mentioned in

Chapter 2, TPPs are struggling to prepare teachers with teaching practices that meet the

needs of the increasingly diverse student population in the United States; especially the

needs of students who are historically disenfranchised (Allen et al., 2017; Haberman,

2010a; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Milner, 2011a). North Carolina has fewer

licensed teachers in high-poverty schools and nearly twice as many beginning teachers

(0–3 years of experience), who make up almost 30% of the teachers at high-poverty

schools which have a high racially diverse student population (Darling-Hammond et al.,

2022; Oakes et al., 2021).

TPPs' curriculums are similar to preschool-twelfth grade curriculums in that

white dominance is embedded in the structures and policies of TPPs. Because of this,

TPPs' "diversity" plans are satisfied through "add-on" courses which send a message to

teacher candidates that learning about diversity is optional versus imperative to teaching

racially diverse students and should not take precedence over the existing white

curriculum (Li et al., 2021). This causes a lack of readiness among pre-service teachers

working with diverse students from different cultural backgrounds (Nieto et al., 2012).

Because each of the participants in this study has had time in the classroom prior to

enrolling into their TPP, authentic hands-on experiences became their teacher in terms of

preparing them to teach racially diverse students. While having existing prior teaching

experiences with teaching racially diverse students has its benefits, there is still work that can be done to provide beginning teachers with tools learned from their TPP to cultivate a culturally relevant classroom environment that centers students' race and culture.

Implications

Although much research has been centered around beginning teachers' preparedness to teach, this study provided unique insight by inviting beginning teachers to travel through time to their early past, present, and future to reflect on how their personal and professional lived experiences impacted their perceptions of preparedness in teaching racially diverse students. Because the consenting participants all racially identified as Black, the similarities and differences in their experiences generated curiosity about the implications of other Black beginning teachers' experiences while simultaneously demystifying the idea that the Black race is a monolith. During the interview questioning, there were instances that the participants had "Aha" or "Wow" moments because it was not until this study that they realized how something that happened, for example, over 20 years ago, had that much of an influence on their teaching today.

To unearth these described moments and experiences, there must be an open and safe space provided and welcomed in order for teachers to do so, outside of their place of work and disconnected from an employer or faculty member who wields power over them. The protected time allotted for these interviews were not only used to collect data, but to provide such a space where the participants could reflect in a way that they possibly may not have considered before. This study illustrated the power of these spaces and how they are needed to discuss their experiences and how the tenets of

critical race theory play out in their personal and professional worlds. This study encourages creating affinity groups with fellow educators and connecting with other spaces, resources, and opportunities that offer ongoing support in reflection and introspection.

This study also adds to research the notion that teachers' perceptions are deep-rooted and can come from virtually anywhere in one's life span. In these cases, a lot of their perceptions of preparedness to teach racially diverse students stemmed from personal experiences. The good news is perceptions, positive or negative, can optimistically evolve with support. While this study focused on beginning teachers' perceptions of preparedness to teach racially diverse students, there is also a need for administrators to truly get to know their teachers. This study implies a need for school leaders to learn more about who they are leading. In North Carolina, less than half of teachers (48.67%) agreed that they were consistently supported by their school leadership. The data was consistent for the school district used in this study (49.31%) (North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, 2022). Having school leaders who are invested in learning about the different racial and cultural identities that their teachers possess could motivate their teachers to adopt the same practices for their students, therefore, providing a more inclusive learning environment for children.

This study was also unique because it focused on teachers within their fourth and fifth years of teaching who have successfully made it through the first critical three years of teaching. Examining the perceptions of preparedness to teach racially diverse students from beginning teachers who, statistically, should not still be in the profession provided an in-depth glance into the highs and lows of working through the novelty of

teaching while balancing teaching in a way that affirmed their students. This study added to and drew attention to the knowledge of teachers who have made it past the third-year threshold that work in racially diverse schools where beginning teachers leave at high rates (Berry et al., 2020; Bettini & Park, 2017). Having a dialogue with the described teachers opens opportunities for leaders who lead racially diverse schools and districts that are experiencing high beginning teacher turnover rates to discuss what they can do increase staff retention. Lastly, this study provided suggestions from the participants as a starting point for how leaders can support them as well as their racially diverse students.

