

White Urban Special Educators:
Making Sense of Culturally Relevant Teaching

By

ABISOLA BAKARE
B.A., University of Lagos, Nigeria, 1983
M.S., Chicago State University, 2003
M.Ed., American College of Education, 2009

THESIS

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Defense Committee:

Dr. Michelle Parker-Katz, Special Education, Chair and Advisor
Dr. Daniel Maggin, Special Education
Dr. Marie Tejero Hughes, Special Education
Dr. Edward Podsiadlik, Curriculum and Instruction
Dr. Vinni Hall, Learn Charter School Network

This dissertation is humbly dedicated to my mother, Mary Tinuola Smith without whom it would never have been accomplished.

Mom, your sacrifices, unconditional support, encouraging words, strength, and love have pushed me to achieve this dream.

I love you.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
I. INTRODUCTION	1
A. Who are Urban Special Education Teachers?	2
B. Who are Urban Special Education Students?	5
C. Need for Culturally Relevant Teaching	7
D. CRP as a Theoretical Framework	9
E. Statement of the Problem	12
F. Purpose of the Study	14
G. Research Questions	15
II. LITERATURE REVIEW	16
A. Theoretical Framework	16
B. CRP	18
C. CRT	21
D. Culture of Exclusivity	25
1. Urban Schools	27
E. Structures of Schooling	29
1. Teacher-Centered Classrooms	30
2. Age-Grade Classifications	31
3. Carnegie Credits	31
4. Grading System	32
F. Practices of Teaching	33
1. Eurocentric Curriculum	33
2. Assessments	35
3. Tracking	36
4. Disproportionate Representation	37
G. Challenges to Culturally Relevant Teaching	39
1. Whiteness	42
2. Sporadic Research on CRP	43
3. Cultural Mismatch	45
4. Personal Attitude	47
5. Committing to Culturally Relevant Teaching	48
H. Summary	50
III. METHODS	51
A. Case Study Methodology	51
B. Recruitment Procedures	53
C. Participants	55
D. Setting	56
E. Researcher Positionality	56
F. Instruments	58
1. Demographic Profile	58
2. Initial Interview Conversation Protocol	58

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
3. Parent Information Sheet	60
4. Student Information Sheet	60
5. VDR Protocols	60
a. Video Recording Protocol.....	61
b. Video Review Guide	61
c. Culturally Relevant Teaching Checklist	62
d. Field Notes	64
G. Procedures	65
1. Initial Interview Conversation	66
2. Video Review Discussion Sessions	66
a. Culturally Relevant Teaching Checklist	67
H. Data Analysis	68
1. Within-Case Analysis.....	69
a. Cross-Case Analysis.....	72
I. Trustworthiness and Credibility.....	73
J. Summary	73
IV. RESULTS	75
A. Case 1: Karen.....	76
1. Part 1: Profile	76
2. Part 2: Thematic Analyses	78
a. Identity and Self-Awareness	78
b. Perception of Self as a Culturally Relevant Teacher.....	79
c. Influences on Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices	80
3. Part 3: Comparison of Practices With Culturally Relevant Teaching	81
a. Artifact Analysis	83
B. Case 2: Peggy.....	86
1. Part 1: Profile	86
2. Part 2: Thematic Analyses	88
a. Identity and Self-Awareness	88
b. Perception of Self as a Culturally Relevant Teacher.....	90
c. Influences on Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices	92
3. Part 3: Comparison of Practices With Culturally Relevant Teaching	94
a. Artifact Analysis	96
C. Case 3: Lesley	100
1. Part 1: Profile	100
2. Part 2: Thematic Analyses	102
a. Identity and Self-Awareness	102
b. Perception of Self as a Culturally Relevant Teacher.....	104
c. Influences on Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices	105
3. Part 3: Comparison of Practices With Culturally Relevant Teaching	106
a. Artifact Analysis	108

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
D.	Case 4: Nancy 111
1.	Part 1: Profile 111
2.	Part 2: Thematic Analyses 113
a.	Identity and Self-Awareness 113
b.	Perception of Self as a Culturally Relevant Teacher..... 114
c.	Influences on Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices 114
3.	Part 3: Comparison of Practices With Culturally Relevant Teaching 115
a.	Artifact Analysis 117
E.	Case 5: Dave 120
1.	Part 1: Profile 120
2.	Part 2: Thematic Analyses 121
a.	Identity and Self-Awareness 121
b.	Perception of Self as a Culturally Relevant Teacher..... 123
c.	Influences on Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices 126
3.	Part 3: Comparison of Practices With Culturally Relevant Teaching 129
a.	Artifact Analysis 131
F.	Cross-Case Analyses 134
1.	RQ 1: What Do White Urban Special Education Teachers With Over Five Years Experience Perceive as Teaching in Culturally Relevant Ways? 134
a.	Backgrounds and Experiences 134
b.	Self-Awareness as Part of Participants' Culturally Relevant Teaching Perceptions and Practices 136
c.	Open-Mindedness and Difference 139
d.	Recognizing Students' Lived Experiences..... 140
2.	RQ 2: How Do White Urban Special Education Teachers With Over Five Years Experience Foster a Learning Environment for Students From Culturally Diverse Backgrounds? 141
a.	Descriptions of Behaviors in Practice..... 142
b.	Behaviors Aligned With Ladson-Billings' Tenets..... 144
c.	Teacher Artifacts and Learning Outcomes for Students 147
3.	RQ 3: What Relationship, if any, Exists Between Teachers' Perceptions of Culturally Relevant Teaching and the Realities of Its Implementation? 148
a.	Teacher Practices Promote Diversity and Interaction 150
V.	DISCUSSION 152
A.	Perception of Self Within Culturally Relevant Teaching 153
1.	Positionality and Choice 159
2.	Social Consciousness 161
B.	Knowing Students 164
C.	Community Involvement and Participation in the Community 167
D.	Limitations 169
E.	Implications 171
1.	Implications for Research 171

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
2. Implications for Practice	173
F. Conclusion	174
APPENDICES	176
Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer	177
Appendix B: Email Script	178
Appendix C: Eligibility Screener	180
Appendix D: Demographic Profile	182
Appendix E: Initial Interview Protocol	183
Appendix F: Parental Information Sheet	186
Appendix G: Student Information Sheet	187
Appendix H: Video Recording Protocol.....	188
Appendix I: Video Review Guide.....	190
Appendix J: Culturally Relevant Teaching Checklist for Video Review Discussion	192
Appendix K: UIC Institutional Review Board Approval Letter.....	194
Appendix L: Consent for Participation in Research.....	198
Appendix M: Codebook	204
Appendix N: Culturally Relevant Teaching Behaviors Identified By Participants	209
CITED LITERATURE	211
VITA.....	232

LIST OF TABLES

<u>TABLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
1. Percentage of Teachers Working in U.S. Schools by Race/Ethnicity	4
2. Percentage of Public School Students Who Receive Special Services by Race/Ethnicity	7
3. Participants' Demographics	56
4. School Demographics for Each Participant	57
5. Research-Based Culturally Relevant Behaviors With the Cited Authors.....	63
6. Culturally Relevant Teaching Behavior Checklist and Karen's Representation of the Behaviors	82
7. Frequency of Behaviors in Karen's English Classroom Organized by Ladson-Billings' Three Tenets	83
8. Video Discussion Review 1-3 for Karen With Artifacts, Descriptions, and Teacher Expectations	85
9. Culturally Relevant Teaching Behavior Checklist and Peggy's Representation of the Behaviors	95
10. Frequency of Behaviors in Peggy's English Classroom Organized by Ladson-Billings' Three Tenets	96
11. Peggy's Artifacts With Descriptions and Teacher Expectations	100
12. Culturally Relevant Teaching Behavior Checklist and Lesley's Representation of the Behaviors	107
13. Frequency of Behaviors in Lesley's English Classroom Organized by Ladson-Billings' Three Tenets	108
14. Lesley's Artifacts With Descriptions and Teacher Expectations	109
15. Culturally Relevant Teaching Behavior Checklist and Nancy's Representation of the Behaviors	116
16. Frequency of Behaviors in Nancy's Mathematics Classroom Organized by Ladson Billings' Three Tenets.....	117
17. Nancy's Artifacts With Descriptions and Teacher Expectations.....	118

LIST OF TABLES (continued)

<u>TABLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
18. Culturally Relevant Teaching Behavior Checklist and Dave's Representation of the Behaviors	130
19. Frequency of Behaviors in Dave's Social Science Classroom Organized by Ladson-Billings' Three Tenets	131
20. Dave's Artifacts with Descriptions and Teacher Expectations.....	132
21. Percentages of Behaviors Aligned with Ladson-Billings' Three Tenets.....	145
22. Teacher Artifacts and Learning Objectives From Three Lessons	149

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>FIGURE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
1. Thematic Interactions: White Urban Special Educator and Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices	25
2. Alignment of Observable Culturally Relevant Teaching Behaviors With Ladson-Billings’ (1994) Three Culturally Relevant Pedagogical Tenets.....	65
3. Sample of Student Essay: All About Me.....	97

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BLM	Black Lives Matter
CRT	Critical Race Theory
CRP	Culturally Relevant Pedagogy
IDEA	Individual With Disabilities Educations Act
IDEIA	Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act
IEP	Individual Education Plan
LBS1	Learning Behavior Specialist
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
SEL	Social and Emotional Learning
USDOE	United States Department of Education
VDR	Video Discussion Review
VRG	Video Review Guide
VRP	Video Recording Protocol

SUMMARY

The consistency of a predominantly White special education teaching workforce in urban classrooms and the significant increase in the enrollment of culturally diverse students have fueled concerns about equity and access in special education (Artiles et al., 2010; Zion & Blanchett, 2017). Scholars advocate that all teachers need to understand culturally relevant teaching practices to promote student learning and to facilitate positive post-school outcomes (Gay, 2010/2018; Ladson-Billings, 1994/1995a/1995b). Many argue that utilizing culturally relevant teaching practices can help provide more equitable learning experiences to many Black and Brown students in urban schools (Gay, 2010; Grant & Sleeter, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Milner, 2010). However, little empirical literature exists regarding how White special educators perceive culturally relevant teaching and utilize it in urban classrooms (Banks & Banks, 2012; Blanchett, 2006; Blanchett et al., 2009; Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

The purpose of this study was to explore how White special educators described and practiced culturally relevant teaching with their Black and Brown urban high school students with disabilities. I drew upon a theoretical framework that linked culturally relevant teaching as defined and studied by Ladson-Billings (1994/1995a/1995b/2009) and critical race theory. To study the phenomenon, I designed a qualitative study with a multiple-case design. I developed five case studies involving special educators who self-identified as White and who practiced culturally relevant teaching in urban high schools. Each of the teachers taught for more than five years. As part of the design, I conducted semi-structured interviews with each participant delving into their background and family experiences. Participants recorded and presented three episodes of their teaching. We discussed the learning objectives and outcomes, topics, and resources used

during their teaching. We discussed behaviors that they believed indicate culturally relevant practices.

Using both thematic and theoretical analysis, I identified three themes within each case. I also used frequency analysis to investigate key aspects of participants' enactment of culturally relevant teaching. After developing individual case studies for each participant, I conducted a cross-case analysis to respond to the research questions. From the cross-case analysis, three themes also emerged.

Three major findings were identified. First, a connection between participants' perceptions of themselves as culturally relevant teachers and their identity awareness exists. Second, while all participants acknowledged the importance of knowing about their students' lives, participants varied in terms of what they chose to know and how they folded that into their teaching. The third theme related to participants' involvement and participation in their students' communities outside school. Participants varied in what they knew about communities and how they linked communities into students' learning opportunities; the differences found related to the participants' self-awareness and self-reflection. Participants' awareness of their racial identity and positionality influenced how willing they were to be involved in their students' communities. The varying degrees of participants' racial awareness impacted their perception and implementation of culturally relevant teaching.

Additional research could shed light on how culturally relevant teaching as enacted by White special educators could influence individual education plan goals and accommodations, development of wrap-around services, and positive transition outcomes.

Chapter I: Introduction

In my 17 years as an urban special education teacher, significant changes in the classroom environment have occurred. For instance, I have welcomed a steady flow of Black and Brown students into my classroom and celebrated the retirement of an increased number of Black colleagues. Over the years, I have formally and informally mentored and collaborated with several novice and experienced White teachers. Most of the Black teachers who retire have been replaced by White teachers thus changing the teacher demographics at my school. The teacher workforce is gradually changing to reflect the national data that indicate approximately 82% of White teachers in public schools (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2016). The steady increase of White teachers is paralleled by an increasing enrollment of a culturally diverse student population. Moving forward, student enrollment is expected to continue to become less White and more diverse (USDOE, 2016); thereby, widening the disparity between the racial makeup of students and teachers and further fueling the need for significantly more progress in teacher recruitment, support, and retention (USDOE, 2016).

The majority of my professional career as an urban special educator has been alongside many dedicated White teachers. Together, we worked to educate urban students with disabilities and collaborated on how best to meet their needs. We all expressed frustrations as we sought ways to make learning meaningful to students in terms of what to teach and how best to teach. One significant constraint we expressed was finding best practices to teach the assigned curriculum to many of the students who are linguistically diverse and struggle to speak and express themselves in English. Another constraint was how to connect ideas and topics we teach to the lived experiences of Black and Brown students. White colleagues who are special educators feel challenged and constrained when teaching urban students who are identified with

a wide range of abilities and disabilities. In addition, the students' cultural backgrounds are different from theirs. As I collaborated with my White colleagues, I wanted to know more about culture and teaching and what it meant for experienced White urban special educators to utilize their students' cultures in their practices. However, I found limited empirical studies on the topic.

In 2017, I was selected as a member of the Teacher Advisory Council in my district. The topic for my subgroup was how to make sense of "culturally relevant teaching." The majority of the members of my subgroup were White. At the end of that school year, our culturally relevant teaching team was unable to clearly articulate what it meant to teach in culturally relevant ways, nor were we able to provide clear guidelines or recommendations to move the district towards shaping teacher practices in this regard.

From my experience and given that White teachers make up the majority of the teaching workforce in my urban district, I began to realize a critical need to understand how White urban special educators perceive, describe, and implement culturally relevant teaching. I reasoned if the trend in my school is reflective of most urban district trends, and the number of culturally diverse students in urban classrooms continue to trend upward, it is highly likely that most students in the urban special education classroom will have a White teacher.

Who are Urban Special Education Teachers?

Reports indicated that the trend I noted in my school is reflective of a broader, national trend. Urban special education teachers are primarily White and have remained so for at least the last decade (DeRemer, 2021; Kozleski et al., 2014; Sleeter, 2017; USDOE, 2016). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (USDOE, 2016) 83% of teachers identify as White. Data indicated the stable presence of White teachers in the teaching workforce prior to the 1954 passage of *Brown v. Board of Education* (USDOE, 2016). Historically and prior to *Brown v*

Board of Education (1954), Black teachers primarily taught Black students and White teachers were the primary instructors for White students in the segregated school systems of that era (Walker, 2006). After the landmark court decision of *Brown v Board of Education* (1954), however, desegregation began. This meant that many Black students were integrated into predominantly White schools United States. As such, most Black teachers lost their jobs (Blanchett, 2006; Kohli et al., 2015). White teachers were forced to teach Black students without adequate preparation of how to teach culturally diverse students with different experiences from White America. In addition to demographic distinctions between teacher and student, teacher preparation programs remained the same with little to offer new teachers about evidence-based practices to utilize in urban classrooms. Many White teachers struggled to meet their new obligations (Goldenberg, 2014; Neri et al., 2019).

The increasing cultural disparity in urban classrooms became markedly controversial for Black and Brown students, including those students with disabilities. Researchers criticized the methods by which cultural disparity was addressed in urban classrooms (Blanchett, 2006; Kohli et al., 2015). Many advocated for effective training for all teachers of culturally diverse students (Goldenberg, 2014; Harry & Klingner, 2006; Milner, 2012; Sleeter, 2017). Even as the advocates rallied, many Black students were relegated to special education classrooms in what was regarded as a slow but “continued segregation under a seemingly natural and justifiable label” (Reid & Knight, 2006, p. 19). Unintentionally, the post-*Brown v Board of Education* (1954) era marked the beginning challenge for White teachers to meet the academic, social, and behavioral demands of culturally diverse urban students with special needs effectively (Howard, 2010; Neri et al., 2019; Siddle-Walker, 1996; Tillman, 2004).

More than a half a century after *Brown v Board of Education* (1954), the situation remains the same. The surge of migrants to urban America in the past 20 years has increased the racial, ethnic, language, and cultural diversity of urban classrooms (Hyland, 2005; Neri et al., 2019; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The cultural disparity is at levels that scholars describe as unprecedented (Ford, 2012; Sleeter, 2012/2017; Zion & Blanchett, 2017). Urban teachers continue to face challenges each day to meet the demands of their students even as the enrollment of Black and Brown students increases. As Table 1 indicates, the percentage distribution of teachers in U.S. public schools over the past two decades has remained relatively stable. As of 2018, teachers of color (i.e., Blacks, Hispanic or Latinx, and Asian/Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islanders) accounted for only 18% of teachers in U.S. public schools while White teachers maintain a high distribution at 79% (Hussar et al., 2020). Although data reflect a 5% decrease in White teachers hired from 1999-2018, there is still a vast difference in the percentage of White teachers when compared to teachers of color. Given the trend, it seems highly unlikely that the number of teachers of color in U.S. public schools will match that of White teachers within the next decade.

Table 1

Percentage of Teachers Working in U.S. Schools by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	1999-2000	2017-2018	Percent of change
White	84	79	-5
Black	8	7	-1
Hispanic/LatinX	6	9	+3
Asian	0	2	+2

Who are Urban Special Education Students?

Research indicates that the students in urban classrooms are increasingly more diverse (Ford, 2012; Skiba, 2013; Sleeter, 2012/2017; Zion & Blanchett, 2019). Student diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, language, and culture has been on an upward trajectory especially in public schools for more than 20 years (Blanchett, 2009; Delpit, 2012). Historically, the aftermath of political, economic, and social change (i.e., equal and civil rights) in U.S. resulted in all students being granted access to public education (Blanchett, 2006; Siddle-Walker, 2009; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Educational access meant increased opportunities to enroll underrepresented groups, which included Black and Brown students (Ford, 2012; Sleeter, 2012/2017; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). As a result, faces of students in urban classrooms changed from primarily White to increasingly Black and Brown.

Although classroom demographics have changed, the curriculum remains Eurocentric and the teaching workforce primarily White (Church & Sedlak, 1976; DeRemer, 2021; Kaestle, 1973; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Moreover, scholars have noted how many Black students were excluded from general education by being identified for special education services (Skiba, 2013; Harry & Klingner, 2006). The exclusion resulted in what Anyon (1997) described as ghetto schooling. Anyon and fellow advocates criticized teaching practices that ignored student experiences and began a movement to link schooling with students' communities (Anyon, 1997; Blanchett, 2006; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). At the same time, U.S. public schooling policies lagged the mandates established with the *Brown v Board of Education* (1954) decision and its inadvertent consequences of a correlated surge of racially and culturally diverse students in special education classrooms (Blanchett et al., 2005; Kohli, 2018; Tillman, 2004). U.S. public

schooling continues to report unprecedented diversity in student demographics (Blanchett et al., 2005; Ford, 2012).

Urban students with disabilities in U.S. public schools have exceptional characteristics. Not only do they have disabilities within the 13 disability categories outlined by the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; 1997), but they may also have a vast range of ability levels. They come with varied assets and skill sets associated with cultural and familial funds of knowledge from membership in different racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groups. As teachers work to acknowledge and meet their needs, many diverse students experience a disruption of rigorous scholarship and poor outcomes (Anyon, 1997; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Zion & Blanchett, 2017). Consequently, many researchers and scholars urged districts to mitigate the disruption to learning by identifying and supporting teacher behaviors and practices to promote student achievement (hooks, 1994; Howard, 2010; Milner, 2011).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (Hussar et al., 2020), nearly 7 million students with disabilities made up 14% of the nation's public school enrollment during 2017-2018. Prior data show there were 6.3 million students with disabilities accounting for 11% between 2000-2001. The three disability categories with the highest increase are students with specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, and other health impairment. The changes in terms of race/ethnicity for U.S. public school students with special needs are displayed in Table 2.

White student enrollment decreased within a 10-year span. Black student enrollment decreased slightly. Asian student enrollment remained stable. Brown student enrollment increased (Hussar et al., 2020). Given these data, the percentage of White students enrolling in U.S. public schools is decreasing and the percentage of Black and Brown students is increasing.

In addition, there is an increase in the enrollment of diverse migrant populations. If this trend continues, then within the next decade it is likely that underrepresented groups will make up many students in U.S. public schools.

Table 2

Percentage of Public School Students Who Receive Special Services by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	2008-2009	2018-2019	Percent of change
White	58	48	-10
Black	20	18	-2
Hispanic/LatinX	19	26	+7
Asian	3	3	+0

Need for Culturally Relevant Teaching

As teachers work to provide meaningful instruction to their culturally diverse students, scholars propose several ways to connect teaching and learning to students' cultural experiences (Dover, 2013; Gay, 2002; Goldenberg, 2014; Haynes, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1994/2009; Nieto, 2017). Scholars call for teachers to pivot from traditional teaching methods and embrace practices centering student experiences (Goldenberg, 2014; Nieto, 2017). Nieto (2017) postured as White teachers center student experiences, they might question their White privilege and status quo. In this sense, White urban special education teachers need to utilize behaviors and practices that sustain student identity and culture, connect to student communities, and support academic growth and achievement (DeRemer, 2021; Ladson-Billings, 1994/2009; Nieto, 2017; Paris, 2012).

In the United States, providing access to free and appropriate public education is a federal mandate under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004)

amendment. Furthermore, the amendment establishes that students with disabilities have access to the same rigorous curricula as their general education counterparts. Because of this mandate, it is important that teachers find and apply best practices to support student learning (Milner, 2011). Milner (2011) stressed that teachers must identify strategies and competencies that promote learning and academic achievement in their urban, diverse classrooms. With the increasing diversity of urban students including those with disabilities, the need to address issues of equity, and the federal stipulations, it is vital for teachers to utilize behaviors and practices to promote all students' learning and success. Behaviors and practices that effectively promote learning for diverse students need to be clarified for all urban teachers, including White special educators.

For over three decades the concept of practicing culturally relevant teaching has been the focal point of many scholarly works (Dover, 2013; Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Moll et al., 1992). While Ladson-Billings (1995a/2014) coined the term “culturally relevant pedagogy” (CRP), Gay (2002/2010) referred to similar ideology using the label “culturally responsive teaching.” More recently, Paris (2012) introduced the term “culturally sustaining pedagogy,” while Dover (2013) named it “culturally relevant education.” The underlying premise of each of the terms is to center and utilize the cultural experiences of diverse students to promote academic achievement (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

I choose to situate my study on the foundational theory of Ladson-Billings (1995a/2014) and utilize the term “culturally relevant teaching.” The acronym is modified to avoid confusion with that assigned to critical race theory (CRT) and culturally responsive teaching. I use culturally relevant teaching to mean practices that are inclusive of students' cultural experiences, linguistic variations, and nuances. It is critical for teachers to recognize what are culturally

relevant teaching practices and to identify essential behaviors that make it effective. With so many terms, understanding culturally relevant teaching core values and how to implement them can be confusing to teachers (Delpit, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1995a/2014; Neri et al., 2019; Paris 2012). In addition, Young (1990) highlighted how White teachers might struggle with understanding and implementing culturally relevant teaching because of the *normalcy of cultural imperialism*. Young (1990) described cultural imperialism as the normalization of White cultural experiences, which renders non-White cultures invisible. Young believed the dominance of White cultural values could act as a barrier for White teachers to readily deviate from what they have come to believe are normalized practices. In an approach to debunk the impact cultural imperialism could have in teaching and learning, Delpit (2012) proposed that teachers must intentionally foreground their students' cultural experiences and values within their teaching. However, despite her suggestion as well as others, we have little clarity of what culturally relevant teaching is and guidelines for its implementation.

CRP as a Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical framework emerges from the theory of CRP espoused by Ladson-Billings (1995b/2014). The researcher described CRP as a teaching practice where teachers center instructional delivery around their students' cultural experiences. Ladson-Billings' research built upon earlier studies on how to bridge the gap between the home cultures of culturally diverse students who were not succeeding academically in the classrooms and the school culture. In her monumental 1994 study, Ladson-Billings studied over time eight experienced teachers of Black students to determine what they were doing in their classrooms that made them successful (Ladson-Billings, 1994/1995a/1995b/2014). Ladson-Billings found that all participants showed actions and reasoning connected to these three tenets: (a) students

must achieve academically, (b) students must maintain their cultural competence, and (c) students must develop sociopolitical awareness. These three criteria became the central tenets for her CRP theory. She argued that teachers who met the three tenets demonstrated specific behaviors that included centering their students' needs in the curriculum they taught, caring about issues of inequity and social justice, and incorporating resources to meet the needs of their students.