There is a common belief that teachers of color are innately culturally responsive (Cherry-McDaniel, 2018; Pirbhai-Illich et al., 2017). Becoming a culturally responsive teacher requires teachers to consistently address student achievement while helping students to accept and affirm their cultural identity and "develop critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate" (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, p. 469). While teachers of color may share commonalities amongst their students of color, CRP is a theoretical model that encompasses students' cultural identities as a whole and requires teachers to affirm their cultural identities and challenge inequities. It would be an incredible wonder if any teacher inherently possesses each of these skills without external development. In this study, Melissa and Giselle displayed a desire to create a culturally responsive and inclusive classroom through their shared anecdotes and resources that they shared. However, Harry showed little interest in cultural responsiveness during the data collection process. This study adds to the existing research that there is room for improvement for TPPs to provide educational practices for

in-service and pre-service teachers to unlearn their biases and assumptions, comprehensively educate them on CRP, and provide field experiences in racially and culturally diverse schools, so that beginning teachers do not leave their TPP without knowledge of CRP and the importance of placing students' racial and cultural identities at the center of their teaching.

This study prompts us to think about how we evaluate teacher success. For instance, Harry shared that last school year, he won the Teacher of the Year award for his school. With the data suggesting that he uses a colorblind approach when teaching students, this implies that how students' racial and cultural identities are incorporated into daily instruction is not commonly used as a determinant when evaluating a teacher's success in their classroom and/or when selecting who receives one of the school's highest honors. There is a likelihood that this is the case in local, state, and national teacher recognitions given that success is typically determined by value added data. While teacher-student relationships are vital, "good" relationships can be absent of inclusivity in the classroom.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the majority of public school teachers are white females. We cannot be remiss to note that no teacher from this group consented to the study. Oftentimes, particularly when discussing race, silence can be viewed as complicity. The largest population teaching our students can not be the quietest population when discussing the importance of students' racial identity in the classroom. There is more work that can be done in uncovering the hesitancy of white teachers in such discussions and the effects that it has on racially diverse students and students in general.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Future Research

This study adds to the existing literature regarding beginning teachers' preparedness to teach racially diverse students by providing intimate personal and professional experiences that shaped beginning teachers' perceptions in the Southeast North Carolina area. Future research on this topic can expand beyond North Carolina and different racially diverse school districts across the country. Collecting the stories of beginning teachers of multiple races, identities, and experiences will inform educational researchers and stakeholders about the barriers and bridges that impact their perceptions of preparedness to teach racially diverse students. These efforts can also be strengthened through quantitative data where beginning teachers' assessment of their preparedness to teach racially diverse students can be measured, as well as racially diverse students can share their assessment of how well their teachers incorporate their race, culture, and identities into their everyday teaching and learning.

In this study, I was not able to provide the perceptions of preparedness to teach racially diverse students from a racially diverse group of beginning teachers but exploring the similarities and differences of same race beginning teachers and their perceptions can be valuable. Like this study, it can refute the idea that people within a race are monolithic and explore their personal and professional experiences that influence their perceptions. However, having multiple races and identities would result in a wider range of insights and experiences.

Another recommendation for future researchers is to continue to explore the different types of resources that beginning teachers are using to teach racially diverse

students and the resources that they feel that they need to be successful in doing so. Viewing the artifacts on a larger scale and analyzing beginning teachers' expressions on what they need to be successful in teaching racially diverse students could impact educational funding and school district awareness. This research would also reiterate the need for systemic curriculum and instruction change to successfully reach students, particularly students of color who are historically viewed through a deficit lens in education (Palmer & Witanapatirana, 2020; Wood & Harris III, 2020).

Recommendations for Curriculum Developers

The lack of cultural relevance in the curriculum was a significant theme in this study. Having a diverse group of curriculum developers is key when developing a curriculum for an entire school district. The participants in this study are representative of the mixture of beginning teachers who want to make changes to the curriculum to meet the racial and cultural needs of their students and those who seldomly stray away from what they have been "told" to teach. It is recommended that voices of the counternarrative (Ladson-Billings, 2022) are present when discussing what content students will learn from preschool-twelfth grade so that teachers will already have a curriculum that is more culturally relevant. Another recommendation would be for curriculum developers to complete, as a team, a culturally relevant teaching or related course or certification from an accredited university or organization so that there is a mutual understanding across curriculum team members.