In describing the first tenet, Ladson-Billings (1994/1995a/1995b/2014) explained that the eight teachers recognized that helping their students succeed academically is a primary responsibility. In concert with the first tenet, successful teachers created opportunities for their students to maintain their cultural competence—the second tenet. Although Ladson-Billings did not offer a clear definition for cultural competence, she gave examples demonstrating how teachers use CRP practices to maintain their students' home or native cultural lives and experiences. In one example, a White teacher involved the parents of her African American students in a program that allows students to learn from parents. By including parents, the teacher provided an opportunity to connect families and school. In another example, Ladson-Billings (1994) showed how a White teacher promoted cultural competency by having her students incorporate their home language while learning English. This teacher had her students speak and write in their home language first before translating to English. She thereby fostered a classroom where students were comfortable enough to maintain their linguistic differences and cultural integrity. In her third tenet, about students developing sociopolitical awareness, Ladson-Billings (1994) explained that teachers help students develop critical thinking skills connecting learning to their community, country, and the world. In this way students can evaluate things around them and grow to become viable members of their communities.

Other scholars affirmed the seminal work of Ladson-Billings by utilizing her tenets to examine teacher practices in urban classrooms where students are increasingly diverse (DeRemer, 2021; Emdin, 2017; Kunjufu, 2002). For the first tenet (teachers who practice CRP help students achieve academically), the researchers showed clear practices associated with actions necessary to help students succeed academically. Kunjufu (2002) stressed the essence of the first CRP tenet by asserting that when White teachers do not understand the cultures of students from diverse backgrounds, they do not and cannot understand their students. Similarly, Emdin (2017) stressed that when teachers fail to affirm the cultures of their students, they neither see nor hear those students. The ability to see and hear students is critical to the teaching and learning process. Knowledge of students helps teachers engage them in learning and to connect what students already know from outside the classroom to the information they need to learn and know in the classroom (Danielson, 2007; Gay, 2002; Haynes, 2008; Morrison et al., 2008). Morrison et al. (2008) added that by understanding student cultures, teachers significantly impact student learning. In their synthesis of CRP classroom-based practices, these researchers gave examples of what CRP practices look like in urban classrooms. They found that teachers maintain practices such as (a) modifying and clarifying curriculum, (b) setting high expectations for their students, (c) referencing their students' cultures, (d) taking personal responsibility for student success, and (e) creating a motivating environment.

In the second tenet of CRP, teachers help students maintain their cultural competence. This means that teachers create learning spaces where students maintain their ethnic and cultural identities. In this sense, teachers develop a “dynamic or synergistic relationship between home/community culture and school culture” (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 467). Morrison et al. (2008) found that teachers who help students develop cultural competence do the following: (a)

reshape the curriculum, (b) build on students' cultural experiences, and (c) establish relationships between school and home. Similarly, Gay (2010/2018) added that CRP practitioners filter the curriculum content through the cultural lens of their students to help make learning more connected, and therefore, meaningful.

The third tenet of CRP, developing students' sociopolitical awareness, urges teachers to help students identify, understand, and become critics of the inequities in their communities. The tenet demands teachers empower students with the knowledge and skills they need to challenge the status quo. DeRemer (2021) added that it is essential for students to become socio-politically aware and prepare for the world beyond their local communities. DeRemer (2021) clarified that when teachers accept their students' cultures, students can take pride and see how their own cultural nuances robustly complement other people's cultural knowledge and practice. In this sense, Ladson-Billings (1995a) affirmed that not only should teachers be willing to modify the content for their diverse students, but they must also connect learning to aspects of life and experience beyond the classrooms. In her findings, Ladson-Billings (1995b) identified that teachers who practice CRP are themselves socio-politically aware of the inequities around them. She explained that such teachers acknowledge social inequities and question the status quo.

Statement of the Problem

Given the 2004 IDEIA mandate, the consistency of a predominantly White teaching workforce, the significant increase in the enrollment of culturally diverse students, and the need to address issues of equity in special education, a need exists for teachers to understand cultural teaching practices that support learning and help students achieve in the urban classroom (DeRemer, 2021; Goldenberg, 2014; Kozleski & Smith, 2009). While there are theoretical ideas about the value of culturally relevant teaching and limited descriptions of teacher practices,

empirical and conceptual literature of the classroom practices involving White urban special educators is minimal. Most research about culturally relevant teaching is focused on general educators and preservice teachers (Banks, 2001; Gay, 2002; Paris, 2012; Shealey et al., 2011). The literature is especially bereft of practices that use culturally relevant teaching tenets for urban special educators. Unfortunately, even less findings related to special educators who are White and teaching racially, ethnically, linguistically, and culturally diverse students is available.

The lack of literature-based research is problematic given the unique characteristics of special education teaching practices and IDEIA mandates. Also, general education teaching practices might not be transferable to the special education setting (Buehler et al., 2009; Sleeter, 2012; Young, 2010). Studying specifically White special educators' practice in the urban special education classroom with its dominant demographic of Black and Brown students could be useful in several ways (e.g., for professional development, recruitment, and retention). Furthermore, studying what White special educators believe to be culturally relevant teaching could impact district level support of new teachers (Buehler et al., 2009; Sleeter, 2012; Young, 2010).

Corroborating the dearth of empirical work on the use of culturally relevant teaching in special education, Shealey et al. (2011) found only eight empirical studies addressing teaching in one area of CRT. Based on their findings, Shealey et al. suggested that special educators increase their knowledge of their students' cultural experiences, provide culturally relevant instruction, and remain critically aware of how their attitudes and values could impact their classroom practices. Similarly, Artiles et al. (2010) emphasized that despite many advancements made in special education, confusion over the different meanings of the word "culture" remains an obstacle as to how special educators understand and utilize culturally relevant approaches.

Another problem lies in the pervasive dominance of White culture in school structures and practices (Blanchett et al., 2009; Harry & Klingner, 2006; Zion & Blanchett, 2017). DiAngelo (2019) argued that many White teachers may find it difficult to recognize the pervasive nature of normalized white schooling structures and practices.

Purpose of the Study

Urban students with disabilities have unique characteristics that could make it challenging for teachers to determine appropriate approaches and best practices to meet their needs (Goldenberg, 2014; Shealey et al., 2011). In light of this, teachers need to be intentional in what to teach and how to teach to help their diverse students learn and achieve. While scholars recognize a need to practice in culturally relevant ways to support diverse student assets and challenges, how best to do that and with what effective practices needs empirical attention. For instance, several studies show teachers are not clear about how to utilize culturally relevant teaching in their classrooms to help students succeed academically while preserving their cultural competence (Goldenberg, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris, 2012). Furthermore, although research exists on how general educators and preservice teachers practice culturally relevant teaching, effective practices for White urban special education teachers working with culturally, racially, and linguistically diverse students who are not White remains less clear (Buehler et al., 2009; Shealey et al., 2011; Sleeter, 2012; Young, 2010).

In this study, I examined in what ways White urban special educators understand culturally relevant teaching and use appropriately what they believe are culturally relevant teaching practices in their urban classrooms. Given current recommendations for more studies on culturally relevant teaching practices, the purpose of this study is to explore how White urban

special education teachers utilize culturally relevant teaching to help diverse students with special needs learn and achieve academically.

Research Questions

1. What do White urban special education teachers with over five years experience perceive as teaching in culturally relevant ways?
2. How do White urban special education teachers with over five years experience foster a learning environment for students from culturally diverse backgrounds?
3. What relationship, if any, exists between teachers' perceptions of culturally relevant teaching and the realities of its implementation?

Chapter II: Literature Review

Enrollment of students with special needs from culturally diverse backgrounds are increasing in U.S. public schools and the consistency of a White urban, special educator workforce prompted researchers and scholars to examine practices that promote learning in the classrooms (Banks, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1994/1995a; Milner, 2011/2012; Sleeter, 2012/2017). To investigate the phenomenon experienced by White urban special educators, I conducted a review of scholarly literature. Four major themes emerged that helped me explore and understand the phenomenon: (a) culture of exclusion, (b) structures of schooling, (c) practices of teaching, and (d) challenges to culturally relevant teaching practices. I begin with a review of the theoretical framework that grounded my study. Other theories are examined as well as school structures and practices, relevant pedagogy, and the challenges of blending teaching and cultural relevance.

Theoretical Framework

The framework for this study emerged from considerations of CRP and CRT. Culture, a key word central to both theories, was defined as a noun and a verb. Merriam-Webster.com (n.d.) defined culture as “the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group; the characteristic features of everyday existence (such as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time.” However, from other readings and the various interpretations given to the term culture, a clear definition of the complexity of culture and the integral role it plays in human existence is not simple (Kluckhohn, 1949). From the work of anthropologists such as Kluckhohn with Navajo Indians, culture is defined in many ways. In his chapter on “Queer Customs,” Kluckhohn defined culture as “a way of thinking, feeling, believing” (p. 28); “a learned behavior shared with others” (p. 31); “a map . . . a total way of life

of a people” (p. 24). To further complicate its intrinsic yet essential nature, Geertz (1973) expressed his thoughts on culture:

Believing, . . . that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun. I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. (p. 5)

The many definitions given to the concept of culture not only show how intricately woven into human existence culture is but also how varied such a reference might be when we talk about culture in educational contexts. We often hear about culturally diverse students (Counts et al., 2018; Gay, 2002/2010) or cultures of teaching (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1984; Nesbit, 2000) or CRP (Ladson-Billings, 1994/1995a/1995b). For this study, culture is operationalized as a noun. Culture is a multifaceted concept intricately human but also having distinct qualities from one group of people to another in terms of beliefs, values, and learned experiences. For example, White urban special educators might have multiple cultural beliefs, values, and norms. One of their experiences could relate to their professional work as urban educators, while another experience could relate to their personal experiences in their communities. Similarly, urban students with disabilities might have multiple cultural beliefs, values, and norms. For example, one such experience could relate to their lives as students in the urban classroom, while another could relate to their personal lives within their various communities. Therefore, based on how I define culture, White urban special educators might have varied similarities and differences with their students from diverse backgrounds who arrive at school with different beliefs, values, and learned experiences.

Kluckhohn (1949) pointed out that to know the culture of a person is to have the ability to predict many of the actions of people from the same culture (p. 41). Considering Kluckhohn’s

reasoning within schooling, could White urban special educators know the culture of their urban students with disabilities well enough to interpret and predict their behaviors? The response to this question is important. Perhaps, it lays in the ability to recognize that both teachers and students operate within the totality of their learned beliefs, values, and experiences. Given that this is true, the behaviors and understandings of shared beliefs, values, and experiences as they occur within each school context will be impacted by both who the teacher and student are.

CRP

As Ladson-Billings (1994/1995a) aimed to conceptualize culturally relevant teaching, many have argued that what she describes is simply *good teaching*. However, she emphasized such good teaching was not happening on a consistent basis for Black students as they continue to underperform academically (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Ladson-Billings' theory of CRP, offered a pivotal change: an approach in which the teacher is responsible for including the students' cultural experiences in their teaching practice. Her study of successful teachers of African American students showed ways she connected teaching practice as the foundation for her theory (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Ladson-Billings (1995a) explained that teachers who practice culturally relevant teaching empower their students to gain critical knowledge and political, intellectual, social, and emotional skills.

Grounding her theory in practice, Ladson-Billings (1994/1995a/1995b/2014) posed three central tenets that emerged from her observations and analyses of successful teachers of Black students. The first tenet is that teachers must help students become academically successful. Many researchers interpret this to mean that teachers must have high expectations for their students to succeed and achieve (Haynes, 2008; Kunjufu, 2002; Morrison et al., 2008). Morrison et al. (2008) conducted a review of literature using the Ladson-Billings' CRP framework. The

purpose of their scholarly work was to operationalize CRP in 45 classroom-based studies from 1995-2008. Morrison and fellow researchers gave concrete examples of what practicing CRP looks like in classrooms. They found that teachers who maintain CRP enact the following behaviors: model, scaffold, and clarify the curriculum. In addition, Morrison and his colleagues described other specific behaviors practiced by teachers of CRP such as using students' strengths as instructional starting points, investing in and taking personal responsibility for student success, fostering learning environments where students are motivated, and having high behavioral expectations for students.

The second tenet is that teachers help students become culturally competent. This implies two things: First, teachers create a learning environment where students can maintain their cultural integrity. Second, teachers must be aware of their identity and stance as they work to develop relationships among the home, the school, and the community. According to Morrison et al. (2008), this involves helping students maintain their ethnic and cultural identities. Scholars advocated that those students from culturally diverse backgrounds do not have to give up their cultural identity to succeed academically. They suggest teachers can help students maintain their cultural integrity by building relationships between the teacher, the school community, and the home and by making the curriculum more relevant (Morrison et al., 2008). Gay (2010/2018) described how teachers make learning more meaningful using relevant curriculum—curriculum important to their students' culture.

In her seminal work, Ladson-Billings shared what teachers who effectively practice CRP do. Ladson-Billings (1995b) gave examples of how two White teachers utilized CRP practices to maintain their students' cultural integrity. In the first example, Ladson-Billings described how the White teacher developed a relationship between home culture and school culture by

involving the parents of her Black students in a program that allows students to learn from parents. In the second example, Ladson-Billings showed how the White teacher maintained cultural competency by having her students use the linguistic variations of their home language as they learn English. Students were allowed to speak and write in their home language first before translating to English. By so doing, the teacher succeeded in creating a learning environment where her students were comfortable enough to speak their home language and maintain their cultural experiences while learning English. These examples support Kunjufu's (2002) reasoning that, White teachers who create learning opportunities that include their students' cultural experiences are likely to be effective in teachers. More recently, DeRemer (2021) conducted empirical research and identified the beliefs and behaviors of a highly effective White teacher in a multicultural urban school. The teacher created a safe space where his students developed a sense of belonging where his students can include and share their cultural experiences within his practices; he formed a relationship with his culturally diverse students.

The third tenet of CRP is that teachers help students identify, understand, and become critics of societal inequities. In other words, Ladson-Billings (1995a/1995b) urged that students must be provided with the critical skills needed to challenge the ways things are done around them. Teachers who practice in culturally relevant ways need to help their students develop sociopolitical consciousness so they can become advocates for their communities. According to Ladson-Billings (1995a/1995b), not only should teachers who support CRP be willing to filter the curriculum content through the cultural lens of their students, but they must make instructional decisions to meet the unique demands of their students. Generally, these teachers are socio-politically aware, they question the status quo, and challenge the way things are done around them (Ladson-Billings, 1995a/1995b).

Extending the work of Ladson-Billings, Gay (2010/2018) also recognized the importance of culture in teaching practice. She argued that teacher practice is critical to improving overall student achievement and described five assumptions of culturally responsive teaching. First, she noted how student, teacher, and school cultures (i.e., the norms, expectations, and routines of a school) could impact teaching and learning. Secondly, she claimed general reforms to improve the academic achievements of Black and Brown students are inadequate without addressing specific cultural, ethnic, and linguistic factors that impact student learning. In her third assumption, Gay shared that a teacher's good intention is not enough to close the achievement gap. Intentions, she argued, have to be demonstrated, and seen inside revised practice that embraces and integrates students' cultural backgrounds and experiences. Gay added a fifth assumption that the consistently lower test scores and grades of Black and Brown students as compared to White students are symptoms of the achievement gap between the student groups (Gay, 2010/2018). The tests are not the cause; the causes are rooted in the historical structures, norms, and expectations woven into the fabric of U.S. institutions.

CRT

CRP theory is related to teaching in culturally relevant ways. Milner (2017) argued that CRP was conceptualized to consider the pedagogical practices of teachers of Black students. Milner (2017) explained when considering CRP, it is critical to examine embedded issues of race, power, and privilege. One central belief of CRT is that racism and different racial outcomes could result from complex, dynamic, and often subtle social and institutional structures and practices, rather than the intentional prejudices of individuals. In that regard, I draw on CRT as a lens through which I can understand the interactions between White teacher participants and their urban students from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Solorzano and Yosso (2002) explained CRT as a framework that strives to “identify, analyze, and transform those structural and cultural aspects of education that maintain subordinate and dominant racial positions in and out of the classroom” (p. 25). While some researchers argued against a single-core tenet that makes up CRT (Crenshaw et al., 1996; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), others have worked to identify the assumptions and approaches that define it (Gillborn, 2015). One such assumption is that race is a social construct reinforced by racialized, often taken-for-granted structures in society. I draw on that major assumption of CRT, that is, the permanence of racism in the United States to analyze the participants’ teaching practices. Some of their views about race and linked practices might be grounded in historical events and perceptions. CRT purports that racism is a normal and permanent part of American culture and institutions--political, economic, and social.

CRT scholars explore the construct of race as it exists in schooling. While many argue race is complex and manifested in different ways in various contexts, others describe conceptions of race as subtle and often hidden under a yoke of accepted norms and practices (Carter, 2008; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Through CRT tenets, one could be guided to challenge both the construct of racism embedded in schools along with the assumption of neutrality and color-blindness that distorts its endemic nature. According to CRT theorists, racism is so normalized within institutions such as schools that it remains typically unacknowledged (Blaisdell, 2016; Milner, 2017). Teacher preparation programs or professional developments rarely discuss race as a factor and part of the dynamics of urban learning that may impact how Black and Brown students can become successful in assessments that count toward progress and achievement (Blanchett, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2003/2010; Sleeter, 2012/2017). Research shows many White educators appear to be unaware of the impact of racism, thus unintentionally or

unconsciously tolerate racially related school structures (e.g., disproportionality in special education) and accept hegemonic practices (Artiles et al., 2010). In this study, I wanted to understand White special educators' perspectives about how racial awareness could impact their urban teaching practices.

By conceptualizing CRT with the framework, an avenue was constructed to focus on the educational experiences of students from culturally diverse backgrounds whose voices are often silenced in the dominant narrative (Blaisdell, 2016; Yosso, 2005). CRT scholars point out that those whose narratives are more privileged than others could be a major factor in how teachers practice. They also argue why those narratives shape policies and expectations that guide schools. What effect the privileged narratives could have on the cultures of those whose narratives are silenced is another major question to consider; however, it is outside the scope of this literature review. Through a CRT lens, one can examine how historically accepted White narratives might influence White teachers to draw on their dominant ways of action. CRT lens might provide the opportunity to see how CRP practices might give voice to the Black and Brown students and how they could possibly counter deficit narratives (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

By synthesizing the tenets of CRP and CRT along with contributions offered by Gay (2010/2018), I examined the experiences of White urban special educators who self-identify as culturally relevant teachers within the following four major themes: (a) culture of exclusion, (b) structures of schooling, (c) practices of teaching, and (d) barriers against culturally relevant teaching practices. I argue that there is an overarching "culture of exclusivity" that envelopes historic and normalized school structures and teaching practices. Those broad practices of

exclusivity also contribute to “othering” in which some students gain academic and social capital, while others are systemically denied access.

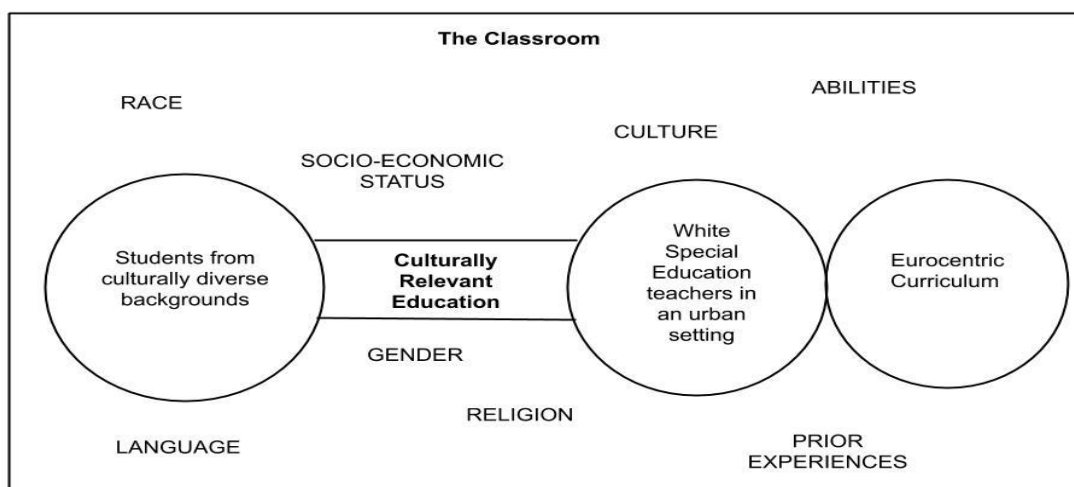
Within the pervasive culture of excluding and othering are embedded structures and practices that impact classroom interactions and teaching (Serpell et al., 2009). Serpell and his colleagues claimed that White urban special educators within these pervasive structures and practices could consciously or unconsciously struggle as they try to understand different student cultural experiences and behaviors. Their struggle might stem from their attitude and beliefs in terms of how critically aware they are. Such teachers might not recognize the impact of culture, race, ethnicity, language and critical political, economic and social issues. To practice culturally relevant teaching, teachers might need to find answers to pedagogical questions such as *How to teach urban students from diverse backgrounds effectively?* In addition, they might question how well they understand foregrounding their students’ experiences in the learning environment. To what extent and in what aspects do White urban special educators in such situations effectively mediate curriculum, instruction, and the dominant culture to improve student learning?

Figure 1 illustrates a visual representation of some variables that impact classroom interactions between teachers and students. Students come to class with diverse backgrounds and demographics such as language spoken at home and English dialects, race, gender, and prior experiences, and those funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 2004; Moll et al., 1992) contribute to students’ abilities. Those same factors contribute to the dynamics of successful school experiences and how success is defined. In the same way, teachers also bring similar diversity, and that too contributes to the dynamics of how they shape and revise their practices over time. Contextual factors like the curriculum teachers are expected to impart (i.e., typically the historically accepted cannon that is mostly Eurocentric) and how and what teachers actually

present are key. Scholars of CRT and CRP would argue that good teachers connect with their diverse students by leveraging students' abilities, languages, and cultural experiences to promote learning (Blaisdell, 2016; Gay, 2010/2018; Milner, 2017; Sleeter, 2012).

Figure 1

Thematic Interactions: White Urban Special Educator and Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices



Culture of Exclusivity

Exclusive education refers to school practices that withhold culturally diverse students from high-quality educational opportunities (Zion & Blanchett, 2017). The culture of exclusivity refers to historically normalized practices in general and special education that foreground the values of the dominant White culture while overshadowing other non-dominant cultures (Danforth et al., 2005; Harry & Klingner, 2006). Danforth et al. (2005), Anyon (1997), and Klingner et al. (2005) documented how the historically U.S. public school system excludes groups of children who do not fit within the dominant culture. These different groups of

excluded children have included girls, Blacks, other underrepresented minorities, (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Deschenes et al., 2001) and children with disabilities (Zion & Blanchett, 2017).

In the 1800s, education in the United States was available for White children exclusively (Cubberley, 1947). This practice continued until change occurred because of social demands from the civil rights movement, court orders, and legislation increased access to public schooling opportunities for diverse groups of students. Nevertheless, even as the breadth and range of the diversity increased and more children were enrolled in schools, especially over the last 100 years (Kaestle, 1973), the idea of sorting and exclusion was slowly becoming the norm. Those practices persisted especially in urban areas where the diversity seemed the greatest. The sorting and excluding resulted in a system of public but separate schools for children from poor working class communities (Kaestle, 1973), Black students, and students with special needs (Blanchett, 2006; Brunetti, 2006; Church & Sedlak, 1976).

Discontent with schooling structures and practices ultimately led advocates to challenge the exclusive nature of public schools in the courts (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). The landmark decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) led to the end of “separate but equal” schooling for diverse groups of students. Although the intent of the court decision was to *right* the culture of exclusion and break down the erstwhile structures and practices of segregation, the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision resulted in unintended consequences (Blanchett et al., 2005; Kohli, 2018; Tillman, 2004). Kohli (2018) described how the court decision resulted in the integration of public schooling and the increase in the enrollment of underrepresented students. It also led to the flight of many White students to suburban and private schools. Similarly, Tillman (2004) and Blanchett et al. (2005) pointed out that the unanticipated displacement of Black

teachers as a result of the decision marked a turning point in the scholarship of many Black students. Tillman and Blanchett et al. (2005) argued that Black students suffered academically after the decision because they could no longer experience culturally relevant instructional practices from teachers who came from communities like that of the students.

With the unintended consequences of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the subsequent era marked an increase in the racial and ethnic diversity of students in urban classrooms. After the landmark court case, reports from the U.S. Department of Education show significant increases in the enrollment of racially and ethnically diverse students in urban public schools nationwide (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017). Status and trends in the education of racial and ethnic groups show that between Fall 2003 and Fall 2013, the percentage of students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools decreased from 59% to 50% for White students and from 17% to 16% for Black students. In contrast, the enrollment percentage increased from 19% to 25% for Latinx students and from 4% to 5% for Asian/ Pacific Islanders over the same 10-year period (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017).

Urban Schools

Urban schools are significantly different from rural and suburban schools (Blanchett, 2009; Weiner, 2000). Weiner (2000) explained that one of the unique characteristics of urban schooling is that urban teachers must meet the exceptional needs of students from diverse communities under structures that are likely to “foil their efforts to personalize and individualize instruction” (p. 371). Similarly, Blanchett (2009) argued that urban schools have a long history of offering urban students, including those with disabilities, free but poor-quality education. Urban schools are situated in densely populated, low-income neighborhoods that often report a high incidence of drugs, gang activity, violence, crimes, and unemployment (Brunetti, 2006;

Means, 2013). Urban schools tend to be underfunded, underresourced, and understaffed when compared to non-urban schools (Brunetti, 2006; Weiner, 2000). Furthermore, these schools have a high enrollment of students from historically underserved communities (Blanchett et al., 2005/2009). Losen and Orfield (2002) described urban schools specifically for students with special needs as separate, dilapidated schools serving students from historically and primarily underserved communities

Following the *Brown v Board of Education* decision, as Black teachers lost their teaching positions, reports indicated that many urban schools recruited and hired White female teachers from suburban communities to replace them (Deschenes et al., 2001). The White female teachers were culturally different from their urban students, and they were provided little to no training on how to be responsive to the culturally diverse student population they now taught. Therefore, Brunetti (2006) argued that those urban teachers faced many challenges that could have contributed to a high teacher turnover.

Subsequently, the challenge of urban school districts to curb the high rates of attrition and low teacher retention has been problematic even to this day. Issues of high attrition and low retention rates in urban schools too often result in issues of educational inequities, as demonstrated by reports of inadequate education and high referral rates for special education services and programs (Kozleski & Smith, 2009; Mason-Williams, 2015). Even as school districts strive to retain teachers, Goldenberg (2014) noted that many of those active, White urban teachers face tensions as they learn to understand, interpret, and respond appropriately to the behaviors and learning demands of the diverse, urban students.

Researchers suggested that this lack of teacher know-how in the classroom is associated with many students, including those with special needs who are being excluded from high-

quality instruction (Kozleski et al., 2014; Mason-Williams, 2015). Since research shows that the single most critical predictor of any student's success is instructional practice (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Odden & Kelly, 2008), exposing with disabilities from urban areas to inadequate instruction might lead to a case of "double jeopardy" for those students (Blanchett et al., 2005). Double jeopardy refers to students with disabilities living in high poverty and high crime neighborhoods while also attending urban schools with limited funds and resources. These students with disabilities experience marginalization within special education such as limited access to the general education curriculum, limited resources, under qualified teachers, and inadequate staffing--conditions that restrict learning and maintain practices of educational inequalities (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007).

Structures of Schooling

Structures of schooling refer to the order of doing things in schools that are a normalized part of the educational system and tend to perpetuate exclusivity. Four major structures of schooling were examined: (a) teacher-centered classrooms, (b) age and grade classifications, (c) Carnegie credits, and (d) grading systems. Despite the rapidly changing demographics in urban classrooms, public school structures and practices demonstrate slow and limited adaptation to differences in terms of race, ethnicity, language, and ability (Connor & Ferri, 2013; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Zion & Blanchett, 2017). Structures of schooling are so interwoven into the fabric of teaching that any effort to change them often result in protest or resistance (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Historically, these structures worked well when enrollment involved the majority of students from the dominant White culture and teachers were from similar cultures. However, classroom demographics in urban communities have also changed because of influences from political, economic, and social changes. As faces in the classrooms began to reflect the changing

urban communities, it became necessary to question the purpose of schooling structures (Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Little & Bartlett, 2010), to recognize inequities within schooling (Anyon, 1997; Artiles, 2013), and to reflect on the teaching and learning dynamics (Schwab, 1978).

Consequently, advocacy in terms of equity and fairness increased, and educational reforms were made. Yet, despite the progress in general and special education reforms, the four major school structures, and practices of exclusivity continued (Brunetti, 2006; Goldenberg, 2014; Zion & Blanchett, 2017). The minimal efforts put forth in U.S. public schools (i.e., general education schools) to understand diversity and instruct students from various culturally diverse backgrounds were also mirrored in the field of special education. In U.S. public special education schools, urban students with disabilities also face issues of educational inequity related to race, language, and socioeconomic status as well as issues within teaching and learning (Blanchett et al., 2009; Harry & Klingner, 2006).

Teacher-Centered Classrooms

One structure of schooling that is unremitting within both general and special education and could promote exclusion is the dominance of the teacher-centered classroom. Schools organized this way generally promote teachers as experts of knowledge (Bidwell, 2001; Hedges & Schneider, 2005). Hedges and Schneider (2005) described teacher-centered classes as environments where students are passive recipients of lectures and information. Yet, research findings show students learn best when teachers use evidence-based practices such as small collaborative groups and peer-assisted learning (Hedges & Schneider, 2005). Over the past 15 years, many evidence-based practices have emerged from research that indicate highly effective learning outcomes from using peer groups across subject matters and disability populations (Carnahan et al., 2009; Kamps et al., 2007; Kunsch et al., 2007). Hedges and Schneider claimed

that student-centered learning is effective because teachers provide opportunities and access for students to collaborate and construct knowledge and meaning. With the advent of digital instruction and blended-learning practices teachers become better suited as facilitators and not experts (Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003). These practices could diminish the traditional teacher-centered classroom practices and provide structures that could entrust students with the flexibility and opportunities to engage, learn, and make progress. In special education, these learning practices could be utilized to vary instructional approaches for students with disabilities.

Age-Grade Classifications

A second entrenched structure of schooling is the age-grade classifications (Bunday, 2013; Cremin, 1988). According to Bunday (2013), the age-grade structure was first introduced in Boston in the mid-1800s and quickly became a pattern of U.S. schooling. Age-grade separation occurs when students are put into different classes and courses based on their age until they leave high school. This structure is universal for students in general and special education and aligns with how the education system is segmented into three parts: elementary, high school, and postsecondary education.

Carnegie Credits

Alongside the age-grade classification is the structure of using the Carnegie credits. The Carnegie unit was developed in 1906 to measure the amount of time a student has studied a subject (<https://www.carnegiefoundation.org/faqs/carnegie-unit/>). For example, a high school student who takes a class four or five times a week for a minimum of 40 minutes per session is said to have earned one Carnegie unit of high school credit after a year. The minimum requirement needed for graduation from high school was 14 Carnegie units

(<https://www.carnegiefoundation.org/faqs/carnegie-unit/>). Carnegie credits are so important; they are a requirement for U.S. college admissions nationwide. Without the required Carnegie credits, students, including those with disabilities, might encounter limitations as they seek to further their education.

Grading System

Finally, another structure is the grading system that has become a fixture of schooling experiences (Andersen, 2018; Olsen & Buchanan, 2019). Olsen and Buchanan (2019) explained that rather than give narrative reports on student performances in different subjects, teachers, especially those in high schools, used single letters and number systems to determine student proficiency. The letter grades from *A-F*; with A being *the highest* and F *the lowest* and the numerical grades from *0-4* with 0 *the lowest* and 4 *the highest*. While some teachers see grading as an objective measure of a student's academic achievement, others see it as a way of comparing students with each other.

Andersen (2018) pointed out that grading could be a subjective source of power for teachers and coupled with the structure of the teacher as an expert, grades could be intimidating for students. For example, teachers could use grades to determine which students advance to the next grade level, the courses the students will take, and whether the students can participate in sports and other extracurricular activities. Therefore, grades can be complicated and high stakes. In her essay on social class, Anyon (1980) explained that in middle school, work is about obtaining the right answer. If a student accumulates enough correct answers, then that student earns a good grade. She argued that schooling should not be all about obtaining good grades. Even as scholars decry the impact of grading and how it impacts the lives of students, limited research exists on grading in both general and special education.

Practices of Teaching

Many traditional practices of teaching emerge from and are mediated by the structures of schooling. By practices of teaching, I refer to the practices teachers routinely utilize in schools. A close look at the urban special education classroom shows many practices that could exclude students. I suggested four practices that might contribute to maintaining a culture of exclusivity in special education: (a) dominance of a Eurocentric curriculum, (b) use of standardized assessments for referral, (c) practice of tracking, and (d) disproportionate representation of non-White students.

Eurocentric Curriculum

Cubberley (1947) posited that since the European experience is behind all the beginnings of American education, the curriculum is heavily steeped in Eurocentric values and practices. Also, despite years of social changes and educational reforms, the use of the Eurocentric curriculum holds steadfast both in general and special education (IDEIA, 2004). Arguably, implementing the Eurocentric curriculum by a predominantly White teaching force has inadvertently contributed to maintaining a status quo of schooling practices that could create difficulty for many teachers to break. It might be especially problematic for those teachers who want to utilize culturally relevant teaching practices. In other words, the use of the Eurocentric curriculum, which often provides the core to teachers' instructional practices and centers the values of the dominant White culture, might limit teacher flexibility and creativity to develop individual changes. Likewise, White urban teachers who want to utilize culturally relevant teaching practices might feel isolated if they do not obtain the support they need from their colleagues and administrators. It is this situation that Achinstein et al. (2010) recognized as a power structure. Achinstein and his fellow researchers described power structures as norms that

impact decision making and influence people's behaviors within schooling activity. The influence and power of the curriculum have been widespread yet not always apparent to those who see it as normalized practices.

Literature focused on special education and the impact of using the Eurocentric curriculum for urban students with disabilities was negligible. However, the literature that I did find focused on multicultural curriculum and teacher education. Banks and Banks (2001) focused on the need for teachers to help students develop an appreciation of the different identities found in America. The authors noted the consequences of using a Eurocentric curriculum on both White and non-Whites students. They explain that when White Americans write Black history, they do so through their White lens. Thereby, whether intentional or not, they silence the voices and perspectives of the Blacks that endured the events. Banks and Banks argued that since history is interconnected with the experiences of different groups of people, history should be presented through the perspectives of the different groups to gain multiple viewpoints and report the whole event. Similarly, Katz (1986) raised the same concern about writing history from one perspective concerning Native Americans. Katz argued that given the diversity in the United States, using a monolithic Eurocentric curriculum fails to help all students view society from different perspectives and to understand activities that could connect distinct histories and cultures.

In addition, Banks and Banks (2001) described the consequences of using a Eurocentric course of study. For instance, they claim that using a Eurocentric curriculum may create a false sense of superiority for White students, provide a myopic conception of their relationship with other racial and ethnic groups, and deny them the opportunity from the knowledge and perspectives that can be gained while learning and experiencing other cultures. These scholars

suggested that the dominance of a Eurocentric curriculum might deny White students the opportunity to view White ethnic cultures from the perspectives of others. When people view their culture from the point of view of another culture, they (the people) can understand and better appreciate what is unique in their culture; see its distinction from others; and understand how it relates, compares to, and interacts with other cultures (Banks & Banks, 2001).

The negative impact of using the Eurocentric curriculum on non-White students such as Blacks and Latinx, includes marginalizing their experiences and cultures and denying them the opportunities to voice their perspectives. Similarly, Gutmann (2004), in his work on general education students, added that using a Eurocentric curriculum fails to provide non-White students the social equality they deserve within the school environment. By using a Eurocentric curriculum, many students from culturally diverse backgrounds enrolled in urban public schools, including students with disabilities, might feel alienated. This feeling of alienation might also develop from the cultural divide resulting from cultural differences between school practices and community experiences (Delpit & Dowdy, 2002). One method to mitigate this divide is for schools to permit teachers to be flexible and adapt curriculum based on their knowledge, their reflections, and the unique demands of urban students from diverse communities. Another method to mitigate the divide is to provide opportunities for White urban special educators to experience the cultures of their urban students with disabilities (Gay, 2000; Milner, 2011).

Assessments

Another practice of teaching that has also become increasingly normalized in special education is using standardized assessments. IDEIA (2004) mandates the participation of students with disabilities in state and districtwide assessments. Assessment in special education is a process that involves collecting data about a student to make decisions (Christensen et al.,

2011). Increased attention to curriculum-based assessments and assessment-driven instruction (Conderman & Hedin, 2012; Fuchs, 2004) has been examined in several ways, including their fairness. Over the last decade, the processes and types of results generated from the assessments have undergone scrutiny (Scott et al., 2014). Parents, teachers, specialists, and counselors use various assessments in special education to identify a student's strengths, areas of needs, and progress in academics and behavior. Ongoing assessments are designed to be used for screening and identification, eligibility and diagnosis, individual education plan (IEP) development and placement, instructional planning, and evaluation. Nevertheless, Harry and Klingner (2006) found evidence of subjective application of eligibility decision-making criteria and random practices in placement procedures that emerge from using assessments arbitrarily. Special educators have to offer suggestions and make decisions on various situations; therefore, it is important to understand the assessment process fully and the students involved. Educators must be able to clearly communicate vital information to professionals, parents, and students and use assessments appropriately to make informed decisions (Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2006).

Tracking

Another core practice in teaching that emerged from the structures of schooling is the practice of tracking or ability grouping. Essentially, it is the practice where teachers act as gatekeepers to sort and exclude students according to how well they determine their performance is in the classroom (Andersen, 2018). This practice occurs in both the elementary and high school levels and impacts all students including students with disabilities. The impact of tracking is detrimental in that it reflects in teacher-talk where some students are identified as low, advanced, regular, or overachievers. Tracking is also found in special education where students are continuously sorted within the exclusive special education setting. One problem with

tracking in special education is that for many of the students, they likely remain tracked for the rest of their schooling experience. For some special education students caught in this vortex, tracking limits the educational opportunities provided to them and often result in low motivation for learning (Stough & Palmer, 2003).

The practice of tracking in schools began in response to the economic needs at the turn of the 20th century to prepare students for their *appropriate* place in the workforce (Cooper, 1996). Tracking was also an unintended consequence of the *Brown v Board of Education* decision to resist racial integration in schools, which resulted in many students from culturally diverse communities being placed in special education. Those students receiving special education services were excluded from the rigorous academic training that is designed to lead to college. Students with disabilities are marginalized within a system where most of their special educators are ill-prepared to meet their academic and behavioral demands (Zion & Blanchett, 2017).

In special education classes, tracking is integral to instructional practices as special educators use it as a strategy for within-class groupings and between-class groupings. Describing within-class grouping involves teachers placing students of similar abilities in small groups, and between-class grouping involves teachers placing students into different classes or courses based on their ability level and behavior. While those in favor of tracking claim the practice allows teachers to pace instruction to meet student needs, those against it point out that it is discriminatory and sorts a greater number of non-White students into a sub-group of lower expectations (www.nea.org/tools/16899.htm).

Disproportionate Representation

Another normalized teaching practice closely related to tracking is the disproportionate overrepresentation of non-White students in special education. The sorting and labeling that is

shrouded in tracking within general education become significant issues in special education where a larger number of students identified and referred to programs and services are mainly students from historically underserved communities. Skiba et al. (2008) defined disproportionality as “the representation of a group in a category that exceeds our expectation for that group or differs substantially from the representation of others in that category” (p. 266). Much research has been conducted on disproportionality in special education (Harry & Klingner, 2006; Klingner et al., 2005; Shealey et al., 2011; Skiba, 2013; Skiba et al., 2006; Waitoller et al., 2010). Shealey et al. (2011) advocated researchers stop focusing on symptoms of disproportionality, but rather, direct research to understand and provide context where disproportionality takes place in terms of social, cultural, and political factors. Similarly, Klingner et al. (2005) suggested that culturally relevant teaching practices could mitigate the disproportionate representation of students from culturally diverse backgrounds in special education. Blanchett (2006), recognizing the complexities involved in the problem of disproportionate representation of Black students in special education, emphasized the need to reduce the role whiteness plays in teaching and learning in urban classrooms.

Artiles et al. (2010) asserted that despite many gains in research and policy and practice in special education, the issue of disproportionality persists. Expanding on earlier work, Sullivan and Artiles (2011) highlighted a hierarchical dispensation that enables disproportionality within educational systems based on racial inequities that exist in the broader society. Furthermore, according to Sullivan and Artiles, power is critical to maintaining both racial and educational inequities; the hierarchical structure within the educational system empowers the dominant group and enables practices that result in disproportionality. Andersen (2018) referred to that power by describing all educators as gatekeepers who are involved in student evaluations, which may lead

to disproportionality in schools. In the field of urban special education, who are these gatekeepers--White special educators.

Challenges to Culturally Relevant Teaching

Ladson-Billings (1995a) claimed that teachers who want to clearly understand and practice culturally relevant teaching need to be self-aware of their attitude, identity, and positionality within the classroom. In addition, Neri et al. (2019) noted failure to examine who teachers are in terms of attitude, identity, and positionality may be one reason why teaching in culturally relevant ways remain sporadic and inconsistent in urban classrooms. Similarly, some researchers emphasized that White urban special educators resist utilizing culturally relevant teaching because they lack a clear understanding of its principles and how to utilize them in their teaching practices effectively (Griner & Stewart, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2014). Furthermore, other researchers suggested that the use of culturally relevant teaching is sporadic because those teachers who utilize it in their practices lack support from colleagues and administrators because they perceive the practices as a threat to established school structures (Kohli & Pizarro, 2016; Underwood & Mensah, 2018). Nevertheless, others counter that White urban educators simply lack the cultural understanding of their urban students from diverse backgrounds and may be resistant to the idea of enacting culturally relevant teaching because they do not want to empower students and disrupt the status quo of White culture dominance (Goldenberg, 2014; Picower, 2009).

Several additional barriers discourage White urban special educators from clearly understanding and utilizing culturally relevant teaching practices. One such barrier exists in traditional school structures and practices that provide few learning opportunities for active educators to experience the cultures of their diverse students (Blanchett, 2006; Goldenberg,

2014; Shealey et al., 2011). While educators are regarded as experts and owners of knowledge, students are positioned as recipients of knowledge. Teachers that hold that viewpoint may find it difficult to practice culturally relevant teaching (Kozleski & Smith, 2009). In fact, teaching and learning contexts created within such viewpoints may lead to educators unintentionally failing to provide equitable and appropriate learning opportunities for all students (Brown et al., 2019; Kozleski & Smith, 2009). Kozleski and Smith (2009), in their discussion on the need for systemic change, suggested that all educators needed to understand and reflect on how normalized structures and practices of schooling could create a context where change is resisted. An example of such practice is embedded within special education. Creating the field of special education and the practice of its disproportionate representation of non-White students from culturally diverse backgrounds has resulted in a binary structure where exclusion is normalized. The disproportionality that exists in special education has become a fixture of the new norm, even though it separates and excludes the students with disabilities from their general education content and contexts (Zion & Blanchett, 2017; Sleeter, 2012). Blanchett (2009) shared and others concurred that this practice of disproportional representation impedes the use of culturally relevant teaching in urban special education (Artiles et al., 2010; Waitoller et al., 2010).

Considering Kozleski and Smith's (2009) reasoning that teachers understand and reflect on how school structures and practices may impact teaching and learning, there is a need for White urban special educators of students from diverse cultural backgrounds to consider the complexities that exist in the cultural mismatch between the teacher and the student. Goldenberg (2014), Milner (2011/2012), and Rubel (2017) recommended ways to reflect upon their educational practices. The teachers must be cognizant of who their students are and their environments. They should be purposeful when providing access to the general education

curriculum and increase learning opportunities for their urban students. Similarly, other researchers argued that tackling the problem of systemic change requires that teachers develop a clear and deep awareness of their own cultural identities and how such identities might impact instructional practices (Banks, 2001; Epstein, 2019; Picower, 2009). Picower (2009) suggested that while developing a sense of identity and recognizing its impact on their practices, White teachers also need to learn about their students' cultures and use that knowledge to plan and teach in culturally relevant ways. This pedagogical pivot is especially critical, based on research suggesting that the failure to provide appropriate opportunities in urban schools for White teachers to learn about their diverse students might contribute to the persistent achievement gap and inequities between White and non-White students (Kozleski & Smith, 2009; Skiba, 2013; Skiba et al., 2006/2008).

Kozleski and Smith (2009), in their study of three different school districts, found learning environments that perpetuate the dominant White culture at the expense of the non-dominant cultures of their urban students with disabilities. They argue that existing norms do not incentivize teachers to consider the ways in which urban students' experiences and cultures contribute to their instructional needs and performances. Kozleski and Smith concluded that when school administrators consider ways in which the culture impacts education for teachers and students individually and collectively, evidence of change in student learning is visible. In a study conducted by Skiba et al. (2008) on achieving equity in special education, emphasize that teachers' participation in systemic practices that maintain a racially based status quo contributes to issues of educational inequity. They concluded that inclusive approaches such as culturally relevant teaching could contribute significantly toward reducing educational inequality.

At a broader level, many urban school-district administrators are also unclear about how to integrate culturally relevant teaching into district structures and practices. This is disconcerting specifically as data show that a high number of school districts are faced with teacher shortages and compounded by teacher attrition and retention (Billingsley, 2003; Boe et al., 2008; Kozleski et al., 2014). Samuels and Harwin (2018) reported that the number of special educators nationally has dropped by more than 17% over the past decade. Similarly, in 2015, Vittek's study on retention in special education shows that 13.2% of the teachers leave the profession annually. In fact, state and national statistics continue to show that special educator retention is especially critical in urban districts where teacher turnover is disproportionately high. These conditions overlap with higher rates of educational inequity for students from racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse backgrounds (McFarland et al., 2017).

Whiteness

There is scarce research on the influence of whiteness in special education. However, I draw on research about whiteness with preservice teachers as the majority of White teacher candidates continue to enroll in urban teacher preparation programs (Sleeter, 2017). These White teacher candidates are enrolling at a higher rate than non-Whites, even as school districts struggle to hire and retain culturally diverse teachers (USDOE, 2016). Given that trend and the likelihood that many of the preservice teachers could have students with disabilities in their classrooms, these findings of preservice education are relevant to my argument about the proliferation of whiteness among teachers--including those in special education. According to Leonardo (2009), whiteness is a racially motivated hegemonic system that is different from White people. Depending on the context, White people may choose to benefit from the privilege of whiteness. Picower (2009) studied whiteness by looking at eight White female preservice

teachers. Picower found that study participants had gained hegemonic understandings of whiteness from their cultural experiences. When their understandings of whiteness were challenged, the participants used “tools of whiteness” to resist and maintain dominant understandings of race (p. 197). The study of whiteness is relevant in education because of the conscious or unconscious influence it might have on White urban special educators and their interactions with students. The impact could affect teacher attitudes, perceptions, teaching practices, and interpretations of student behaviors. Student progress and achievement in the classrooms can also be impacted.

Sporadic Research on CRP

Limited empirical and conceptual literature exists on the use of culturally relevant teaching by White urban special educators with over five years teaching experience. Research surrounding culturally relevant teaching is commonly focused on general educators and preservice teachers and significantly limited on special education teachers (Banks, 2001; Gay, 2002; Paris, 2012; Shealey et al., 2011). In an overview of the research on disproportionality and multicultural special education, Shealey et al. (2011) corroborated the dearth of empirical work on the use of culturally relevant teaching in special education. Shealey et al. found that only eight studies met their criteria for an empirical study that addressed one of the four areas of culturally relevant teaching. The researchers recommend that special educators increase knowledge of their students’ cultural experiences, provide culturally relevant instruction, and remain critically aware of how their personal attitudes and values may impact their instructional practices. Similarly, Artiles et al. (2010) concluded that despite many advancements made in special education, varying interpretations over the different meanings of the word culture may be an obstacle to how teachers understand and use culturally relevant teaching.

Lea and Sims (2008) maintained that interpretations and attitudes toward diversity present barriers for White urban special educators who want to practice culturally relevant teaching. In addition, such varying interpretations and attitudes toward diversity could influence teaching practices. Furthermore, some scholars argue that White teachers have limited awareness of the inequities in teaching and learning practices in urban classrooms (Gay, 2002; Goldenberg, 2014; Sleeter, 2017). Gay (2002) found that U.S. school practices do not readily embrace diversity, nor do they incentivize teachers' who work to include their students' cultural experiences in their instructional practices. Given the trend in the workforce of White urban special educators and the significant increase in the enrollment of students from culturally diverse backgrounds in special education, it is vital to examine teacher practices needed to improve urban students' learning (Goldenberg, 2014; Kozleski & Smith, 2009).

Considering the varying and competing viewpoints, expectations, and roles that shape teachers in their classroom, it is important to understand the structures that impact the choices that White urban special educators develop concerning how to teach urban students with culturally diverse experiences. Current data show urban special educators are primarily White females (Kozleski et al., 2014). In special education, that 83% identify as White and as 17% non-White. Kozleski et al. (2014) claimed that non-White students in U.S. public schools are being educated by people who do not share their cultural experiences. This is corroborated by data from the USDOE (2016), which reported that 82% of the public schools' educator workforce remains overwhelmingly White. Trends show the figure has hardly changed in more than 15 years. For instance, data from a similar survey conducted in 2020 found that 84% of teachers identified as White (Hussar et al., 2020).