Lastly, invite a diverse group of teachers from different grades and content areas to be a part of the curriculum development discussions. Patricia Hill Collins (2000) once said, "individuals who have lived through the experiences about which they claim to be

experts are more believable and credible than those who have merely read and thought about such experience" (p. 209). Listening to the diverse voices of teachers who are responsible for implementing the curriculum will be valuable when deciding what is appropriate and how the curriculum should be presented.

Recommendations for School and District Leaders

School and district leaders must first recognize the power that they hold, especially from the perspective of a beginning teacher. As with other careers, new employees are impressionable and want to do their job well. This is no different for beginning teachers. With that in mind, having school and district leaders work as change agents to prioritize racial diversity and encourage teachers to change the curriculum to best meet students' needs rather than the other way around would give teachers who take or want to take culturally relevant teaching seriously a relief from tiptoeing the line of "obeying orders" at the expense of reaching students fully. Like Giselle, many teachers feel conflicted veering from the standardized curriculum despite knowing that it is not relatable to their students and they are not retaining the information. In the U.S., standardized test results pressure school leaders and teachers alike. Becoming more well-versed in CRP would provide school and district leaders with greater insight into CRP's importance and be more prepared to respond to teachers like Giselle when they share their frustration with the current Eurocentric curriculum. Becoming more aware of implicit biases will also create a more open line of communication with beginning teachers, especially beginning teachers of color, when collaborating with them to decide what resources (tangible and intangible) are needed to ensure that culturally relevant teaching is taking place. Other recommendations include the following:

- Hiring new teacher support coaches who are professionally trained in culturally relevant pedagogy to support beginning teachers.

- Require beginning teachers to have mentors who have successfully completed a culturally relevant pedagogy training so that they are "culturally attuned" (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011) to racially diverse students and teachers and can support beginning teachers in this area along with other responsibilities (ex: classroom management, content learning, lesson planning, etc.).

Recommendations for Teacher Preparation Programs

As mentioned in Chapter 2, teacher preparation programs play a significant role in growing teachers. Currently, the teacher-educator faculty remains largely white (Ober, 2022). One recommendation for teacher preparation programs is to hire more diverse teacher educators. As implied in other recommendation sections, having a diverse group of voices teaching pre-service teachers will benefit everyone, including white teacher educators. Allowing future teachers to leave their teacher preparation program without an opportunity to engage in racial discourse is irresponsible and dangerous.

Additionally, teacher preparation programs should make critical efforts to partner with racially diverse schools and school districts so that teacher candidates can have experiences in these contexts prior to starting their in-service teaching since, as we have learned throughout this study, these are the school districts in which beginning teachers are more likely to be employed. Another recommendation is to increase the time that pre-service teachers are engaged in field experiences. The amount of time that pre-service teachers spend in classrooms varies. For some, observations begin as early as their sophomore year in college (traditional license pathway), while some do not enter a

classroom until their very last semester of college for student teaching. Providing more time for pre-service teachers to experience different school districts and environments will better prepare them to adapt to their in-service school assignments. Also, pre-service teachers should be viewed as co-constructors of their own learning with multidimensional roles—"curriculum developers, researchers of their own practice, and as learners of their students' lives" (Nieto et al., 2012, p. 32). Doing so allows pre-service teachers to develop their teacher identity and leadership skills.

Lastly, just like the three participants in this study, the majority of beginning teachers in the U.S. are licensed through an alternatively licensed pathway. This means that a large portion of TPP students is already teaching in their classrooms. This cannot be interpreted as an assumption that beginning teachers enrolled in a TPP who are already working in racially diverse schools are fully equipped to teach racially diverse students. The perceptions, climates, and influences in schools can vary drastically. TPP leaders can utilize the experiences of in-service teachers enrolled in the program to inform them of their success and challenges in teaching racially diverse students and how to support them moving forward when working in racially diverse school environments.

Recommendations for Beginning Teachers

Teachers must view themselves as co-conspirators (Love, 2019) and take risks for the sake of their students. It is teachers who can help students see themselves in their classrooms every day. One recommendation would be to expand beginning teachers' thinking about how students' identities can be represented in curriculum and instruction without reducing them to heroes, holidays, and vignettes. Students' lives should be the center of teaching and learning every day. Secondly, taking ownership of learning about

racially diverse students is critical. Examples of starting points for these

recommendations include but are not limited to:

- Complete a course or certification focused on CRP or a related topic.