The predominantly White urban special educator workforce enters urban schools with their personal cultures as they interact with students and other stakeholders (Freedman & Appleman, 2008). The structures and practices of schooling act as barriers for teachers to learn about their students' cultures. Considering the stability in the teacher workforce and the challenges school districts face to hire and recruit culturally diverse teachers, schools need to retain all their special educators, especially White urban teachers who are the majority of the special educator workforce. School districts need to support teachers against the structures and practices that may be barriers for White urban special educators to practice culturally relevant teaching.

Cultural Mismatch

Like all teachers, one personal characteristic White urban special educators bring into the schooling activity is their culture (Goldenberg, 2014). Culture impacts how teachers think, feel, and believe as they interact with urban students who bring with them their manners of thinking, feeling, and believing. Given differences in cultures, as the teacher and student interact some cultural disparities are likely to emerge. Schooling contexts where these interactions occur are important to teaching and learning as a teacher, and students share experiences, exchange information, and show behaviors that might be outside of each other's cultural experiences (Carter, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1995a). As this occurs, the possibility that each participant misinterprets behaviors and gives a wrong meaning to what is happening too often produces conflict.

Conflicts could arise when White teachers do not give credence to their students' cultural experiences and instead use their White cultural lenses to interpret student behaviors, responses, and actions (Delpit, 2012; Irizarry, 2017; San Pedro, 2017). Irizarry (2017) advocated for the use

of culturally relevant teaching in her work with Latinx students. She found that when students feel empowered to use their language and culture in the learning process, they set high expectations for themselves and succeed. Given indications that Latinx students are the fastest-growing student body in urban schools, the findings from Irizarry's study show a high level of student involvement when provided learning opportunity that was connected to their cultural backgrounds.

What could further complicate the dynamic of cultural interactions is the inherent notion of the power vested in the White urban teacher because of the structures within the broader society that have become normalized in hegemonic structures and practices of schooling. The notion of power is subtle yet complicated. Power belongs within the dominant White system in which the urban White special educator belongs, whether they choose to be aware of the power or not (Milner, 2011). When armed with this power in schooling activities, some urban White teachers experience tension in their instructional tasks (Crowley, 2019; Crowley & Smith, 2015), and they may even show a lack of willingness to understand and utilize CRP; this attitude could impact a White urban teacher's ability to help their students learn effectively.

Conversely, an attempt by an urban White special educator to commit to culturally relevant teaching often involves giving up some White privilege. Studies show that relinquishing some of their White privilege might bring about personal struggles for teachers--feelings, attitudes, and knowledge may be questioned or critiqued (Buehler et al., 2009; Goldenberg, 2014). For those White urban teachers who successfully overcome the struggle and commit to culturally relevant teaching practices, a negative consequence sometimes included isolation by their colleagues and administrators who did not support their efforts (Buehler et al., 2009).

Researchers stress that when teachers have to contend with these challenges, they have difficulty supporting their students, and invariably, the students suffer (Gay, 2000).

A cultural mismatch could be a factor in the disproportional representation of Black students in special education programs and services (Skiba et al., 2008). The cultural mismatch that occurs when schools do not connect the values necessary to succeed in its unfamiliar cultural context to students from culturally diverse communities is likely to result in poor student outcomes (Skiba et al., 2008). Harry et al. (2002) found that although the practice of psychological testing should be objective, it is not. They found that White psychologists administer tests to produce the desired results that the referral teacher expected to see regarding their Black students; this example of a cultural mismatch undergirds racial and educational inequities within special education (Artiles, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2001).

Personal Attitude

White special educators bring their personal cultures and manners of thinking, beliefs, and values into schooling. Often, their personal identities and cultures are often reflected in their attitudes. These attitudes play a role in the interactions that take place in schools as teachers develop their professional teacher identity. With the racial and cultural disparities that exist in urban classrooms, researchers suggest teachers reflect and discuss race, culture, and power to help improve teaching and learning interactions (Picower, 2009). For White urban special educators whose attitudes may be acultural or color-blind, they are likely to be challenged as they interact with urban students. These challenges might impede how they practice culturally relevant teaching (Gay, 2000). Some researchers describe such White urban teachers as being resistant to learning about the cultures of their urban students (Neri et al., 2019).

According to Gay (2000), to be committed to developing culturally relevant teaching practices, teachers need to break from the exclusionary structures and practices of schooling. These structures and practices mediate schooling activities and prevent White urban special educators from including the cultural values, learning styles, contributions, and achievements of their students' various communities in their teaching practices. Teachers who commit to developing culturally relevant teaching practices often face problems that are results of isolation; isolation occurs from the reactions of colleagues and administrators who see these practices as a threat to the status quo. Yet, Neri et al. (2019) suggested that what some researchers refer to as "White teacher resistance," could be a call for help as many White teachers struggle to understand what it is to practice culturally relevant teaching and what it looks like in their classrooms.

Committing to Culturally Relevant Teaching

When White urban special educators maintain the exclusionary structures and practices of schooling, they are less likely to practice culturally relevant teaching (Crowley & Smith, 2015; Haviland, 2008). Crowley and Smith (2015) claimed that when teachers practice culturally relevant teaching, they are seen as denying, evading, and resisting the status quo and its power. Doing so could result in conflicts with colleagues who work to maintain the status quo. Utilizing CRP translates to a shift in attitude and moving away from practices that exclude any group of students in teaching and learning. Researchers noted that the shift may include engaging in discourses about race and its implication for the learning outcomes for students, including those with disabilities (Crowley & Smith, 2015). Other studies show that despite the complexities of working within structures and practices that foreground the dominant White culture, some White urban teachers can practice culturally relevant teaching in their classrooms (Milner, 2011). One

approach to increase White urban special educators' commitment to culturally relevant teaching practices are linked to perceptions of roles and expectations.

For instance, in an ethnographic study of four White teachers, Hyland (2005) found a disconnect between how White teachers understood their roles as urban teachers and what research determines as good teaching practice. The study took place in the only Black neighborhood elementary school in a small Midwestern city. The four teachers saw themselves as good teachers of Black students. However, from their self-report, their practices showed otherwise. Data indicated how they inadvertently maintained values steeped in White culture and sustained racist practices in their classrooms. In Hyland's example, Pam, a special educator for 34 years, self-reports that she is a helper to her Black students:

I am just here to help kids . . . I guess students just need someone to care for them and give them some of the attention that they deserve. A lot of these families don't have much. These children have so little that you need to give them things. (p. 439)

Although she appeared helpful, Pam saw her students and their families as needy and dependent. She used words that showed her othering her students and her choice to give material items to her students could be interpreted as satisfying her sense of superiority. Furthermore, Pam demonstrated how power could be misused in her role as a special educator. She described that she rarely declassifies students out of special education even when they have met their goal because, in her mind, "they need help. Even if they have made great progress, they still could use the help. And I am of the belief that once you are LD, you are always LD" (Hyland, 2005, p. 440).

Hyland's (2005) findings reveal the problem some White special educators could have with implementing culturally relevant teaching practices. The four teachers reported they

performed their role based on their understanding of these practices. However, the reality did not support their claim. Moreover, the study suggests some confusion White urban special educators might have regarding being culturally aware and implementing culturally relevant teaching in the urban classroom. A commitment to culturally relevant teaching is also overshadowed by the lack of clarity about terms, definitions, and what it looks like in the urban classroom. Skiba et al. (2008) showed teaching practices in assessment testing, cultural mismatch, and how teachers interpret behaviors impact student achievement. Similarly, Artiles et al. (2010) advocated for teachers to reject deficit views about students from non-White cultures by not supporting color-blind practices and policies that could justify disproportionality in special education.

Summary

My study investigated how White urban special educators who express a commitment to culturally relevant teaching perceive and support the practice. My interest emerges from my thematic representation of the phenomenon of White urban special educators who find it difficult to practice culturally relevant teaching within practices and structures of schooling that have become normalized under an overwhelming culture of exclusivity. In addition, White urban special educators come into teaching with their cultural experiences steeped in a dominant White culture and its hegemonic nature of Whiteness—a possible barrier to those educators committed to culturally relevant teaching practices in the urban classroom. Considering structures and practices that operate in multiple layers of schooling, I examined what White urban special educators with over five years' experience perceive as culturally relevant teaching. In addition, I examined how this group of educators foster learning environments for their urban students from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Chapter III: METHODS

This study was conducted to address the following research questions:

1. What do White urban special education high school teachers with over five years experience perceive as teaching in culturally relevant ways?
2. How do White urban special education high school teachers with over five years experience foster a learning environment for students from culturally diverse backgrounds?
3. What relationship, if any, exists between teachers' perceptions of culturally relevant teaching and the realities of its implementation?

I used qualitative research because it is a process that enabled me to construct meaning from participants' experiences and ideas. Creswell (2014) stated that the use of qualitative research allows the researcher to study a problem by “addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 44). Shank (2006) described qualitative research as systematic, planned, ordered, and public. He added that it is a process aimed to yield a rich and insightful picture of some phenomenon or situation. Similarly, Patton (2015) argued that researchers interpret participants' data using inductive and deductive ways. In this sense, researchers give meaning by either testing an existing theory or by developing a theory from specific observations. Therefore, I selected qualitative research methods to answer the research questions for this study (Mertens, 2014; Yin, 2014).

Case Study Methodology

Case studies provide a way for researchers to solve a problem and examine a phenomenon that can offer information for future research (Miles et al., 2014). Merriam (2001, p. 27) described *case study* as an “intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance,

phenomenon, or social unit” that allows the researcher to enclose what is being studied. She stated that case studies enable the researcher to see the case as happening within set boundaries of time and place. Similarly, Yin (2014) noted that case study research means situating what is being studied within the real-life natural setting in which it occurs. Creswell (2014) posited that it is crucial to collect data in the field where participants experience the phenomenon.

Developing a case in its natural setting ensures the phenomenon can be understood from each participant’s perspective (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014). In this study, I uncovered how White urban special education teachers describe and practice culturally relevant teaching by carefully examining what they said and how they implemented what they did. To answer the three research questions, I collected multiple data over time to develop a rich and robust case (Harrison et al., 2017). Specifically, I applied a multiple case study design because there is more than one participant in this study.

Multiple case study design allows for the comparison of the perspectives of participants within and across data sources (Creswell, 2014; Mertens, 2014; Yin, 2014). Creswell (2014, p. 99) described a *multiple case study* as a design in which the researcher “selects multiple case studies to illustrate the issue” and show various perspectives on the issue. Likewise, Yin (2014) added that in multiple case studies the researcher uses the same procedures for data gathering and analysis for each case of study. In this study, I employed the same research procedures with each study participant to describe and understand similarities and differences in participants’ practices and what meanings they assigned to what they were doing. According to Geertz (1973),

If you want to understand what science is, you should look in the first instance not at its theories or its findings, and certainly not at what its apologist say about it; you should look at what the practitioners of it do. (p. 5)

I interacted with the participants often to develop a comfortable relationship. This was done to learn how the participants connected their professional and personal experiences in their classrooms. Insight was needed to understand their perspectives about what they described as culturally relevant teaching and how they chose to practice what they perceived as culturally relevant teaching. Scholars affirmed the effectiveness of such relationship building and the co-construction of meaning that will emerge as both the researcher and the participant interact (Patton, 2015; van Manen, 1990). In their work on research and special education, Mertens and McLaughlin (2004) endorsed interactions that foster the development of relationships such as what I sought as I co-constructed meaning from data gathered from multiple perspectives.

Recruitment Procedures

Certain instruments and gathered data specific to this study had to be submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before approval was granted. These items included the recruitment flyer (see Appendix A), email scripts (see Appendix B), eligibility screener (see Appendix C), demographic profile (see Appendix D), initial interview protocol (see Appendix E), parental information sheet (see appendix F), student information sheet (see Appendix G), video recording protocol (see Appendix H), video review guide (see Appendix I), culturally relevant behavior checklist (Appendix J). Shortly after submission, I obtained approval from the UIC Institutional Review Board (see Appendix K).

Initial recruitment began by using purposive sampling. In September 2020, I sent 50 recruitment flyers (see Appendix A) to potential participants within my professional network using their personal emails. I received a response from my first eligible participant via email in October 2020. By November 2020, this initial procedure yielded eight potential participants from a total of 12 respondents who expressed interest. I followed up via email script (see Appendix B)

with the eight potential participants and sent links to UIC Qualtrics for the Eligibility Screener (see Appendix C) to determine whether each potential participant met the eligibility criteria. Of the initial eight, four participants met the following inclusionary criteria:

- White special education teacher, Learning Behavior Specialist (LBS1) licensed or endorsed (K-12) with over five years teaching experience in an urban high school
- Teach at least one high school core subject
- Self-identify as practicing culturally relevant teaching
- Teach students with high incidence disabilities (e.g., learning disabilities, behavioral disabilities, or autistic spectrum disorder in at least one class where at least 70% of students are African American or Latinx.

Following this initial recruitment procedure, one potential participant was unable to participate because of personal issues related to the COVID 19 pandemic, leaving three participants eligible for the study. Each eligible participant was sent a link to complete the consent form (see Appendix L) via UIC Qualtrics. Once consent was obtained, I followed via email for an appointment for our initial interview.

I continued recruitment procedures as I was unable to obtain five participants from my initial recruitment efforts. I used snowball sampling (Merriam, 2001) by asking eligible participants to refer me to other potential participants within their networks. I followed the same procedures used during purposive sampling and obtained four additional potential participants. Of the four additional recruitments, two qualified for the study. Once the minimum number of five participants was obtained, the recruitment process ended.

Participants

Participants for the study included five White urban special education teachers. Each participant had a full teacher license with the LBS1 endorsement. All participants were currently teaching in a charter high school in a large metropolitan city in the Midwest. In addition, each participant self-identified as a practicing CRT and taught students with high incidence disabilities. One teacher participant identified as male and four identified as female.

Teacher demographics are described in Table 3. Participant ages ranged from 28 to 48 years with an average of 39 years of age. Each participant had over five years teaching experience and three of the five participants reported professional experience working in more than one school district. Their years of experience teaching students from African American and Latinx backgrounds ranged from 6 to 25 years ($M = 16.8$) Peggy had the least years of teaching experience. She reported she had been teaching for six years while Karen had been teaching for 25 years. All five participants had graduate-level degrees (master's degrees), and three were currently enrolled in additional graduate programs. Karen obtained her special education degree in an undergraduate program, while the other four participants obtained their special education degrees in graduate programs. All five participants work in charter schools where the majority of their student population received free- or reduced-price lunch. Three of the participants reported teaching English, one taught Mathematics, and another reported teaching Social Science. While three indicated teaching in instructional settings with all students with disabilities, two specified teaching in what they called inclusion settings. For confidentiality and participant identity protection, all participants were given pseudonyms.

Table 3

Participants' Demographics

Name	Age	Instructional role	Subject	Disability
Dave	36	Inclusion	Social science	LD/ED
Karen	48	Instructional	English	LD/ED/Autism
Peggy	28	Instructional	English	Autism
Lesley	36	Instructional	English	LD/ED
Nancy	46	Inclusion	Mathematics	LD/ED

Note. LD = learning disability; ED = emotional disability. All participants had a master's degree.

Settings

The five participants taught in five different urban, charter high schools. The five schools were located in various parts of a large urban school district in the Midwest. All participants reported high percentages of underrepresented groups of students (i.e., African American and Latinx) in their schools. Dave reported that his school enrolled the highest number of Latinx students at 88%, while Lesley's school had the lowest Latinx enrollment at 47%. Karen's school had the highest percentage of African American students at 90%; Dave's school reported 10% enrollment of African American students. The percentage of students who received free- and reduced-price lunch ranged from 76% to 94% and the percentage of students with IEP's was 25% or less. Specific names of schools shared during interviews were redacted for confidentiality. School demographics are described in Table 4.

Researcher Positionality

As I designed this study, I needed to reflect on how my identity and cultural experiences could influence the research process and findings. Tillman (2002) argued the use of culturally

sensitive research approaches can be a catalyst for educational change. She added that research approaches focusing on Blacks can be regarded as culturally sensitive research. She suggested the culturally sensitive researcher “carefully consider the extent of their cultural knowledge, cross-race, and same-race perspectives and insider and outsider issues related to the research process.” (p. 6). Therefore, since the purpose of my research is rooted in racial and cultural teaching practices, I needed to recognize my own biases and be transparent in what drives and motivates me (Milner, 2007).

Table 4

School Demographics for Each Participant

Teacher	Race	%	% with free	
			lunch	% with IEP
Dave	Latinx	88	94	15
	African American	10		
	Other	2		
Karen	Latinx	7	86	21
	African American	90		
	Other	3		
Peggy	Latinx	74	92	20
	African American	24		
	Other	2		
Lesley	Latinx	47	76	12
	African American	28		
	White	18		
Nancy	Other	7	84	25
	Latinx	52		
	African American	40		
	Other	8		

A few of my identity features might have influenced this study. I recognized my experiences as a Black parent, a Black special education teacher of primarily Black and Brown students, and a Black, middle-class female immigrant working in an urban setting with a majority of White teachers. I am also racially and culturally mindful of the diversity in urban education generally, and in special education specifically. In addition, since the participants in my research are White, I needed to be sensitive as a researcher. Asking participants to discuss and share their views about issues of race and culture with me could impact what they chose to share. This mindfulness influenced how I designed the protocols and how I made meaning of the experiences of my participants as I conducted the research.

Instruments

Several instruments were used to gather data for this study. The instruments included demographic profiles, the initial interview conversation protocol, a parental information sheet, a student information sheet, video discussion review (VDR) protocols, and a behavior checklist for culturally relevant teaching. I also kept a notebook for field notes during all data collection.

Demographic Profile

Each participant completed a demographic profile (see Appendix D) via UIC Qualtrics before our initial meeting. In the survey, I asked about their years of experience teaching diverse students, their highest degree obtained, instructional role(s), age, and subject(s) taught.

Initial Interview Conversation Protocol

The interview protocol (see Appendix E) was adapted from recommendations for narrative and phenomenological interviewing (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). I focused on doing systematic narrative interviewing to gather data and reconstruct events directly from the perspective of participants. Seidman (2006) provided step-by-step guidance to help researchers

develop, shape, and reflect on in-depth interviewing as a qualitative research process. I integrated the research-based suggestions to develop an open-ended, semi-structured protocol as the primary tool for data collection. The protocol allowed me to follow the same order of questions with each participant.

My purpose in designing this initial conversation protocol was to develop a connection with each participant. I planned to conduct the initial interview as a conversation between two urban special educators. I recognized that I was asking participants to discuss potentially sensitive issues and share their views about race with me. To establish a conversation between educators, occasionally I made comments and shared my thoughts after my participant's response to a question or probe. I was able to include spur-of-the-moment probes during my conversation interview (Patton, 2015). In addition, designing each event as a conversation with the same questions for all participants with varied probes, I sought to reduce the perceived power dynamic that could exist between the researcher and the participant (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The semi-structured interviews were designed with probes so participants could elaborate on their ideas and provide insights about their experiences. The protocol consisted of eight questions with probes under two main sections. The first section focused on participants' beliefs and reflections about what they mean when they say they practice culturally relevant teaching. For example, I asked them to share their thoughts and beliefs about teaching in a culturally relevant way. In the next section, I focused the questions on personal and professional influences that impacted their practice and their role as teachers of culturally diverse students. For example, I asked if any professional supports influenced their culturally relevant teaching practice. Also, I asked participants to describe their role as a teacher of students from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Parent Information Sheet

I designed the parent information sheet (see Appendix F) for teachers to share with their parents. Following IRB procedures, parents had to be notified about the purpose of the study and the likelihood their child may be audio recorded during regular instructional interactions. Parental permission was required before each teacher audio recording their students. Parents were provided the option to have their child included in the audio recordings by checking the appropriate box. The parent information sheet included my contact information.

Student Information Sheet

I designed the student information sheet (see Appendix G) for teachers to read the information to their students before their recordings. Following IRB procedures, students needed to be aware that they were being audio recorded during the instructional interactions. Each teacher informed their students that they volunteered to participate in the study about what it means for them to teach in a culturally relevant way. Students were reminded their faces would not be recorded and their last names not used. They were informed that a sample of their work might be shared with the researcher during this study. Also, they were told that all audio recordings and work sample/artifacts) would be destroyed after data analyses. Students were reminded that parental permission was provided for the students to be included in the recordings. Students whose parents did not permit them to be recorded and who did not volunteer to do so could still participate in the lesson by completing independent work during the audio recording. Such students would not have their work samples shared with the researcher.

VDR Protocols

I designed several VDR protocols to capture how each participant perceived and demonstrated culturally relevant teaching in their classrooms.

Video recording protocol. The first tool was the video recording protocol (VRP; see Appendix H). This VRP was a one-page tool created to provide participants with clear guidelines about audio recording their instructional interactions remotely using their personal devices (IPAD or phone). The major guideline stated that participants audio record themselves using their own devices (IPAD or phone) practicing what they believed to be culturally relevant teaching. Next, participants were instructed to review their recordings and select a 10- to 15-minute audio excerpt that they would share with me and discuss at the video discussion sessions. In addition, they were instructed that this procedure would be repeated three times to meet study requirements.

Video review guide. Another protocol created for the VDR session was the video review guide (VRG; see Appendix I). The VRG tool was used for all three VDR sessions to allow for participants' views and thoughts to emerge. Following the protocol helped me ensure participants were asked the same questions and in the same order while allowing for spur-of-the-moment interjections that might happen during each discussion (Patton, 2015). The VRG was organized into three phases.

- Phase 1, the participant and I focused on discussions before listening to the audio recording excerpt the participant brought with them. In this phase, participants discussed their excerpt and the expected outcome of their lesson, shared an artifact, and discussed its connection with the lesson.
- Phase 2, the participant played the excerpt as we listened attentively. During this phase, the participant defined each of 10 behaviors on the culturally relevant teaching checklist (see Appendix J). While listening to the recording, we each

made a “tally mark” each time we heard something that was the behavior according to how the participant defined it.

- Phase 3, the participant and the researcher reviewed what each recorded, discussed any discrepancies, and came to an agreement drawing on the participant’s definition and reasoning.

Culturally relevant teaching checklist. I designed a third tool to gather data during the VRD sessions. I named it the culturally relevant teaching checklist (Appendix J). I wanted to learn how participants’ descriptions and reflections about themselves aligned in practice with an accepted theory of CRT. I chose Ladson-Billings’ (1994) CRP theory based on her extensive impact on the academic and teaching communities. Additionally, she identified three tenets that could be observed in practice: (a) CRP teachers help their students achieve academically, (b) CRP teachers maintain their students’ cultural competence, and (c) CRP teachers develop students to be socially conscious within their communities (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Furthermore, these three tenets have become a foundational cornerstone for the scholarship related to culturally relevant education (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Gay, 2002; Howard, 2003; Neri et al., 2019; Paris, 2014; Young, 2010). I created the culturally relevant teaching checklist and the observable behaviors based on the theory and scholarship of CRP (see Table 5).

To gain information about how each participant described what they do in their self-identified culturally relevant teaching practice, I needed to identify observable behaviors that could point out what they considered to be part of their practice. To do that, I referred to the literature and identified possible behaviors associated with those specific practices. After combing the literature and finding patterns of similarity, I identified 10 specific behaviors I could link with the three tenets of Ladson-Billings’ theory of CRP. I used those to create the culturally

relevant teaching checklist: a tool designed to aid in the discussion of participants' views of their culturally relevant teaching practice.

Table 5

Research-Based Culturally Relevant Behaviors With the Cited Authors

Author	Culturally relevant behaviors
Morrison, K.A., Robbins, H. H., & Rose, D. G. (2008).	Modifies/reshapes curriculum Building on student strengths/interests Parental and community involvement Motivating/non-judgmental Use evidence from student's background Others
Gay, G. (2010/2018).	Filters culture through the cultural lens of student Use evidence from student's background
Milner, H. R. (2011).	Centers student strengths and interests Parental and community involvement Others – storytelling
Aronson, B. & Laughter, J. (2016).	Authentic dialogue Questioning Linguistic variation Use evidence from student's background Parental and community involvement Filters culture through the cultural lens of student

Once I identified the behaviors, I aligned them with the three CRP tenets. Figure 2 illustrates the alignment of observable culturally relevant teaching checklist behaviors with Ladson-Billings' CRP tenets. Some behaviors are specific to one tenet (e.g., modifies curriculum fits only with the tenet of academic achievement; evidence from students' backgrounds, filters content through students' cultural lens, and authentic dialogue fit only into the tenet of cultural competence). However, many behaviors overlapped. For instance, four behaviors linked to social consciousness could be observable in the other two tenets based on the contexts in which they are described.

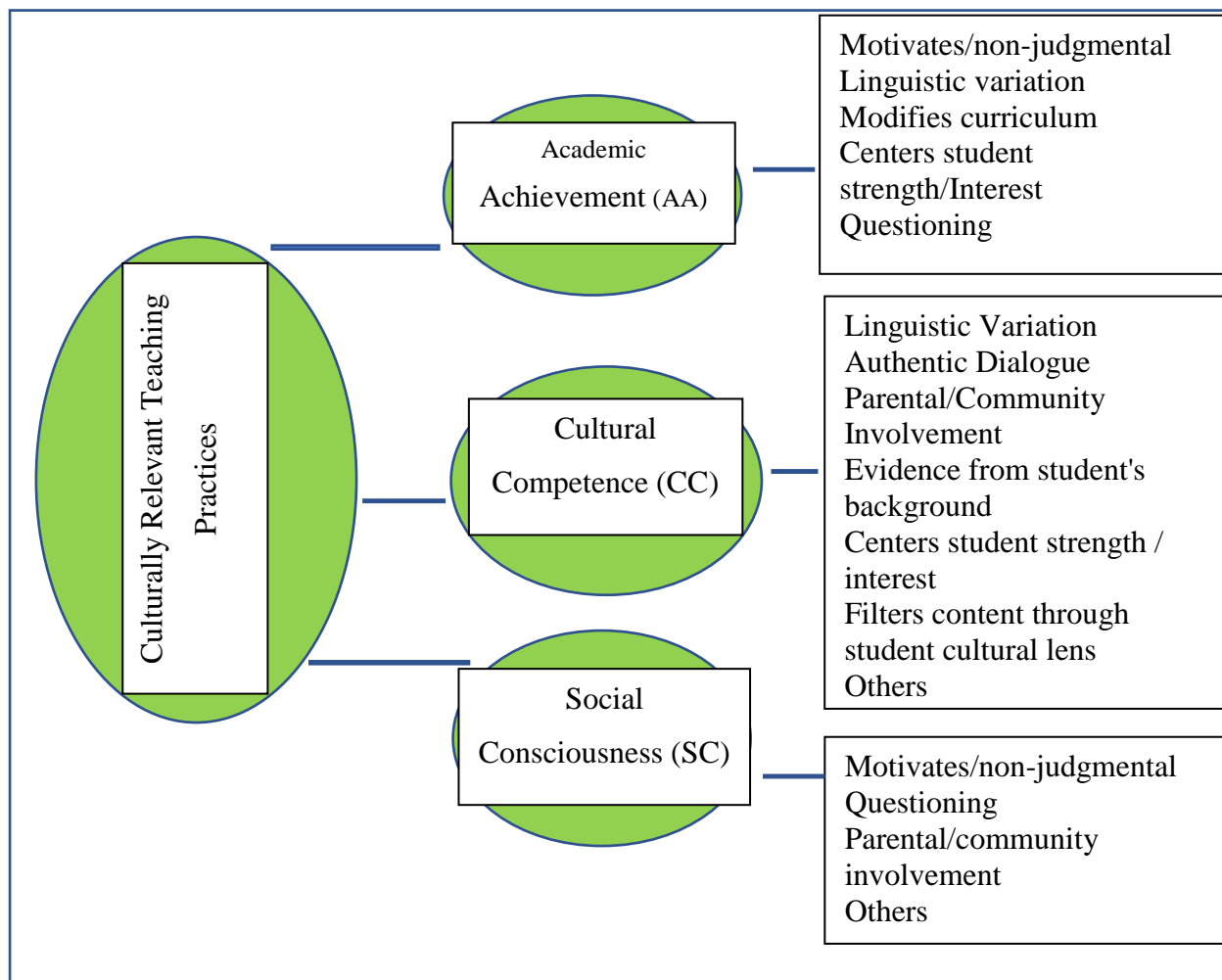
The culturally relevant teaching checklist tool was designed to provide a way to operationalize observable behaviors related to culturally relevant teaching by allowing each participant to describe actionable behaviors happening in their classrooms. The tool was also essential to track the number of occurrences of each behavior, according to the participant, and for me to hear their reasoning. The participant and I kept track of the number of occurrences. We reconciled our tallies and addressed any discrepancies as a measure of establishing trustworthiness and addressing issues of credibility (Miles et al., 2014).

Field notes. In addition to the audio recordings, I maintained field notes as I interacted with participants. In my field notes, I included my hunches, non-verbal communications, insights, reflections, and thoughts that might have added context to my work. The notetaking was done during each meeting with the participant and reflections were completed often within 10 minutes following my meeting with each participant.

Figure 2

Alignment of Observable Culturally Relevant Teaching Behaviors With Ladson-Billings' (1994)

Three Culturally Relevant Pedagogical Tenets



Procedures

For each participant, I conducted an initial interview conversation aimed at establishing our shared identity as urban special education teachers. Following this initial interview, each participant and I reviewed the directions and guidelines for the VDR sessions and agreed to a date within the following two weeks to meet for our first VDR session. The timeline from the initial interview conversation to the last VDR was an average of 8 weeks for the five

participants. All initial interviews were conducted in Week 1. During Weeks 2-3, VDR 1 was complete; VDR 2 occurred during Weeks 5-7, and VDR 3 was completed between Weeks 8-10.

Initial Interview Conversation

Each participant sat through an initial interview conversation with me. The open-ended, semi-structured initial interview protocol was used to guide the questions and responses during each conversation held via UIC zoom. The average time for the initial interviews was 56 minutes, with a range of 52 to 64 minutes. Each initial interview conversation was audio-recorded. I made notations in my field notes about any hunches or thoughts I had during our conversation immediately after the interview to help shape my understanding of each participant's perspective.

I began each meeting by providing clear explanations of participants' responsibilities during the phases of the study. This was followed by developing an understanding of participants' background experiences, perceptions, and practices using the protocol questions. At the conclusion of each initial interview conversation meeting, we set the appointment for the first VDR session, which was scheduled within 2 weeks.

Before the three VDR sessions, I followed up with each participant via email. I sent them the UIC IRB-approved Parent Information Sheet (see Appendix F) and Student Information Sheet (see Appendix G). I also sent them the VRP and the culturally relevant teaching checklist. Finally, I confirmed our next appointment. Following the transcription of the initial interview conversation, each participant received a copy via email for member checking.

Video Review Discussion Sessions

Following the initial meeting, I conducted three separate video review discussions sessions (VDRs). Each VDR session was conducted via UIC Zoom and audio recorded. Each

participant audio recorded their classroom and then selected a 10- to 15-minute excerpt that they brought to the session. I began each VDR session by asking the participant to confirm that parental permission was obtained for the students included in the audio recordings, and their students were made aware of the audio recordings before each recording. Once the participant confirmation was received, we began our VDR session. I posed three queries to each participant:

1. Discuss why you selected the audio excerpt to share.
2. What learning outcome(s) did you expect from students from the lesson?
3. Describe the artifact you brought and how it connected to the lesson.

Culturally relevant teaching checklist. After each VDR session, we progressed to the checklist discussion. Each participant defined each of the 10 behaviors listed on the culturally relevant teaching checklist in terms of what it looked like in their practice or what they recognized as evidence for each behavior. By so doing, the participants shared what they believed each behavior looked like as they interacted with their students in their classrooms.

Once participants had described all 10 behaviors in terms of what they looked like in their practice, the participant shared their audio recording. We both listened attentively to the recording. As we did, we each recorded tally marks for the behaviors we heard in the excerpt that corresponded to what the participant had defined. Once the audio recording stopped, we each tallied our scores in each behavior category and shared our scores. Where we disagreed, we discussed the example we heard and decided to agree or disagree on whether it was evidence of an occurrence of the CRT behavior as defined by the participant. This process was done until all 10 behaviors on the checklist had been tallied, discussed, and either agreed or disagreed upon. During our discussions, participants were provided the opportunity to play the audio recordings back to verify, explain, or clarify evidence and their reasoning about it. This step was pivotal in

continuous data collection and analysis to expand my understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014, Yin, 2014). At each VDR session, participants defined each of the behaviors according to the current lesson and excerpt they shared. For VDR 2 and 3, I read the definition offered during the previous VDR session. Participants could agree or revise the definition. These processes helped me see how participants defined behaviors identified in the literature about culturally relevant teaching within their own words and practices.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2014) described data analysis as a continuous process of reflecting on data collected and analyzing it simultaneously. Yin (2014) indicated that by combining the processes, we effectively increase understanding of the specific phenomenon in case studies. To increase my understanding, I used Glaser and Strauss' (1967) method of constant comparative analysis. The constant comparative method is a coding process used to classify and compare qualitative data for analysis. Maxwell (2013) described coding as a process used to rearrange data into categories and allow for comparison. Glesne (2011) stated that making sense of data requires organizing sources to categorize, synthesize, interpret, and discover patterns. Similarly, Yin (2014) explained that in case-study research, continuous data collection and analysis help the researcher to expand understanding of a particular phenomenon.

To ensure the data were efficiently managed, I organized the data sources according to each participant. I had the following data sources for each participant: initial interview conversation, VDR 1, VDR 2, VDR 3, one artifact per lesson excerpt, and my field notes. My initial task was to transcribe the initial interview conversation and three VDR session interviews for each participant. Transcribing allowed me to listen and review continuously each participant's words and ideas, thereby helping to expand my understanding of the phenomenon.

During this process, I removed conversational fillers and repetitions as I constructed meaning while maintaining the integrity of the participants' realities and voices (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Audio recordings were transcribed within a week of each interview. To check for errors following my transcriptions, I relistened to 40% of the audio recordings that aligned closely with two transcripts to ensure that I reached 95% accuracy in my transcription. In addition, to determine the reliability of the data, I sent each participant a copy of the transcripts to do a member check. Participants were informed they could add, edit, or clarify transcripts. All participants returned the transcripts without any significant changes.

Within-Case Analysis

Once I completed organizing the data, I randomly selected one participant and analyzed their data in several rigorous steps. I read and re-read the transcripts. I disaggregated their responses on a spreadsheet organized by questions from the initial interview conversation. Once data were arrayed, I made analytical memos about my thoughts while highlighting quotes that stood out as I moved along with data analysis. These notes were helpful as I coded, revised, and reduced data into small yet meaningful chunks from single words, short phrases, or a sequence of words. The analytical memos helped me reflect in many ways on what I was seeing in the interviews (van Manen, 1990). I shared the memos with my doctoral advisor who asked me about my hunches and choices of evidence to support them. We discussed how to determine interpretations, make assertions, and avoid biases as I made meaning of the data. I continued to go back and forth comparing and contrasting data to make meaning. This process of initial coding aligned with Rossman and Rallis (2017) who described coding as the process of organizing and segmenting data to make meaning. In addition, coding involves breaking the data

into smaller units or labels to make sense of and give meaning to chunks of information (Miles et al., 2014).

Next, I moved to axial coding as I connected the phrases and words, labeling them with language I developed or phrases from the data itself. With axial coding, I was able to make connections and link codes together into categories. As I segmented the data into meaningful categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), I looked to identify commonalities and similarities. As I compared the codes and categories using the process of selective coding, I reduced the data by selecting one central category connecting similar categories from my analysis. Selective coding allowed me to develop themes from the categories. Once this was completed, and to address the issue of researcher bias in the analysis, I worked with a second coder to establish interrater reliability for the initial codes that were developed. The second coder coded 60% of the transcripts resulting in a 92% interrater reliability rate. The second coder and I discussed and reconciled any differences and reached agreements about the codes.

I repeated a similar process for each of the three VDR sessions. I arrayed data from each VDR into a spreadsheet. I organized the questions into segments that connected ideas. In Segment 1, I included questions about why the participant selected the lesson excerpt, and what was the expected student learning outcome(s) for the lesson. In Segment 2, I asked about the artifact, and how it connected to the lesson.

To determine consistency with the codes for the VDR interview data, I worked with a second coder for the first two participants. We independently conducted open coding and met to discuss similarities and differences in our codes. Once we agreed on the codes and reconciled differences, we moved on to axial coding by linking the initial codes together in meaningful categories. We continued to interpret the data by linking categories in a process known as

selective coding. As part of this process, I continued with the analytical memo process as I noted hunches and evidence to support them (Saldana, 2015). I made statements about each set of categories and supported each assertion with evidence from the participant's practice as presented through the audio excerpts or our discussions.

By doing an analysis of the VDR codes with codes from the initial interview conversation data, I conducted a data-based thematic analysis—an analysis based on what emerged from the participants only. I followed a similar process of putting together the open codes across the two kinds of data sets, which yielded axial codes and then selective coding. I reviewed the research questions, too.

Three robust and linked themes emerged: identity and awareness, perception of self as a culturally relevant teacher, and influences on culturally relevant teaching practices. I compiled robust assertions around each theme while completing memos to describe each theme. From the coding, memo taking, and working closely with my doctoral advisor, I developed a codebook (see Appendix M) used to examine the VDR thematic analyses.

Using the codebook, I worked with a fellow doctoral student familiar with qualitative data analysis methods as my second coder for the three remaining participants. At our initial meeting, we met to review the codebook including the research questions and codes. We discussed the coding process and together we reviewed one transcript. We coded the transcript together using the codebook. We discussed similarities and differences in our coding and reconciled differences. Following our initial meeting, clarifications to the codebook were made based on suggestions by the second coder. Independently, we coded two of the same transcripts. I used the Miles and Huberman (1994) formula to calculate intercoder reliability (i.e., to divide the number of agreements by the total number of agreements plus disagreements and multiply

this number by 100). We met to compare our coding and reached a 92% interrater agreement. This percentage is above the recommended percentage used by researchers to ensure intercoder reliability (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Analysis of the culturally relevant teaching checklist enabled me to compare participants' descriptions of their practices with the three key tenets in Ladson-Billings' (1994) CRP theory to develop theory-based analysis. To analyze the checklist data, I created two tables for each participant. In one table, I arrayed participants' descriptions of behaviors in their classrooms that align with each of the 10 checklist behaviors. In another table, I showed the frequency of behaviors the participant and I ticked off as we listened to the lesson excerpt. I calculated the number of behavior occurrences using the participants' definitions across the three VDR sessions. I recorded the average of behavior occurrences each session, and how many we associated with each of the three theoretical tenets of academic achievement, cultural competence, and social consciousness.

To analyze the artifacts and participants' discussions, I arrayed the name of the artifact according to what the participant called it and put in the table a description based on what they said about it and what I saw. I looked at each participant's collection of artifacts to identify any similarities or striking differences between them. I then compared it with the culturally relevant teaching checklist analyses to see how or if what I found linked with aspects of the behaviors and practices described that linked to Ladson-Billing's (1994) theoretical ideas.

Cross-case analysis. To compare the findings across the five participants, I arrayed data on a spreadsheet with each participant's name in columns. In the rows, I showed participants' descriptions of the culturally relevant teaching checklist behaviors to determine patterns and respond to Research Question 1: What do White urban special education high school teachers

with over five years' experience perceive as teaching in culturally relevant ways? I compared the descriptions of the behaviors in their classrooms and percentage of occurrences with regards to the three tenets for each participant. I then used the analysis to guide my responses to Research Questions 2: How do White urban special education high school teachers with over five years' experience foster a learning environment for students from culturally diverse backgrounds? By comparing their perceptions and their behaviors, I responded to Research Question 3: Is there a relationship between teachers' perceptions of culturally relevant teaching and the realities of its implementation?

Trustworthiness and Credibility

The ongoing process of comparing and contrasting across multiple data sources, known as triangulation, helped me ensure trustworthiness and credibility. The issue of credibility is essential in qualitative research because some scholars argue about what is *true* given that all concepts are socially constructed (Glesne, 2011). Evidence from multiple data can help strengthen the credibility of an assertion, and shape how assertions can become themes, and together, become claims that are credible. The concept of trustworthiness in qualitative research comes about when researchers describe their claims and support them with clear evidence. (Creswell, 2014; Glesne, 2011).

Summary

In this chapter, information was provided about how the study methodology was designed to help answer the three research questions. Presented in this chapter were research strategies, data sources, data collection methods, and data analysis. I included information about the setting for the research, participant profiles, and case study design were shared. The interview protocol, three VDR sessions, and procedures with each participant were outlined.

Two data analyses were conducted that included examinations within and across each case. Emergent themes were examined using open, axial, and selective coding, which helped to articulate a framework that linked teaching to students' cultures. The frequency of the behaviors that participants identified in their practices and those scholars suggested might be linked to Ladson-Billings' three tenets were also analyzed. External raters were used and detailed the systems of trustworthiness guiding the data analysis process. This was done to provide the reader with enough evidence to consider the results derived from the study.

Chapter IV: Results

This descriptive study focused on three research questions:

1. What do White urban special education teachers with over five years experience perceive as teaching in culturally relevant ways?
2. How do White urban special education teachers with over five years experience foster a learning environment for students from culturally diverse backgrounds?
3. What relationship, if any, exists between teachers' perceptions of culturally relevant teaching and the realities of its implementation?

In this chapter, I present an etic perspective of the study conducted by me, a Black urban special educator, that involved five White urban special educators as the participants. I developed five cases and a cross-case analysis. Each case has three parts:

- Part 1 is the participant's profile that was drawn from the initial interview conversation and focuses on their childhood reflections and education.
- Part 2 is the thematic analysis that uses the themes that emerged across all the participants' cases: (a) identity and awareness, (b) perception of self as a culturally relevant teacher, and (c) influences on culturally relevant teaching practices. The three themes emerged from my analysis of participants' initial interview conversations, their three VDR sessions, the checklist, and discussions about the artifacts they shared with me.
- Part 3 is where the participants' descriptions and evidence of their teaching practices with the three tenets of Ladson-Billing's (1994) theory of CRP are compared.

Case 1: Karen***Part 1: Profile***

Karen identifies as female. She is 48 years of age. Reflecting on her childhood, Karen recalled growing up in a predominantly White community on the southside of a large metropolitan city. She attended a public high school. She recalled being in school with primarily White students, some Black students, and hardly any Latinx students. Although Karen grew up in a large, diverse metropolitan city, she recounted, “I didn’t have much interaction with other cultures like Black and Hispanic students in high school.” After graduating high school, Karen went to a four-year college in the same metropolitan city where she grew up. While in college, Karen experienced more interactions with students from other cultures. She graduated with a bachelor’s degree in special education. While teaching, she earned her master’s degree in curriculum and instruction. At the time of this study, she was enrolled in another program to earn a second master’s in educational leadership.

Karen has been teaching culturally diverse students for over 25 years. Currently, she teaches in a charter high school with mostly Black students; however, Karen’s professional career includes various experiences within the urban school district. She began her teaching career in an urban elementary school. Shortly afterward, she transferred to a citywide position. “I was a teacher for 23 years in a large urban school district, and my background includes teaching students of Arabic descent, Hispanics, and students from different countries in Africa.” Later in our interview conversation, she noted, “I had the experience of teaching and coaching all over the city” and said she was exposed to “different cultures within the same school system.” She described the exposure to different cultures as giving her a “global sense.” Reflecting on her

experiences, Karen added, “Not only have I worked with students from multiple diverse backgrounds but also the staff.”

When asked why she chose to teach in an urban setting, Karen said,

I am from the city (and) maybe that’s why I stayed. And secondly, I truly have never had any desire to live in the suburbs. I have lived in two major cities including New York.

I loved it (New York). I learned all about different cultures. Experiencing life in New York was really cool and you bring that into your profession.

When probed about what specifically she brought to the profession she added, “You bring what you know about connecting with different cultures.” She described her experiences with cultural diversity by stating, “In the past, I used to think of different cultures in terms of just Black and Hispanic. But even just learning of the Arabic culture, and cultures from different African countries, was a cool experience.”

In addition, Karen reported that she has family members who are from culturally different backgrounds than her own. Karen shared that her sister is married to an Arab. Besides having a sister married to a man from a different cultural background, Karen shared that her husband is Jewish. “Before I dated him, I knew nothing about the Jewish culture: their different heritage and religion.” She considered having such close relatives like her husband and brother-in-law as “big things in my past experiences, (like) marrying someone of a different ethnicity” helps with the teaching and connecting to her students from culturally diverse backgrounds. Perhaps, sharing about her family members alludes to Karen’s understanding of diversity from an ethnic perspective.

Besides her personal and professional interactions with diversity, Karen shared she had no formal preparation or coursework in college to practice culturally relevant teaching. She

thought she took a course in multicultural education in her first master's program. Reflecting further on formal preparations to teach the culturally diverse student in her current master's program in leadership, Karen stated,

In my leadership program, I have taken coursework on cultural awareness. I don't recall what it is called, but it had to do with culturally based teaching. Going back to school 10 years after my last master's . . . I feel like a lot of cultural relevance stuff is embedded into courses instead of being a stand-alone course.

Part 2: Thematic Analyses

Identity and self-awareness. Karen identified as a White teacher and stated, "One of the main things is to be aware that I am White." During the initial interview conversation, Karen described growing up in a predominantly White neighborhood in a metropolitan area. She experienced minimal interactions with the few Black students who attended the same public high school. Across her four interviews, however, Karen made no other reference to her White identity. She did, however, share that her teaching and coaching career in a large urban school district exposed her to diverse ethnic and cultural experiences. As stated earlier, she referenced experiences with diverse non-White people in her family, with students, and with staff.

Karen's cultural self-awareness seems to show in ways she sees and understands her students and their cultures. For example, while administering a formal assessment to one of her students from Ghana, she realized a bias in the test. She explained, "I know the student. He is very high functioning, very intelligent, but he could not identify the American food items that were in the test." In other examples, she intentionally selected materials representative of the culture of the students whom she was teaching. In addition to her awareness of assessment biases, she explained, "I really try to find materials that are more culturally relevant to my

students.” Her effort to learn about her students’ cultures seems to help with the choices she makes in her practice.

Karen’s self-awareness contributed to her need to link the curriculum to her students’ experiences. Karen recognized that being aware of her students’ cultural experiences could make her lessons have more meaning to them. In her initial interview conversation, she shared how she tries to create meaning. “So, if I have some students of Hispanic heritage, I will incorporate materials from the Hispanic culture. I also do the same for my African American students.”

Perception of self as a culturally relevant teacher. Karen believed she must choose instructional materials reflecting her students’ diversity. When I asked her to say more about that, she stated, “I try to locate materials and videos that are more culturally relevant to my students.” When asked what she meant, she clarified with the following:

You know, videos that would really represent their cultures and experiences . . . sort of like what we do with age appropriateness. I am not going to use videos of those little preschoolers in my high school class, right? Right. Same thing.

Karen described herself as “a model of acceptance.” She added, “I celebrate differences rather than singling someone out for being different. I truly foster and celebrate differences.” As an example, she said she facilitates discussions with her students about different cultures so they can learn.

Karen described herself as accepting diversity. She believes that her experiences with different cultures in two major urban cities prepared her to become accepting of different cultures. She described herself as a teacher who “does not single someone out for being different.” In her practice, she works to “expose my students to other cultures (more) than (only) their own.” Karen added that she believed her role was to accept and celebrate diversity. She

shared how she learned so much working with students from various backgrounds that she appreciates and celebrates the diversity in her classroom. In an example shared in her initial interview conversation, Karen shared how she is frustrated when “a student is trying to express their idea or participate in a class discussion and they’re using slang and the teacher is constantly correcting what they were saying.” She pointed out that if the goal is for the student to communicate, having the teacher constantly correct them can be frustrating for the student as well. She reasoned, “with every culture there is slang . . . there is no static language. Many people need to realize that.”

Influences on culturally relevant teaching practice. Karen’s knowledge of her students influenced her practice, and she provided several examples. In her initial interview conversation, she said, “I select articles for my students based on my knowledge of who they are.” For example, she shared how she pre-reads Newsela articles to determine if they will be of interest to her students. *Newsela* is a standards-based instructional tool for teachers to find appropriate materials at different reading levels for their students. She explained,

When I read the article about earthquakes, I skipped over that one. I didn’t think the topic was relevant. I didn’t think my students wanted to know about earthquakes. So, I selected the article about resilience in the Black community.

In her VDR 2 lesson, Karen shared how she selected a topic based on her knowledge of her students. Students debated the effects of social media. She explained the topic was relevant because she knew her students well enough to understand the role of social media in their lives. Similarly, in VDR 3, she chose to show the movie *Annie* (2014) because of the cultural diversity of its cast members. In describing the outcome, she stated that she wanted students to watch the movie, and to review the similarities and differences in the lifestyles of the rich and the poor.

Karen believed she was able to determine which version of the movie Annie (there have been several versions made through the last three decades) to use in her class because of how well she knew her students.

Karen's perception of herself as a lifelong learner also seems to influence her practice. Karen's expressed interest in learning about other cultures impacted her decisions on what to teach her students. For example, in her decision not to select an article about the earthquake, Karen reasoned, "It didn't have anything to do with another culture--with my students' culture."