- Build relationships with students and families.

- Teach about different races and their historical and modern impact on society.

- Disrupt preconceived stereotypes of different races and cultures openly (for yourself and for your students).

- Allow and encourage students to correct you as needed when discussing their identities. Know when to listen and allow students to lead conversations in which they have more efficacy.

- Work to become more aware of implicit bias.

- Routinely vet your curriculum using a culturally relevant lens.

Recommendations for Racially Diverse Students

"We can disagree and still love each other unless your disagreement is rooted in my oppression and denial of my humanity and right to exist." -James Baldwin

Challenging adults can be hard, especially if correcting or enlightening an adult has been viewed as disrespectful in students' experiences. However, I recommend students find their inner voice when they are being taught or treated in a way that purposefully (or not) oppresses their racial identity and its intersections. Being a co-conspirator involves taking risks. Students' stories are important and deserve to be heard. It is how we grow and how we heal. I hope that they know that they are a gift, a jewel, and someone who is worthy of being seen, heard, celebrated, and represented…fully.

Conclusion

In this study, we learned about the personal and professional experiences of beginning teachers that shaped their perceptions of preparedness in teaching racially diverse students. It takes all educational stakeholders to support teachers, especially beginning teachers, to be equipped to create a learning environment that does not degrade racial diversity but embraces it. As shown through the participants' stories, beginning teachers' perceptions of preparedness can be impacted by events that occurred as far back as elementary school or earlier. Because beginning teachers have such a wide range of personal and professional backgrounds that impact their teaching practices in the classroom, it is important that beginning teachers are given authentic opportunities, resources, and experiences that work to increase their knowledge, inclusion, and acceptance of racially diverse students.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview 1

Establishing Rapport

Tell me about yourself (personal, professional background, etc.).

How many years have you been teaching, and what grade/subject do you teach?

How would you describe your racial identity?

Describe your most rewarding experience with a student.

Experiences in Racial Diversity

What experience, if any, have you had with people of other races prior to becoming a teacher?

What preconceived notions do/did you have of people of other races?

How did your upbringing impact how you view people of other races?

Describe your schooling experience (PK-12 and beyond) with racially diverse students.

Racial Diversity Experiences in Schools

Describe the racial diversity in the school where you teach.

How does the racial makeup of your students influence your teaching?

Is there anything else you'd like to share with me regarding your experiences with racially diverse students?

Interview 2

What do you think your strengths are as a teacher?

What do you think your weaknesses are as a teacher?

Reflections on Teaching Racially Diverse Students during the First Three Years of Teaching

Describe a time when you felt that you successfully addressed racial diversity in your teaching.

- To what do you attribute your success with teaching racially diverse students during your first three years of teaching?

Describe a time when you felt that addressing racial diversity in your teaching was challenging.

- To what do you attribute your challenges with teaching racially diverse students during your first three years of teaching?

What have you learned about yourself while teaching racially diverse students?

Perceptions of Preparedness in Teaching Racially Diverse Students

When you graduated from your teacher preparation program, how prepared did you feel to teach racially diverse students?

If applicable, what could your teacher preparation program have done to better prepare you?

If applicable, what aspects of your teacher preparation program do you feel were the most effective at preparing you to meet the needs of racially diverse students?

What aspects of your teacher preparation program do you feel were the least effective at preparing you to meet the needs of racially diverse students?

As you concluded your first-third year of teaching, do you feel that your teacher preparation program adequately prepared you to meet the needs of racially diverse students? Why or why not?

Resources used to Build Competency in Teaching Racially Diverse Students

In August, you shared some resources that you planned to use when teaching racially diverse students. Can you explain them to me?

Describe the resources that you've found, how you went about finding them, and what that process of finding resources has been like.

What resources do you feel like you need to improve teaching racially diverse students?

What types of support do you feel you need from your school/school district to be successful in teaching racially diverse students?

Do you feel prepared to teach racially diverse students? Why or why not?

Additional remarks

Is there any additional information that you would like to share?