Having self-awareness of the racial and cultural differences in the classroom has also affected Karen's practice. She explained how she intentionally selects topics and materials connecting student learning beyond her classroom. In VDR 1 and the first lesson shared, Karen selected a Newsela article on the Black community. The content of the article was about how small businesses were rebuilding following the impact of the pandemic and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement protests in communities. When asked why she selected the article, Karen explained she wanted to discuss an article that connected to her students' lived experiences. She pointed out that she selected the article because it related to her students' communities—how each was experiencing the loss of too many small businesses because of the Covid 19 lockdown and BLM protests.

Part 3: Comparison of Practices With Culturally Relevant Teaching

Table 6 shows Karen's descriptions of how she defined the culturally relevant teaching checklist behaviors in her classroom. For all 10 behaviors, she maintained the original descriptions she gave in VDR 1. In her description of how she defined the behaviors, I found one commonality--uses examples from the community in her lessons--across Behaviors 4, 6, 7, and 9. Another commonality seen in two of the defined Behaviors (2, 7) was using peer support.

Between the two, I noted a focus on “connection” (e.g., with the community and with peers). One behavior that was distinct in Karen’s descriptions was the use of humor that she listed as “other” behaviors.

Table 6

Culturally Relevant Teaching Behavior Checklist and Karen's Representation of the Behaviors

Checklist behavior	Karen's representation
1: Motivates/non-judgmental	Praises, encourages students to speak and participate, peer support
2: Linguistic variation	Allows Ebonics, Spanglish with translations
3: Authentic dialogue	Teacher-student discussions
4: Parental/community involvement	Uses examples from the communities
5: Modifies curriculum	Pre-teaching, use visuals, activate student’s prior knowledge, vocabulary development, use pictures instead of sentence writing
6: Evidence from student's background	Uses examples from the community
7: Centers student strength/interest	Peer support, use examples from the community
8: Questioning	Use tons of open-ended questions
9: Filters content through the cultural lens of students	Use examples from the community
10: Others	humor

Table 7 shows the frequency of behaviors in Karen’s English teaching excerpts organized according to Ladson-Billings’ (1994) three theoretical tenets, cultural competence, academic achievement, and social consciousness on the checklist behaviors. While listening to the VDR excerpts, tally marks were made by the participant and me (independently) when the accepted

behavior was recognized. I calculated the percentage and the mean for each tenet and calculated the range across the three sessions. Across Karen's three VDR excerpts, we agreed on 66 occurrences of behaviors, according to Karen's descriptions. During each VDR session, we marked an average of 22 behaviors (range 20-26). Most tallies, 26 of 66 (39.4%), were marked for cultural competence behaviors where $M = 8$ for the three sessions. The next tenet, academic achievement, had 24 of 66 tallies (36.4%) and with $M = 8$. For the last tenet, social consciousness, we agreed on 16 of 66 tallies (24.2%) with $M = 5$.

Table 7

Frequency of Behaviors in Karen's English Classroom Organized by Ladson-Billings' Three Tenets

Lesson	Karen's tally			Researcher's tally			Combined tally			Total
	AA	CC	SC	AA	CC	SC	AA	CC	SC	
VDR 1:										
Article review	4	4	2	4	4	2	8	8	4	20
VDR 2:										
Speaking Rubric	3	4	3	3	4	3	6	8	6	20
VDR 3:										
Annie	5	5	3	5	5	3	10	10	6	26

Note. AA = academic achievement; CC = cultural competence; SC = social consciousness.

Artifact analysis. In Table 8, I show the artifacts Karen shared in each VDR. In her first VDR lesson, Karen brought a sample of the Newsela article she reviewed with her students. The article was titled "Pandemic and Strife Prompt 'Resiliency' Funds in Black Communities." The article described how the Black community works to promote the interests of the business

community following the BLM protests. Karen expected the students to read, listen to the article, and annotate by highlighting words they did not know. Later, students were to complete a writing activity where they were to select a person, event, or idea from the text. Then, they were to explain what the text reveals about their chosen person, event, or idea. Lastly, they were to connect their topic to their own lived experiences. Karen pointed out that she selected the article because it related to her students' communities with the loss of many small businesses because of the pandemic and BLM protests.

In the VDR 2 lesson, students had a class debate on the effects of social media. The debate topic was "Does social media make people more social?" Karen expected the students to respond to the question and support their position with real-life evidence from their experiences. Then, they were to present their position to the class. For the lesson, Karen's artifact was a speaking rubric. She explained that the rubric was a tool she created to assess student participation in all class discussions and speaking opportunities. Karen evaluated students' speaking skills using three levels: (a) exceeds, (b) meets, and (c) emerging. Karen stated that the rubric served as a useful tool to provide her students with immediate feedback on their speaking skills.

The VDR 3 artifact emerged from a review of the movie *Annie* (2014). Karen brought a Venn Diagram as the artifact from the lesson. She explained that the artifact helped students organize similarities and differences they noted from watching the movie. When asked about her expectations for the lesson, Karen stated that she wanted students to watch the movie and review the similarities and differences in the lifestyles of the rich and the poor. She provided the Venn diagram for students to document their perceptions.

Table 8

Video Discussion Review 1-3 for Karen With Artifacts, Descriptions, and Teacher Expectations

Lessons	Artifact title	Description	Teacher expectations
VDR 1: Newsela article review	Pandemic and Strife Prompt 'Resiliency' Funds in Black Communities	Article on how the Black community works to promote the interests of the business community following Black Lives Matter riots.	Students read, listen, annotate. Students complete a writing prompt about a person, event, or idea from the text. Explain what the text reveals about their chosen topic. Students connect their topic to prior experiences.
VDR 2: Debate on the effects of social media	Speaking rubric	Does social media make people more social? Yes or No	Students were to respond to the question, state and support their position with real-life evidence from their experiences, and present it to the class.
VDR 3: Movie review	Annie (2014) with a diverse cast.	Venn diagram showing differences in the lifestyles of the rich and poor from the movie.	Students watch Annie (2014) and they complete a Venn Diagram activity to show similarities and differences between the lifestyles of the rich and poor.

Note. VDR = video discussion review.

The major connection across the artifacts she shared showed her focus on the topics that are relatable to her students and their lived experiences. In two of the three artifacts, Karen selected an article and a video that she said represented issues that impacted her students and

their community. The opportunities she created allowed her students to discuss their home and community experiences. In the first artifact, she provided an article about how Black communities are re-building. In another lesson, Karen chose to have her students debate about social media, a topic she believed her students found interesting and relatable. In her third artifact, Karen showed a movie with a diverse cast of actors. Additionally, the theme is related to the issue of social disparity that exists worldwide.

In her description of what culturally relevant teaching means to her, Karen expressed that it meant selecting materials and videos that are representative of the diversity of her students. The artifacts from her teaching show how she enacted her belief in her lessons. In addition, this evidence aligns with Karen's scores on the checklist. The highest tallies were in cultural competence under the Ladson-Billings' (1994) tenets.

Case 2: Peggy

Part 1: Profile

Peggy is 28 years old who identifies as female. Reflecting on her childhood, Peggy recalled growing up in what she described as a "super Italian" community. She attended a high school with primarily White students. In terms of diversity in her high school, Peggy recollected some Mexican classmates and two or three Black classmates. When asked if her high school was in the suburb, Peggy explained that she grew up in a small town with its main high school adjacent to a large metropolitan city. She added that growing up close to a large metropolitan city made her aware of different cultures outside of her immediate community. She added that she had minimal interactions with students from culturally diverse backgrounds in high school.

After graduating high school, Peggy attended the town's community college before transferring to a four-year college in the large metropolitan city adjacent to her small town.

Peggy earned her bachelor's degree in English. Shortly after matriculation, she obtained a teaching position at an urban charter school working with students with learning disabilities. While working, Peggy earned her master's degree in special education. As part of her special education program, Peggy chose to do her clinical experience and student teaching in a nearby suburban area. After obtaining her master's degree, Peggy transferred to another classroom in her school and became the instructional teacher of students with autism spectrum disorder. Peggy described her current classroom as her "dream job" because she loves working with students with autism. She presses daily to ensure that her students are "proud of who they are."

Peggy shared her initial uneasiness about teaching urban high school students. She has been teaching predominantly Latinx and Black students for 5 to 10 years in a charter high school. She had concerns about her lack of urban teaching experience as she began working with high school students. "I did not really have any experience working with high schoolers that are from the urban area." Feeling unprepared, she said, "I did not get the things that would help me as I walked into the urban classroom." In addition to feeling underprepared, Peggy thought her family was not supportive of her decision to work in an urban setting initially. "Even my parents and family members are like, aren't you scared?" she shared.

When probed why she decided to go into the urban classroom feeling underprepared and unsupported, Peggy reflected she has personal attributes she believed helps her as an urban special education teacher. For example, she said she is "a very patient person" with compassion for students with special needs. She believed that her patience and compassion stem from growing up in a large Italian family. Her family includes her 30-year-old, wheelchair-bound, uncle with spina bifida who is living with her 81-year-old grandparents.

Part 2: Thematic Analyses

Identity and self-awareness. Peggy described herself as “a White teacher” of culturally diverse students. Reflecting on being a White teacher, she said, “I used to think, I don't have any biases. But I do have biases, and that's something that I need to identify and then try to be cognizant of it.” Although I did not ask her to define what she meant by her biases, during the initial interview conversation, I found evidence of what she might have meant. For example, by describing herself as “a White teacher . . . teaching them” Peggy inadvertently “others” her students. On further reflection on the differences between her “self” and “them,” Peggy shared that, “It can be awkward as a White teacher teaching my students.” When prompted to say more, she explained, “I don't know Spanish . . . how am I supposed to teach them?” She shared, “I feel some of the parents get disappointed that I don't speak Spanish. Sometimes I think they think that I can't help their kid the same way as the Spanish-speaking teacher.”

Peggy described being keenly aware of differences between herself and her students. For example, she was concerned that her inability to communicate in Spanish might affect how well she connected with her students. She explained that by not knowing Spanish, “I'm scared what to say. I don't know what is appropriate to say.” Peggy clarified she is scared about what is appropriate to say to her students because “I don't know what they're talking about in their homes.” When probed to explain what she meant by being scared, she explained, “I don't want to say something against what their parents are saying in their homes.” Peggy seemed to believe her students' home conversations could be maintained in her classroom if only she knew the conversation topics. When asked why she wanted to maintain students' home conversations, Peggy said, “I just don't want to use my ideas like that is reality . . . I don't know what conversations are happening at home to be talking about in the classroom.”

Peggy's determination to connect with her students by including in her teaching and classroom environment at least some references to what students discussed at home. Moreover, she showed self-awareness that her reality might be different from her students' lives. She acknowledged knowing what happened at their homes and in-home-based conversations could help her link students' home and school lives. Peggy believed that her limited Spanish-speaking skills posed a major challenge in her ability to make connections and said,

I noticed I wasn't having a relationship as close with my Spanish-speaking parents as I had with my Black parents because I wasn't able to communicate with them in Spanish. I worked to involve my Spanish-speaking parents just as much as I try to do with my Black parents. Just because we don't speak the same language doesn't mean that I should exclude anybody.

In addition to acknowledging the language differences, she had with her students and their families, Peggy also shared another kind of awareness of differences between her reality and her students' realities. She talked about how her experience with the police might be different from her students' experiences. She explained that while teaching her class about policemen being safe community members, one of her students shared that he was scared of the police. She said,

I need to really figure out how to explain to my students that if they're in trouble, I want them to go ask for help and find someone that can help them . . . we really work with people in uniform, but I guess their (students and their families) experience is different, and what they know is different.

In another example of her self-awareness about difference, Peggy shared what she called a school-wide bias, saying, “I feel like in my school we really cater to the Mexican and Hispanic students . . . we really do. Everything is translated into Spanish.”

She was critical of the larger ways she believed the school norms and climate catered to one particular group of students. She believed that within the school there was “tension between the Black and Mexican students,” especially “given the times we are living in.” She added that “Black students seem like they're even more of a minority in the school.” As a result, Peggy shared how she worked to mitigate the tension in her classroom stating, “Within my classroom, I just try to be aware of different cultures.” Peggy chose to focus on her students’ disabilities rather than their race. She explained, “In my teaching, I do not focus on (students) being Black or Hispanic. It's more of ‘I have a disability’ and knowing their rights as someone who has a disability.”

Perception of self as a culturally relevant teacher. Peggy believed that as part of culturally relevant teaching, she had to adjust her classroom expectations based on who her students were. She explained in her class “everyone needs to sit down and raise your hand.” However, she observed that for many of her students who recently came from Mexico “and didn’t go to a school like ours before,” following that expectation was a challenge. She shared how her students were frequently out of their seats, and that she had to modify expectations of how they asked for her help. She explained, “Classroom expectation is something that is important. It was up to me to understand my students’ needs.” She believed that many needs had to do with understanding and using the English language. Therefore, Peggy began using the peer-buddy system. She sat a bilingual student in close proximity to the Spanish-speaking students. When one of them needed her help, the bilingual student raised a hand.

As a teacher of students with autism spectrum disorder, Peggy perceived it was her responsibility to teach her students self-advocacy skills. In the initial interview conversation, she stated, “I think my role is to help my students become advocates for themselves.” When asked what she meant, she explained, “I want to help my students find their voices and not be taken advantage of.” Using the example of her lesson on the “Policeman: A Safe Community Member,” Peggy stated she selected the lesson because “if my students are in trouble, I want them to go ask for help and find someone that can help them, and a policeman is a safe person.” She shared,

When we’re talking about safe community members and when we get to the policeman, I say to them, make sure you tell them that you have a disability . . . I need to really figure out and explain to my students if they're in trouble, I want them to go ask for help and find someone that can help them.

Building on the importance of self-advocacy for her students who all have autism spectrum disorder, Peggy emphasized teaching her students to learn about places in their community. She shared her belief that her students needed to identify places that help them travel safely. In the VDR 2 discussion, I found evidence of how Peggy taught her students to self-travel. Peggy used a google map as a class activity. She introduced two places in the community using their Spanish names (i.e., a Panaderia and a Lavanderia). She asked students to write the names in English and Spanish. Next, she wanted her students to describe walking from the Lavanderia to the Panaderia. She asked her students to use landmarks, stating, “I want us to pay attention to the names of places we walk past as we go from one place to the next.” Peggy asked a student to share his description. In another part of the lesson, Peggy asked a student to read

about a young Mexican girl, Erika, who lived with her family in a predominantly Latinx community. Erika walks to school every day. Following the reading, Peggy stated,

I need you to open a google doc or use your journal. We will answer questions about Erika walking safely to school. Let's do the first question together. After that, you will complete the rest on your own, ok? Any questions?

When asked why she selected this lesson as an example of culturally relevant teaching, Peggy explained her outcome was for students to understand it is safe to self-travel to school just as Erika did. Peggy stated the following:

I want my students to really know their community. It will help them with being independent and getting to do things within the community. I want them to be comfortable living in their communities with autism. It might be helpful.

Peggy also believed it was her responsibility to connect home and school. She said, "I want to be able to connect to my students . . . and work on involving my Spanish-speaking parents." While she believed there is a need to connect with her students' home life, Peggy realized that she is still learning about her students' home life and communities. She explained, "If I know the conversation they are having at home, then I can continue the home conversations at school." Being able to communicate with her students' parents is important for Peggy because it is up to her to "educate the parents about autism." In her experience, she observed that "the students and parents feel disability is shameful or they don't want to admit (a child) has a disability." She noted that she has had to teach her students "it's okay to have autism" and to reassure some of their parents that having autism, "doesn't mean anything is wrong."

Influences on culturally relevant teaching practices. Peggy's culturally relevant teaching practice was influenced by her students and their diagnosis. For example, she intentionally

shaped her curriculum around her students' disabilities. Her lessons included topics that she believed were critical to helping her students with disabilities advocate for themselves. She wanted her students to understand that it is okay to have autism. She shared how she created lessons to educate them about their own disability.

Another influence for Peggy stemmed from a conflict of belief. She recognized a conflict with how she saw police and how her students saw police. Reflecting on her lesson on safe community members, Peggy identified the policemen are safe because "we (referring to herself) were raised to believe that the policeman is our friend." When one of her students raised his fear of the police, Peggy recalled thinking, "Do I tell them to like the police? That is something I really need to figure out . . . how to explain to my students that if they are in trouble, the police are their friend."

When probed further about what she decided and did in the lesson, Peggy stated that she told her students to "make sure you tell the police you have a disability." She acknowledged that in that lesson she realized, that in her experience, "we really work with the people in uniform and that is okay. But, I can see their experience is different and what they know is different." She also added, "I don't know what their parents have conversations about, and what they want their kids to know." Peggy's desire to improve her communication with her Latinx students and their parents resulted in her return to graduate school where she is working on a bilingual endorsement to better support her students.

Peggy included her students' community and community experiences in her practice in various ways. For example, in VDRs 1 and 2, her lesson excerpts reflected her students' communities. In her lesson on getting to know her students, she asked them to write about a community event they will always remember. She described involving the community in her

teaching because "we rely on the community a lot for real-life experiences." She added that she takes her class into the community. "We really go into the community and practice in a real-life setting." In addition, Peggy pointed out that "sometimes the parents are involved in those lessons."

Part 3: Comparison of Practices With Culturally Relevant Teaching

In Table 9, I show Peggy's descriptions of the culturally relevant teaching checklist behaviors in her classroom. In 9/10 behaviors, she maintained her original definitions given in VDR 1. In 1/10, she made an addition. To the "linguistic variation" category definition in the VDR 3, she added "use sign language". The lesson was about the use of nouns. She explained that she allows the use of sign language to support some of her students who are learning to use sign language as an alternate means of communication.

In our interactions about how she defines the behaviors checklist, I noted one commonality--use of Spanish words in her lessons--across Behaviors 2, 6, 7, and 9. Using evidence from the student's background and evidence that centers student strengths/interests, Peggy described how she used Spanish words (e.g., Panaderia, Lavanderia). Similarly, in both parent/community involvement and filters content through the cultural lens of students, she spoke about supplementing her teaching with examples and resources from students' communities, that is, "use community resources or use community examples". One distinction in Peggy's descriptions was the use of social and emotional learning (SEL) check-ins in other behaviors.

Table 9

Culturally Relevant Teaching Behavior Checklist and Peggy's Representation of the Behaviors

Checklist behavior	Peggy's representation
1: Motivates/non-judgmental	Clear directions, praises, student of the month
2: Linguistic variation	Use Spanish words, Spanish-English translations, use sign language
3: Authentic dialogue	Teacher-student conversation
4: Parental/community involvement	Use community resources, encourage parental involvement
5: Modifies curriculum	Break information down, use lots of visuals
6: Evidence from student's background	Use Spanish words, Use Spanish examples
7: Centers student strength/interest	Peer buddy, Use Spanish words, use Spanish examples
8: Questioning	Ask simple who, what, when, where, why questions
9: Filters content through the cultural lens of students	Use Spanish words, use community examples
10: Others	Additional time, SEL check-ins

Note. SEL = social and emotional learning.

Table 10 shows the frequency of behaviors in Peggy's English classroom organized according to Ladson-Billings' (1994) three theoretical tenets on the culturally relevant teaching behavior checklist. While listening to the VDR excerpts, tally marks were made by the participant and me (independently) when the accepted behavior was recognized. I calculated the percentage and the mean for each tenet and calculated the range across the three sessions. Across Peggy's three VDR excerpts, we agreed on 96 occurrences of behaviors according to Peggy's descriptions. During each VDR session, we marked an average of 32 behaviors (range 26–36).

We marked the most tallies 42 of 96 (43.8%) for academic achievement behaviors with $M = 14$ for the three sessions. The next tenet, cultural competence, had 30 of 96 tallies (31.3%) with $M = 10$. For the last tenet, social consciousness, we agreed on 24 of 96 (25%) with $M = 8$.

Table 10

Frequency of Behaviors in Peggy's English Classroom Organized by Ladson-Billings' Three Tenets

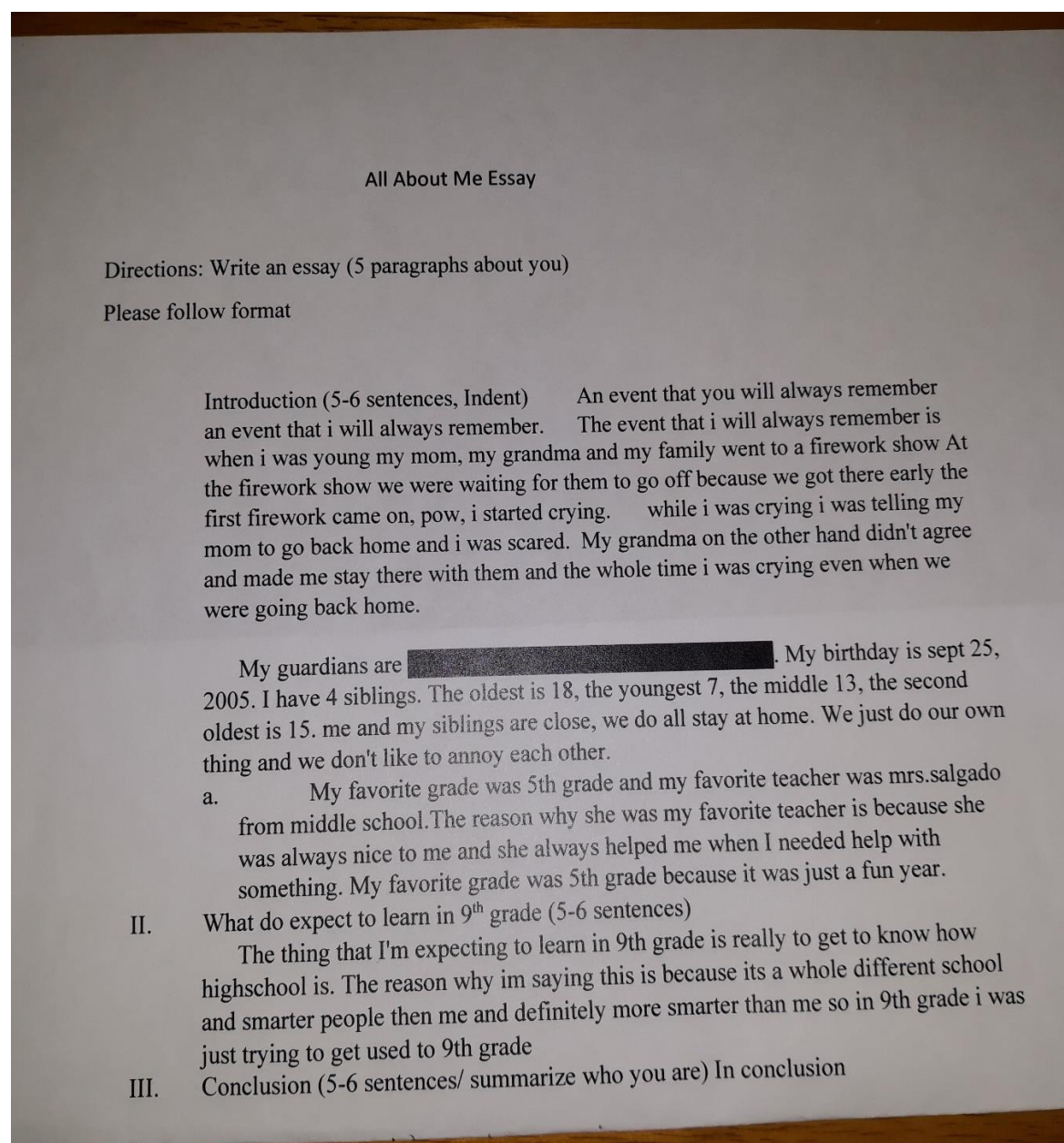
Lesson	Peggy's tally			Researcher's tally			Combined tally			Total
	AA	CC	SC	AA	CC	SC	AA	CC	SC	
VDR 1:										
Getting to know you	7	6	4	7	6	4	14	12	10	36
VDR 2:										
My community	6	6	5	6	6	5	12	12	10	34
VDR 3:										
Nouns	8	3	2	8	3	2	16	6	4	26

Note. VDR = video discussion review; AA = academic achievement; CC = cultural competence; SC = social consciousness.

Artifact analysis. Table 11 shows the artifacts Peggy shared for each VDR. As discussed earlier in this case, with her first lesson, "Getting to Know You," Peggy brought a de-identified sample of student work titled "All About Me." In this essay, the student described who they are and wrote about attending a firework event with their family. When asked about her outcome for the lesson, Peggy stated that students were expected to write a five-paragraph essay about themselves. The essay format was to have an introduction, a description of an event they will always remember, their expectations for the class, and a conclusion. Figure 3 shows the artifact.

Figure 3

Sample of Student Essay: All About Me



The student chose to begin their essay with an event they will always remember, then write about themselves, and what they expect from the class. The student did not provide any conclusion. Peggy did not indicate whether the conclusion was missing because of the student running out of time or because they needed support with writing conclusions. Reflecting on the

assignment, Peggy shared that she gets to know her students better from their writing and removed the stigma of a right or wrong answer for this assignment.

In our second VDR discussion, the lesson was on “My Community.” Peggy brought a PowerPoint titled “Erika’s Community.” Peggy described the artifact as a teacher-made narrative about a Mexican girl living with her family in a predominantly Latinx community. When asked about the student learning outcome for the lesson, Peggy explained the students were to read, listen, and then answer comprehension questions about Erika and her community. In addition to reading and writing, Peggy stressed that she expected her students to be comfortable in their communities as they self-travel like Erika: a task she thought to be pivotal because of their autism. Peggy thought the activity showed how she helped students develop reading, writing, and independent skills in a real-life situation.

Peggy brought a document titled “Nouns” to our third VDR session. She explained that the artifact would help students to clarify the use of common and proper nouns and to understand the differences between both types of nouns. When asked about her expectations for the lesson and the task shown in the artifact, Peggy stated that she wants her students to complete both Part 1 and Part 2. In Part 1, students were expected to identify all the proper nouns in the sentence by highlighting them and to identify all the common nouns in the sentence by underlining them. In Part 2, students were expected to make corrections to the sentences by capitalizing proper nouns and using lowercase for common nouns. Peggy explained, “In my experience, I find my students need help with writing techniques. So, I include mini-grammar lessons in my teaching each week to help with that.”

In all three artifacts, Peggy created opportunities for students to express themselves through their writing. The opportunities also allowed her students to describe who they are and

the communities where they belonged. In the first artifact, she provided the opportunity for her students to describe themselves and their families. She explained she selected the task to get her students comfortable with writing in English. She added that writing gives her students a voice--a chance to express themselves. She wants to hear her students through their writing. In the second artifact, Peggy provided a critical thinking assignment. She expected her students to read or listen to the narrative about Erika. Her students were to understand how self-traveling can be safe in communities similar to their own. Students were also provided the opportunity to respond to questions to demonstrate their comprehension of the text. Through discussion, Peggy planned to provide the opportunity for students to go beyond basic comprehension to engage in linking the lesson to their communities. Still focused on writing, in her third lesson using the artifact, Peggy had her students review grammar skills to help with the mechanics of writing. She described how most of her students struggled to write using the correct grammar techniques, and how that could be problematic. Therefore, she reviewed noun usages to help students improve their writing skills.

In her description of what culturally relevant teaching meant to her, Peggy expressed the need for her students to be able to advocate for themselves. She believed writing English was one way to achieve this goal. Interestingly, all three artifacts from her lessons focused on helping students achieve that goal. Across the three artifacts, Peggy's scores reflected the highest tallies in academic achievement when compared with Ladson-Billings' (1994) tenets. The artifacts supported the assignments she believed would not "step on parents' toes." Her assignments also prioritized students' opportunities to express themselves. In addition, the artifacts show evidence of how Peggy refrained from the use of her ideas as though they (her ideas) were reality for her students.

Table 11

Peggy's Artifacts With Descriptions and Teacher Expectations

Lessons	Artifact title	Description	Student expectations
VDR 1: Getting to know you	Essay: All About Me	Sample of student essay describing who they are.	Students write a 1- 3 paragraph essay about themselves. The essay should have an introduction, a description of an event they attended with their family, and a conclusion.
VDR 2: My Community	PowerPoint: Erika's Community	The teacher made PowerPoint about a Mexican girl and her community	Students read, listen, discuss, and answer comprehension questions about Erika and her community.
VDR 3: Nouns	Common and Proper Nouns	Document on identifying proper nouns and common nouns	Students are to identify all the proper nouns in the sentence by highlighting them, and identify all the common nouns in the sentence by underlining them.

Note. VDR = video discussion review.

Case 3: Lesley***Part 1: Profile***

Lesley, a 36-year-old female, grew up in a small suburb on the south side of a large metropolitan city. She described it by saying, "I actually grew up in a predominantly White neighborhood." She attended the only high school in her neighborhood. Lesley recalled how, "as I got older into high school, there were more and more Blacks moving into our suburb as the

(housing) projects were closing.” Reflecting on early interactions with people from culturally diverse backgrounds, Lesley shared,

Since my dad worked for Southwest (Airlines), as kids we hung out with airport employees at family picnics and so I was exposed to a lot of Blacks especially in [name of large city] as compared to my experiences in the suburb.

Lesley added within her immediate family she has relatives from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. “I actually grew up in a family that’s so diverse . . . I have family from Mexico and the Philippines. I have family from India. So, I have people like that married into my family from all over the world.” In addition, Lesley believed that being the mother of a bi-racial son makes her “more open” to other cultures.

Lesley has been teaching predominately Black and Latinx students for 15-20 years. She earned her bachelor’s degree in English. Her first teaching position was in an urban classroom, and she thought her family experience with diversity prepared her as she explained, “I wasn’t stunned when I went into my first job. It was an all African American school.” While teaching at her first school, she earned her master’s degree in special education. Although currently in a charter high school with mostly Black students, Lesley reflected on formal preparations that had prepared her to teach in the urban classroom. She said, “I did take some classes in undergrad and grad school.” When asked if she thought the classes helped her, Lesley was unable to recall the course name but added, “I feel the one I took in the master’s level, about different cultures and viewpoints, was helpful.” Reflecting on her college course, she said, “I think they showed us some things but not enough.”

Lesley stated she respects other cultures and appreciates learning about them. “I respect everybody’s culture,” she said. She attributed that posture to her family saying, “In my family,

we were brought up to just respect everybody and to try not to judge anybody.” Lesley recalled when Black students began to move into the suburb where she lived, her brother was one of the first to make friends with them, adding, “Actually one of the first African American families was really good friends with my brother. My parents never had any issues with that.” Likewise in her teaching, she also shared how she was respectful of other cultures and still learning about them. For example, she shared her student’s decision not to vote for student government at her school because of his religion. “I didn’t know Jehovah’s Witnesses didn’t vote until I had a student tell me that he could not vote for student government because he was a Jehovah’s Witness.” She also shared that, “Jehovah’s Witnesses don’t celebrate Easter, and that is interesting to me.”

When reflecting further on why she chose to work with urban students with special needs, she shared that her dad always did things for students with disabilities in her community. She clarified by adding, “Dad’s a biker. Bikers do a lot for people with special needs, which I believe is what brought me to special education . . . I had to go to the urban classroom because we just didn’t have special needs programs in my little neighborhood.”

Part 2: Thematic Analyses

Identify and self-awareness. Lesley was keenly aware of being White. She clearly stated, “I am a White woman,” and would speak openly about her racial awareness and how her race was different from her students’ races. Reflecting on her experiences in the classroom, she added, “I feel as a White teacher, I am still learning.” When probed to say more about what it is she is still learning, Lesley emphasized, “I am still learning about where my students are coming from. I am still trying to understand.” She gave an example from the journalism course she teaches. She shared that in that group, as students talk, she fully recognized differences in what

music genres she and her students like. “We like different things like music . . . I try to learn the different music they like . . . but they all like different types of music.”

Lesley believed that her own family experiences have, in part, helped her understanding of differences. She explained that people from “all over the world” have married into her family. By interacting with her culturally diverse family members, she explained, “I know things are different . . . like what they eat. My aunt from the Philippines eats different foods . . . uses different slang.” Lesley believed her awareness made her more accepting of the cultures of her students. She said, “I know things were going to be different.” Lesley believed her awareness has made her “more open.” She continued to stress that it is important to learn about other cultures.

In another example of her self-awareness of differences, Lesley talked about test bias. “I never understood how a test could be biased; they were never biased towards me as a White person.” To Explain how she first acknowledged bias in a test, she recounted the following:

One of my parents told me their kid got something wrong on my homework. The test asked the student to select which one they wear to a wedding. He picked a sombrero because that is what they do in his house, but it was marked wrong.

Lesley added, “I think that could happen with a cowboy hat, too. I know the neighbors on both sides of my parents are from Mexico. Most days when they are dressed up, they’re always in cowboy hats.” Lesley’s reference to her parents’ neighbors wearing cowboy hats is her way of emphasizing how that cultural practice could be misrepresented in an assessment tool if the student were a part of that culture. As Lesley reflected on being self-aware of her students’ differences, she said, “I am aware of the different places our students go, how they dress, and how they present themselves compared to how we do as Americans.”

Perception of self as a culturally relevant teacher. What seemed quite important to Lesley was that she is very open and accepting of students' language and cultures that are different from her own. She referred to this idea in all four interviews, and at times clearly stated, "I am accepting of my students' cultures." At her first appointment, she shared she was not surprised when working with Black students. Moreover, she firmly believed that experiencing diversity in her own family made her "more accepting of cultural differences."

Lesley further spoke of a need to learn about students' cultures. She believed it was her responsibility to find out more about her students, confirming, "I have to learn about what makes my students tick." Lesley shared an example of how she tries to learn what makes her students tick:

Rather than just tell them they cannot use slang in the classroom, I say in a classroom and in an interview, you speak in a different way; but, when you are with your friends outside the classroom you use your slang.

Reflecting on being a culturally relevant teacher, Lesley believed experiencing diversity is important because "you can be more open-minded." She believed being open helps her be aware of and maintain her students' cultures during instruction. For example, she thinks students should be allowed to speak Spanish during their free time. She stressed, "They prefer their language . . . I have to respect that." When probed to say more, she added, "Not respecting the students' cultures could lead to a big fight. The language is their background . . . it's what they know." Lesley expressed understanding when she remarked, "America is like a melting pot . . . my students and their families haven't completely taken on all the American ways. They keep their cultures here in America."

Influences on culturally relevant teaching practices. Again, Lesley's choice to focus on knowing her students, in terms of their backgrounds and beliefs, seemed crucial. Lesley shared how a student refused to vote for student government officers in her school. Her knowledge of the student made her understand why he would not vote. She explained:

I know my students. I know the kid who didn't want to vote is saying that because of his religion. He told me why and I listened. It was not a big deal. It could have escalated if I didn't know him.

Lesley seemed to wear her knowledge of her students and what they shared with her as a "badge of pride." She alluded in this example and others about how she knew information because students would share and even confide in her.

Lesley's practice was also influenced by her determination to understand her students' cultural connections and backgrounds. To support her decision, she purposely focused on the autobiography. I recognized that in all three artifacts and lesson excerpts she chose to share in our VDR sessions. In session two, students did projects that required them to gather data about themselves to complete "My Autobiography." Lesley explained that she used a template with prompts to guide her students' writing and to provide structure as a scaffold for them to do the work. Students shared their autobiography presentations in class.

In another lesson excerpt and artifact, Lesley shared how she used the "The Diary of Anne Frank" as a literacy text. I asked why she selected the text. She explained she believed her students as young adults could relate to the experiences of the main character, Anne Frank. She believed learning to be critical and evaluative in their responses and feedback, allows students to relate current conditions in their world—even their world as students of color--to those endured

by the characters in Nazi Germany. She said, “I want them to see how power and fears build structures and realities that suppress and segregate.”

Part 3: Comparison of Practices With Culturally Relevant Teaching

In Table 12, Lesley’s descriptions of culturally relevant teaching checklist behaviors in her classroom are shown. Across the three VDR sessions, for all 10 behaviors, she maintained the original descriptions she gave in VDR 1. In her description of how she defined the behaviors, I found one commonality--connects examples from the communities in her lessons--across Behaviors 4, 6, 7, and 9. In her description of motivates/non-judgmental behavior, Lesley shared that she encourages her students with phrases such as stay focused.

Table 13 shows the frequency of behaviors in Lesley’s English classroom organized according to Ladson-Billings’ (1994) three theoretical tenets on the behavior checklist. While listening to the VDR excerpts, tally marks were made by the participant and me (independently) when the accepted behavior was recognized. I calculated the percentage and the mean for each tenet and calculated the range across the three sessions. Across Lesley’s three VDR excerpts, we agreed on 72 occurrences of behaviors according to Lesley’s descriptions. During each VDR session, we marked an average of 24 behaviors (range 18–28). We marked the most tallies 28 of 72 (38.9%) for academic achievement behaviors where $M = 9$ across the three sessions. The next tenet cultural competence had 24 of 72 tallies (33.3%) where $M = 8$. For the last tenet, social consciousness, we agreed on 20 of 72 (27.8%) where $M = 6$.

Table 12

Culturally Relevant Teaching Behavior Checklist and Lesley's Representation of the Behaviors

Checklist behavior	Lesley's representation
1: Motivates/non-judgmental	Praises, peer buddy encouraging phrases like stay focused
2: Linguistic variation	Spanish responses with peer translations
3: Authentic dialogue	Teacher-student conversations
4: Parental/community involvement	Send home information in Spanish, connect examples from the communities
5: Modifies curriculum	Connect to student's prior knowledge chunk information, vocabulary development
6: Evidence from student's background	Connect examples from the community
7: Centers student strength/interest	Peer buddy, Use Spanish words, use Spanish examples
8: Questioning	open-ended questions, use Yes/No questions
9: Filters content through the cultural lens of students	Connect examples from the community
10: Others	Extra time

Table 13

Frequency of Behaviors in Lesley's English Classroom Organized by Ladson-Billings' Three Tenets

Lesson	Lesley's tally			Researcher's tally			Combined tally			Total
	AA	CC	SC	AA	CC	SC	AA	CC	SC	
VDR 1: My auto-biography	3	4	2	3	4	2	6	8	4	18
VDR 2: Text analysis	6	3	5	6	3	5	12	6	18	28
VDR 3: Ticket Tuesday	5	5	3	5	5	3	10	10	6	26

Note. VDR = video discussion review; AA = academic achievement; CC = cultural competence; SC = social consciousness.

Artifact analysis. In Table 14, the artifacts presented by Lesley are shown for each VDR. In her VDR 1 lesson, Lesley shared an autobiography template. The artifact is a 15-page project for students to create their autobiography. The template included a page with directions and pages with prompts of what to write or upload. For example, there was a page for the basics, another about the family, a page to upload a baby picture, and a page for important dates in their life. Lesley expected the students to write basic information about themselves and their families. She expected them to use the prompts provided to guide their writing. When asked about what she expected from her students, Lesley explained she wanted students to write about themselves

and their families. In addition, the students were to scan and insert photos into their documents and present their autobiography to the class upon completion.

Table 14

Lesley's Artifacts With Descriptions and Teacher Expectations

VDR Lessons	Artifact title	Description	Teacher expectations
VDR 1: My Autobiography	Autobiography template	15-page document for students to create their own autobiography and use the prompts on each page to guide their writings.	Students reflect and write their own stories. Students scan and insert photos into the document. Each student will present their autobiography to the class upon completion.
VDR 2: Text Analysis	Jamboard page of Anne Frank analysis	Jamboard activity of Anne Frank analysis showing students responses to given prompt	Reflect on the text and respond to the prompt: If you could ask one question to any person in the book or movie who would you ask and what would you ask?
VDR 3: Ticket Tuesday	Jamboard page	Weekly Jamboard activity. Students respond to the given prompt as an exit ticket.	Students respond to exit ticket prompt: If you won two tickets to your dream concert, who are you going to see and who are you taking with you?

Note. VDR = video discussion review.

In VDR 2, the lesson was a text analysis of an autobiography often read in high school entitled “The Diary of Anne Frank.” The artifact was an activity in which students used a Google Jamboard (i.e., an electronic bulletin board for posting and displaying things) to compile students’ responses to this prompt: “If you could ask one question to any person in the book or

movie, who would you ask, and what would you ask?” Lesley used that as an exit slip. Her expectations for the exit slip were for students to reflect on the text, and to share their responses to the prompt on the Jamboard. When asked about the outcome of the lesson, Lesley explained that she wanted to share the experiences of Anne Frank with her students. “I really want them to understand an autobiography and maybe draw parallels between the experiences of Anne Frank and their own.”

For our VDR 3 session, Lesley shared an artifact that was an exit ticket following a lesson on making choices. The artifact was a Jamboard activity titled Ticket Tuesday. The board pictured artists representing various music genres. Lesley’s outcome was for her students to demonstrate their ability to make a choice responding to the given prompt. The prompt was, “If you won two tickets to your dream concert, who are you going to see and who are you taking with you?”

In all three artifacts, Lesley seemed to emphasize the importance of students’ critical thinking and expressions about themselves. In the first two artifacts, she provided opportunities for her students to think of who they are as members of their families and communities. In the first artifact, she wanted her students to think about their identity and their connections to their families. Upon completion of the project, students were asked to make a presentation about their identity and family. The objective was to have them share their project with their peers. The second artifact involved the experiences of Anne Frank and her family. By selecting Anne Frank as a text, Lesley hoped her students could relate to the teenager. She expected her students to ask questions about motives, feelings, or experiences of one person who impacted Anne’s life. In so doing, students had to reflect on Anne’s experiences, think through what they read, and

determine what questions to ask. In the third artifact, students had the joyful task of thinking about themselves and being able to say what they liked, wanted, and appreciated.

In her description of what culturally relevant teaching meant to her, Lesley said it meant she is accepting of her students' cultures. "I just want to learn and understand where they are coming from," she said. Overall, with the focus of her three artifacts on students' expression and critical thinking, it was clear that Lesley valued getting to know students through the learning opportunities she created. and their self-expression.

Case 4: Nancy

Part 1: Profile

Nancy identified as female. She is 46 years old and described herself as a product of a mostly White suburb on the southside of a large metropolitan city. Nancy attended a Catholic elementary school and recalled having Hispanic kids in attendance at her grade school. Nancy's parents encouraged her and her brother to have friends from culturally diverse backgrounds. She pointed out that her parents insisted, "whenever we're having parties, we had to invite everyone." Reflecting further on her family, Nancy recounted, "I also have aunts and uncles who are Hispanic. So, I grew up getting included in their culture, their music, and the foods they would cook and make, which is really nice."

For high school, Nancy attended one of two local public high schools in her community. She described her high school as a feeder school that "opened the whole world to classes with students of different backgrounds including Asians, Hispanics, and Blacks." In high school, she played sports and was "on a team with other females from different cultures, different backgrounds. I was friendly and made friends with them easily." She remembered having

conversations with her friends about different cultural experiences, and that she found the conversations “interesting and fascinating.”

Nancy has been teaching for 20 plus years. She earned her bachelor’s degree in mathematics. Her first teaching job was in a predominantly White Catholic grade school. She recalls, “I didn’t feel like I fit in.” She recalled that not feeling she belonged in that setting led her to seek other teaching options. She received an opportunity to work at a therapeutic day school and she realized she wanted to get into special education. Nancy obtained her master’s degree in special education and her teaching license while working at the therapeutic day school. Shortly after obtaining her special education degree, she transferred to a high school and worked with most Black and Hispanic students for over 18 years. Currently, Nancy teaches in a charter high school where she continues to work with mostly Black and Hispanic students.

Nancy reflected on the formal preparation she might have had to teach in the urban classroom. She described having had some formal coursework as an undergraduate. In graduate school, she shared she had one class where “cultural relevance was included as we learned about special education.” Nancy believed that any formal training she had came from working with the staff at the therapeutic day school. While working there, she observed and learned from the staff who she believed had the working knowledge and experience to manage students with special needs. In her words, she looked to them to “show me, teach me, help me and guide me.” When asked to reflect on personal attributes that may have prepared her for her urban special education classroom, Nancy emphasized, “I like to be able to learn. I like studying people, studying different cultures.” She expressed, “Even though we might be different, there are things that link us together, and trying to figure what those links are is important to me.” Reflecting on her role as a teacher of students from culturally diverse backgrounds, Nancy stated, “My role is to show

them what the world is about. It's having those hard conversations like with the black lives matter (movement) and to discuss the relevance of that." Furthermore, she stated, "I need to let my students know that they are supported. I want my students to trust me."

Part 2: Thematic Analyses

Identify and self-awareness. Nancy identifies as White. She stated, "I'm White" and added, "but I'm also Polish." Reflecting further on her identity, Nancy shared, "I am White, but that doesn't mean that I have that White belief." When probed to say more about what she meant by "that White belief", Nancy replied, "Thinking I know because I don't know."

Nancy shared an awareness of cultural diversity. Reflecting on her high school experience, Nancy stated, "Growing up, cultural difference was real for me." Reflecting further on her experience with cultural differences, Nancy shared how while in high school she became aware of the difference between how she and her White friends were treated when pulled over by the police and how her Black friends were treated when pulled over. She said,

As a White teenager, we've been pulled over before and never have been asked to get out of the car. But when traveling with our Black friends, we were pulled over and all were asked to get out of the car.

Nancy recounted being aware of being different at her first special education school. She described herself as, "the only White teacher . . . as the White girl I knew I was different." She added, "I was not going to put anyone down or think I'm better than you when I am trying to figure out how to be a special ed teacher." She recalled learning from a Black paraprofessional who showed her how to talk and relate to her Black students. She added, "Working with that staff member is where she learned to build trust with her students." Nancy described her awareness of the overwhelming presence of Whiteness in schools stating, "In my perspective,

everything is geared towards my ethnicity, in terms of the curriculum, standardized test, books, all written towards what was the dominant main population at one point.”

Perception as a culturally relevant teacher. Nancy believed being a culturally relevant teacher meant learning from her students and others. Besides the example about learning from a paraprofessional, Nancy shared that she learns from her students’ parents. “Getting to know the parent, talking to the parents . . . hearing the parents’ story and what’s going on with them, helped me understand my students as well.” She added being a culturally relevant teacher meant, “It was a lot of observing, talking, and finding out where they came from. It was learning quickly.” Reflecting further, Nancy shared how, “I learned my students’ history, their culture, their family ties. It’s sitting back listening, observing, learning.” Nancy shared how while she was working to earn her degree in special education, she learned from others in her school stating, “I want my students and other more experienced staff to teach me; I’m learning as they’re learning. Show me, teach me, guide me.”

Nancy also believed it is important to utilize her students’ cultural experiences in her teaching. She shared how she incorporated her students’ background, their ethnicity, and their cultures into her lessons:

In my math class, when I have students who say they would like to shop, then the lesson will be a shopping experience. If I have a family who is rich with in-home cooking like the Hispanic community, I’m incorporating what they had for dinner into what they learn.

Influences on culturally relevant teaching practices. Nancy shared important influences on her practice. First, she believed knowing her students influenced her practice. She shared that in her mathematics class if a student liked sports, she would use it as an example in her teaching. For example, she explained how she would ask her students certain probing questions: “How

many goals were scored? How many baskets? How many hits? How many tackles? I would make it a part of the lesson in any avenue where they could appreciate and relate to it.”

Nancy believed her personality traits influenced her practice. She described herself as being, “friendly with everybody.” She added that she works well with others and seeks to try to “figure out where our common ground is.” She believed her friendly attitude and her ability to learn quickly made it easy to develop the sort of relationship she had developed with her students. She described how, “I pick up words from my students . . . picking up on how they speak, how they do, and incorporating it in how I would say and do that with them.” Nancy stressed how she would “use words her students are familiar with.” She added that she shared a comfortable space with her students. She accepted her students referring to her as “ma’am” stating, “I’d be proud to be your ma’am.”

Nancy’s practice was influenced by her students’ cultural experiences. She shared examples of how she incorporated their experiences as examples in her lessons. She expressed enjoyment when working with her students.

Part 3: Comparison of Practices With Culturally Relevant Teaching

In Table 15, Nancy’s descriptions of behaviors in her mathematics class as they relate to the culturally relevant teaching checklist are shown. For all 10 behaviors, she maintained the original descriptions she gave in VDR 1. In her description of how she defined the culturally relevant teaching behaviors, I found one commonality--use examples from the student’s prior experiences--across Behaviors 5, 6, 7, and 9. In addition to using examples from her students’ prior experiences, Nancy shared she also modifies the curriculum by scaffolding and using visuals. Nancy added, “frequent communication with the home” as her evidence for parental/community involvement.

Table 15

Culturally Relevant Teaching Behavior Checklist and Nancy's Representation of the Behaviors

Checklist behavior	Nancy's representation
1: Motivates/non-judgmental	I encourage, use language students are familiar with, frequent praises, offer to help, frequently redirect
2: Linguistic variation	Use Spanish word of the day, let students respond in Spanish & have a peer translate
3: Authentic dialogue	Discussions that develop based on student-teacher interactions
4: Parental/community involvement	Frequent communication with home
5: Modifies curriculum	Use examples from student's prior experience use visuals; scaffold
6: Evidence from student's background	Use examples from student's experiences
7: Centers student strength/interest	Use examples from student's experiences, assign roles to students based on strengths
8: Questioning	Frequently use who, what, when, where, why questions Yes/No/Maybe questions
9: Filters content through the cultural lens of students	Use examples from student's experiences
10: Others	Find many ways to explain Thumbs up; thumbs sideways; thumbs down

Table 16 shows the frequency of behaviors in Nancy's mathematics class organized according to Ladson-Billings' (1994) three theoretical tenets on the behavior checklist. While listening to the VDR excerpts, tally marks were made by the participant and me (independently)

when the accepted behavior was recognized. I calculated the percentage and the mean for each tenet and calculated the range across the three sessions. Across Nancy's three VDR excerpts, we agreed on 44 occurrences of behaviors according to Nancy's descriptions. During each VDR session, we marked an average of 14 behaviors (range 14-16). We marked the most tallies 26 of 44 (59.1%) for academic achievement behaviors where $M = 8$ across the three sessions. The cultural competence tenet had a total of 12 of 44 (27.3%) where $M = 4$, and the social consciousness tenet had the least tallies at 6 of 44 tallies (13.6%) where $M = 2$.

Table 16

Frequency of Behaviors in Nancy's Mathematics Classroom Organized by Ladson-Billings' Three Tenets

Lesson	Nancy's tally			Researcher's tally			Combined tally			Total
	AA	CC	SC	AA	CC	SC	AA	CC	SC	
VDR 1:										
Elapsed time	4	2	1	4	2	1	8	4	2	14
VDR 2:										
Budget	4	2	1	4	2	1	8	4	2	14
VDR 3:										
Holiday Budgeting	5	2	1	5	2	1	10	4	2	16

Note. VDR = video discussion review; AA = academic achievement; CC = cultural competence; SC = social consciousness.

Artifact analysis. Table 17 shows the artifacts Nancy shared for each VDR. In her lesson excerpt on Elapsed Time in VDR 1, Nancy shared two documents. The first artifact was titled "Find the Time." The first artifact displayed the time on analog clocks. The second artifact was

titled “Elapsed Time Practice #1” with word problems associated with time and no visual displays for guidance. Nancy explained that she wanted her students to understand elapsed time to help with their independent-living skills and post-secondary transition skills. She provided differentiated documents based on her knowledge of where her students were in terms of reading, telling time, and problem solving.

Table 17

Nancy’s Artifacts With Descriptions and Teacher Expectations

VDR Lessons	Artifact title	Description	Teacher expectations
VDR 1: Elapsed Time	Elapsed Time	Elapsed time practice worksheet	Students to
VDR 2: Budget	Budget Project	A 9-picture/ word bank document with item prices provided. Students select three items they want or need.	Students are to select three items they want or need from the word bank provided. They calculate the total cost of their selections and determine whether they have enough money from their \$25 budget.
VDR 3: Holiday Budgeting	Budget Lesson Plan	Teacher Lesson Plan with the learning target for students to read price tags and make purchases within their budget	Students will learn to spend any within their budget. They will determine how much they spend and how much is left over. Students are expected to explain why it is important to know what they spend and what they have remaining

Note. VDR = video discussion review.

In VDR 2, the artifact was a document titled “Budget Project.” Nancy explained that the artifact supplemented her lesson on basic budgeting. She described the artifact as a document where her students choose what they want or need from the 9-picture/word bank provided. She wanted her students to determine if the total cost of the three items they selected was within the \$25 budget they were provided. Her expectation for students’ learning was for them to calculate the total cost of their selections and determine if they were within their budget.

For our VDR 3 session, Nancy shared her lesson plan. The lesson plan was titled “Budget Lesson Plan (Holiday).” She described that her learning target for the lesson was for her students to read price tags and make purchases within their budget for the holiday. Similar to the lesson excerpt in our second VDR session, Nancy explained that she wanted her students to learn to spend within their budget. They were to determine how much they would spend and how much remained. Nancy added that she believed it was important for her students to explain what they spent and what they had remaining; she also wanted them to understand and use reason. Nancy had different versions of the artifact that showed differentiation in the support level for her students as well as providing direct instruction, guided practice, and independent practice.

In all three artifacts, Nancy selected skills based on her knowledge of what her students needed to know. In the first artifact on elapsed time, she provided opportunities for her students to learn about the amount of time that had passed by using varied real-life situations. She provided two artifacts: one with visuals and one with words for her students who needed different support levels. In the second and third artifacts, Nancy created materials that could help students focus on learning about budgeting.

In her description of culturally relevant teaching, Nancy said it meant incorporating her students’ backgrounds, ethnicity, and cultures into her lessons. She also shared her belief that

“math is universal.” She explained how it is important in her practice to make mathematics meaningful to her students by including their shared experiences with numbers. Although the artifacts do not demonstrate Nancy’s efforts to incorporate her students’ backgrounds and cultures into her lesson, they do demonstrate Nancy’s efforts to teach her students critical post-secondary transition mathematics skills. Perhaps that aligns with how Nancy’s behaviors under the academic achievement tenet had the highest tallies. She wanted students to learn mathematics they would need in daily living.

Case 5: Dave

Part 1: Profile

Dave identifies as male. He is 36 years old. Reflecting on his childhood, Dave recalled "a lack of exposure to diverse cultures." Raised in a large, diverse metropolitan city in the Midwest, Dave described his upbringing as exclusive and recounted attending majority-white schools while living in a predominantly white area of the city. However, even with his limited exposure to diversity while growing up and the option to teach in a suburban school, Dave chose to remain in the city as an urban teacher claiming the city is where he belongs. To him, the city is his home. "It is my home. It's my area. It's where I grew up. It's where I live. It is where I belong."

Dave has been teaching for 10-15 years. He has taught African American and Latinx students for all those years. His professional career began at a grade school after earning his bachelor's degree in history. While working at the grade school, Dave earned his master's degree in special education. He transferred to a charter high school where he currently works as an inclusion teacher. Thinking back on his career at his current school, Dave reported that his prior experience was in teaching history in an instructional position. He believed his current position as an inclusion teacher resulted primarily from the changing demographics in the neighborhood

around his school and adjustments made in the school to serve students. Dave currently co-teaches social science to ninth-grade general education and special education students whose disabilities include LD and ED.

Reflecting on his education and personal development, Dave shared that he has a passion for learning. He described himself as "an ongoing learner who needs to always learn about the changing population demographics in the neighborhood where I teach." In addition to learning about the changing population of diverse students in his school, Dave was enrolled in a graduate program and working on a second master's degree in educational leadership at the time of this study.

Part 2: Thematic Analyses

Identify and self-awareness. Dave spoke in different ways about the importance of his identity and self-awareness. He identified as a White male with privilege and said, "As a White man, as a Caucasian, I need to be self-aware of my privilege." He expressed his awareness of being a White man when he said, "I am from a different background than my students." He recalled being aware that growing up, he experienced a lack of exposure to diversity. In his initial interview conversation, Dave stated, "There was a lack of exposure to diverse cultures growing up. My upbringing was very exclusive."

During our discussions, Dave spoke about how his racial and cultural awareness intersected with his students' lived experiences. According to Dave, "Many of my students' interactions, probably with men that look like me, might be negative. So, they might be carrying those negative experiences into my classroom on day one." By being aware of such negative experiences in his students' lives, Dave seemed to act with care when he reacts and interacts with his students. He pointed out, "I need to be self-aware of how I react to things . . . things can be

received differently if the same thing was said by a person of a similar background, culture, and skin color as my students.” Dave emphasized his belief that “as a White man, I need to be aware of specific cultural norms from my students’ different cultures.” His effort to learn about specific norms from his students’ cultures affects how he reacts to students’ behaviors and interacts with them.

Dave’s self-awareness fostered a commitment to connect with his students. Dave’s belief about his awareness of the negative experiences his students might have had with other White men in the society caused him to interpret such negative experiences as barriers that could prevent him from connecting with his students as he desired. Furthermore, he seems to believe it is his responsibility to break any such barrier stating, “it’s up to me to try to break those barriers to build that bridge.”

Dave’s awareness of his racial and cultural differences was reflected in how he chose to utilize his teaching practice to meet his students beyond the classroom. In one lesson about voting, for instance, he utilized two YouTube videos from the Black and Latinx communities as his instructional materials. The videos showed debates between liberal and conservative groups. When I asked why he selected the videos as his instructional materials, he reflected, “I feel my students need to see debates like this (linked to people) in their communities.” Dave believed that using videos from his students’ communities was a valuable way to make the lesson more meaningful to his students.

I want them to hear people that look like them debate issues that impact them . . . I want them to understand the issues in their community and have discussions based on facts . . .

It will help my students with voting and give them skills to advocate for their community.

Dave drew upon his self-awareness and experiences in his community growing up. Perhaps, his current role as an urban teacher might also impact his decisions about what was important to teach his students about their communities and become responsible members of the larger community beyond his classroom.

Perception of self as a culturally relevant teacher. As a culturally relevant teacher, Dave understands that his identity and awareness are integral parts of his practice. For example, responding to what it means to practice culturally relevant teaching, Dave asserted that it is important for teachers who practice culturally relevant teaching to be “more accepting of other cultures.” Being self-aware of his racial and cultural difference makes this statement important. Dave’s ability to self-identify and be accepting of his racial and cultural difference is helpful for him to accept the cultures of his students. From our discussion and my field notes, Dave’s awareness of differences in cultures makes him more open-minded. As an open-minded teacher, according to Dave, he is comparable to being on “an avenue.” He uses the analogy of the avenue to describe his classroom as a space where “I learn from my students, understand them, and they understand me. We learn from each other. It’s a place where we (he and his students) understand each other better.” Dave recognized that as a teacher who practices CRT, he needs to be in a space where both he and his students teach and learn from each other.

Another perception Dave had as a culturally relevant teacher is that he creates opportunities for his diverse students to have voices. He regards the role of creating opportunities for his students to express themselves as vital both within and beyond the classroom. He pointed out, in the initial interview conversation, that such opportunities would be spaces where his students’ voices are heard. When probed to say more about his need to create opportunities for his students, Dave expressed that his students’ voices had been silent in the curriculum that he

taught. Therefore, he thought it was his role to allow students' voices to be heard. He described his classroom as a place where the diverse cultures of his students “are reflected in what I am teaching.” He demonstrated this perception in several ways. Dave included resources that are “representative of the voices of the cultures (of the students) that I am teaching who are not represented in the curriculum that I am teaching.” For example, in his lesson on world religion, Dave recounted how he presented a unit on the spread of the five major religions around the world from BC until the present day. During the lesson, Dave played a video for his students. At one point he stopped the video and rewound it. In his discussion of why he rewound the video, he explained, “I wanted to emphasize the part of history that does not get taught before Europeans came.” Dave specified why he stopped the video.

I stopped the video in South and Central America. By 1492, that's when north and central America started turning into the color that it is today . . . I wanted to emphasize that that is part of history (before Europeans came) that does not get taught.

When probed to say more about his presentation of the world religion lesson, Dave reflected on how he believed it was necessary to highlight his student's ancestry. “It's imperative that my students recognize there were people here before the Europeans came.” Dave is vested in his role of giving voice to his students' cultures. He stressed,

It's just essential to highlight this part of history because that's where a lot of my kids' ancestry comes from. They come from this part of the world, South and Central America, so they need to understand how it used to be versus just how it is now.

Another example of creating opportunities pivotal to being a culturally relevant teacher is from our first VDR discussion. The lesson objective was that his students understand the different viewpoints of liberals and conservatives on abortion. Dave explained that he chose

abortion because he knew it was a relevant issue in his students' experiences in their communities. Dave explained that his outcome was for his students to understand the issues in their communities. Furthermore, he wanted to provide opportunities for students to learn and understand rather than to be force-fed. "I'm trying to give my kids the opportunity to know what they believe instead of being force-fed what to believe."

As a culturally relevant teacher, Dave believes it is his responsibility to make the curriculum more meaningful to his students. He expressed his frustrations over what he regards as a Eurocentric social science curriculum that does not represent the cultural experiences of his diverse students. Dave is intentional in including his students' cultures in his teaching. He described presenting his lessons by including his students' cultural experiences stating, "I make sure that I include the cultures of the students that I am teaching in my teaching." Reflecting on how he intentionally includes the cultures of his students, Dave shared an example where he not only referenced South and Central America while teaching world religions for his Latinx students' ancestry, but he also included information about Africa. He explained, "I emphasize a lot of the positives of Africa." Dave saw a need to create learning opportunities connecting his Black students to their ancestry, and how that was different from his Latinx students. He added, "I don't want my students to walk out of my class thinking that Africa is just Ancient Egypt and slavery. You know, there's a lot more history, a lot more culture that comes out of Africa."

Though Dave shared one approach he utilizes in creating opportunities to include his students' voices and cultures in his classroom, he acknowledged that he does not create such opportunities alone. He looks for resources from within his students' communities. He recalled that he obtains resources from outside of his classroom and has to "rely on the community a lot for real-life experiences." For example, in his VDR 1 lesson on politics and voting, Dave's

choice of abortion as the topic to teach his students about different political viewpoints was based on what he described as his knowledge of issues that are relevant in his students' communities. In the excerpt, I hear Dave giving his students clear expectations of what he wanted them to do. He wanted his students to learn about the pros and cons of abortion and decide what side they agree with. Once they made their decisions, they had to justify their decisions by explaining why. In this example, allowing his students to decide on a viewpoint and explain their choices seemed to be Dave's way of listening to his students' voices.

Key parts of Dave's perception of himself as a culturally relevant teacher are to provide learning opportunities for students to think critically, to express their ideas and opinions, and to link opportunities and opinions to their communities and experiences. This view also supported his position on community or as he put it "local flavor." He connects his teaching to the related ideology of the community. Moreover, as he stated, he does this because "I want to give my students skills to advocate for their community."

Influences on culturally relevant teaching practices. Several factors influence Dave's culturally relevant teaching practices. One influence is how his awareness of his identity as a White male in a classroom with culturally diverse students impacts the topics he chooses to teach in his classroom. He described how being a White man affects how he reacts and interacts with his students. He explained he needs to understand that "the way I react to things can be received differently if the same thing was said by a person of a similar background, culture, or skin color that is the same as my students." He emphasized how vital being self-aware is to his practice because, "that's one way I learn from them (his students), understand them (his students) and they understand me. We learn from each other."

Additionally, Dave's awareness of being White and privileged seems to inspire him to work hard to connect with his students. His commitment to connect with them also drives the instructional choices he makes. For example, he is determined to include "community-based resources to support student learning." I found two examples of this in his teaching excerpts. He selected two YouTube videos of Black and Latinx conservative and liberal groups to teach the power of democracy (VDR 2 excerpt). He also selected specific topics (e.g., abortion, voting) to discuss because he believed the topics were significant to his students and their communities.

Dave disclosed that another influence on his practice was how his perspective changed when he realized his understanding of the content did not match who his students are in terms of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. He stated, "Today, when you walk into a classroom, and your population doesn't match the history that you've been taught, that changes your perspective and how to teach the curriculum and what's important."

Dave believed he needed to build a bridge to connect the curriculum to his students. One example of Dave building his bridge is to bring resources from his students' community. In VDR 2, Dave used a community resource center called the Mikva Challenge and integrated it into his teaching about the power of democracy. At the time, Dave provided his students the opportunity to be part of a community event called the Mikva Challenge. The center develops youth to become informed and active members of society who will promote justice and equity for all. The Mikva Challenge is designed to make youth voices heard in civic and political matters and create a more inclusive democracy where youth voices are valued. For the project Dave created, students had to attend one voting party that was open to high school students during the fall elections. By doing so, students participated in real-life voting activities as they prepared to vote in the upcoming 2020 elections. By doing so, his students earned service-learning credits

required for graduation, and they also earned an assignment grade in his class. Dave saw the Mikva Challenge as a good opportunity for his students to learn about the value of voting as community involvement, a method to develop student voices, and extension of community in his classroom learning. Therefore, he thought it was important to incorporate the Mikva Challenge as a resource to support his teaching and his students' learning and explaining. "The Mikva Challenge as an example of community involvement. Some of my students had attended the Mikva community event to get service-learning credits, which are a graduation requirement."

Dave's culturally relevant teaching practice was influenced by his colleagues and administrators. He described having a good support system from his colleagues and administrators. Dave relies on the support system provided by his colleagues and administrators to create opportunities for his students to learn and succeed. Another influence on his practice is his belief that a cultural mismatch existed within his classroom: between himself and his students and his curriculum and his students). His recognition of this mismatch seemed to affect how he utilizes his classroom space to build a bridge and build relationships. Because of his relationship building, Dave and his students have what he describes as "something cool." He explained that his students feel they belong in his classroom. Dave shared that his classroom is "a home environment" where his students "felt safe and comfortable and are okay with being in the class." Reflecting more on his classroom environment, Dave added that, "it was important for me to have diverse authors, posters, and topics in my classroom." Dave believed because of the influences on his practice that his "students' behaviors get better . . . so whenever I redirect, they're more okay . . . okay, Mr. X. They understand, and they do not automatically go into an outburst."

Part 3: Comparison of Practices With Culturally Relevant Teaching

In Table 18, Dave's descriptions of how he used the culturally relevant teaching behavior checklist in his classroom are shown. In 8 of 10 (80%) behaviors, he remained with his original description given in VDR 1. In 2 of 10 (20%) behaviors, he made additions to motivating/non-judgmental and filters content through the cultural lens of students. He added praises to motivating/non-judgmental in the VDR 2, stating that he praises his students to keep them motivated and on task. During the same VDR 2 discussion, he added community-specific content to filters content through the cultural lens of students, explaining that he utilizes examples and resources from his students' communities in his teaching.

In our interactions around his defining of the behavior checklist, I saw one commonality--allows his students to respond in Spanish--across Behaviors 2, 6, and 9. In both parent/community involvement and filters content through the cultural lens of students, he spoke about drawing on the community, for example, use community resources or community-specific content. For Behavior 10, other, Dave shared that he uses humor in his practice.

Table 18

Culturally Relevant Teaching Behavior Checklist and Dave's Representation of the Behaviors

Checklist behavior	Dave's representation
1: Motivates/non-judgmental	Clear directions, praises, let students speak
2: Linguistic variation	Allow Spanish responses
3: Authentic dialogue	Teacher-student rapport
4: Parental/community involvement	Use community resources, e.g., Mikva challenge
5: Modifies curriculum	Chunk information
6: Evidence from student's background	Responses in Spanish
7: Centers student strength/interest	Re-teach difficult concepts
8: Questioning	Ask probing questions
9: Filters content through the cultural lens of students	Allow Spanish responses, community-specific content
10: Others	Extra response time, sense of humor

Table 19 shows the frequency of behaviors in Dave's social science teaching excerpts organized according to Ladson-Billings' (1994) three theoretical tenets on the culturally relevant teaching behavior checklist. While listening to the VDR excerpts, tally marks were made by the participant and me (independently) when the accepted behavior was recognized. I calculated the percentage and the mean for each tenet and calculated the range across the three sessions. Across Dave's three VDR excerpts, we agreed on 66 occurrences of behaviors according to Dave's descriptions. During each VDR session, we marked an average of 22 behaviors (range 18–26). We marked the most tallies 38 of 66 (57.6%) for cultural competence behaviors where $M = 12$ across the three sessions. The next tenet, social consciousness, had 16 of 66 (24.2%) tallies

where $M = 5$. For the last tenet, academic achievement, we marked 12 of 66 (18.2%) where $M = 4$.

Table 19

Frequency of Behaviors in Dave's Social Science Classroom Organized by Ladson-Billings' Three Tenets

Lesson	Dave's tally			Researcher's tally			Combined tally			Total
	AA	CC	SC	AA	CC	SC	AA	CC	SC	
VDR 1:										
Politics and voting	3	6	2	3	6	2	6	12	4	22
VDR 2:										
Power of democracy	1	8	4	1	8	4	2	16	8	26
VDR 3:	2	5	2	2	5	2	4	10	4	18
Personal values										

Note. VDR = video discussion review; AA = academic achievement; CC = cultural competence; SC = social consciousness.

Artifact analysis. In Table 20, I show the artifacts Dave shared for each VDR. For his first excerpt on politics and voting, he brought a 3-column worksheet called “Issues in the Community.” On the worksheet, students were to choose a topic important to the community that they believed could help determine how they would vote in the November 2020 Presidential elections. When they had their topic, they would research the different viewpoints of Democrats and Republicans, decide on what stance they agreed, and then they would make their choice and explain why.

Table 20

Dave's Artifacts With Descriptions and Teacher Expectations

Lessons	Artifact title	Description	Student expectations
VDR 1: Politics and Voting	Issues in My Community	A 3-column document for students to write “liberal” and “conservative” viewpoints related to abortion	Students choose a topic important to their community, research and present Liberal vs Conservative viewpoints, decide which viewpoint they agree with and why
VDR 2: Power of Democracy	Note Catcher	Document for students to write reactions and use guiding questions to give feedback after watching a video	Students write feedback, reactions, and reflections after watching YouTube videos for class discussions
VDR 3: Personal Values	Values Inventory Summary	An 8-page document showing students’ ratings of personal values, graph, and responses to critical thinking questions	Students rate values in order of importance, answer two critical thinking questions, and present values and their ratings, graphs to class

Note. VDR = video discussion review.

For VDR 2, he brought a copy of a worksheet for his students to take down notes. Dave described it as the note catcher. In the lesson excerpt on the power of democracy, he expected his students to write their reactions on the note catcher after watching YouTube videos that showed the debate between conservative and liberal views on issues affecting Black and Brown communities that could affect how they vote in the November 2020 elections. In addition to writing their comments and thoughts on the note catcher, Dave explained he had included

questions to guide each student's reflections and reactions as they watched the videos and gave their feedback.

Dave brought to our third VDR an artifact he called a “Values Inventory Summary”. Dave stated that his students prioritized 10 personal values and rated them in importance from 1 (*least important*) to 5 (*most important*). They were then expected to justify their decisions and answer two critical thinking questions on the assignment. Dave chose the artifact to show how he has his students make decisions and explain why they make them. After creating their individual value inventory summary, each student presented it to the class to gain peer feedback. At times, Dave would use a summary or feedback to facilitate discussion.

In all three artifacts, Dave created opportunities and specific questions for students to express their voices and viewpoints. Additionally, the artifacts show connections between assigned student work and learning experiences with their immediate and broader communities (e.g., watching debates on videos, deciding on a viewpoint). In all the artifacts, students gathered evidence to justify their views. Dave’s practice also demonstrated that his students were expected to be actively engaged. In his practice, students discussed ideas relevant to their communities as well as current events outside school such as the elections.

In his description of CRT, Dave had stressed that he wanted his students to use their voices and make decisions. The artifacts from his teaching show how he enacted his beliefs in his teaching practice. They also illustrated practices that align with his high tally marks in cultural competence on the Ladson-Billings’ tenets. Overall, the artifacts reflected his belief not to force-feed his students’ information but to be committed to developing students’ decision-making and critical-thinking skills as they make choices and justify their choices.

Cross-Case Analyses

At the onset of my data analysis, I looked at all participants' data pool to identify cross-cutting themes: (a) identity and self-awareness, (b) CRT practices, and (c) influences on CRT perceptions and practices. I presented those in each case. I broadened my cross-case investigation to compare and contrast findings across individual cases in relation to my three research questions. Through examination across the five cases, I sought to shed light on each question to contribute to the development of richer descriptions of culturally relevant teaching perceptions and practices from White special educators with over five years experience.

RQ 1: What do White urban special education teachers with over five years experience perceive as teaching in culturally relevant ways?

Backgrounds and experiences. The five participants had similarities and differences in their backgrounds and experiences. In keeping with the inclusion criteria for the study, each self-identified as a culturally relevant teacher of students with a high incidence of disabilities. All participants were White urban special educators with over five years teaching experience working with Black and Brown high school students. All participants hold a state endorsement in teaching special education. Similarly, they all worked in a charter high school in a large metropolitan city in the Midwest. There was one male and four females with ages ranging from 28 to 48 years old. Three of the five teachers reported professional experiences working in more than one school district. Their years of experience teaching Black and Latinx students ranged from 6 to 25 years. All five participants earned master's degrees and three were enrolled in a second master's program at the time of this study. While three were English teachers, one taught mathematics and another taught social science. All described growing up in predominantly

White neighborhoods; however, Dave and Karen grew up in primarily White sections of a large metropolitan area, and Peggy, Lesley, and Nancy experienced a suburban upbringing.

The participants reported varying experiences regarding stand-alone culturally relevant college-level courses. None of the participants recall taking any stand-alone culturally relevant teaching coursework, but four shared their experiences with courses that embedded aspects of its practices. Among participants, a consensus emerged in their responses about not learning anything of value from their graduate programs about practicing culturally relevant teaching. Dave was unable to recall any stand-alone or embedded culturally relevant teaching practices in any courses, and Lesley was unable to name any specific relevant teaching coursework, but she remembered taking a course in graduate school about different cultures and viewpoints. Peggy could not recall any coursework in undergraduate studies, but she is currently receiving some instructions as part of her bilingual endorsement coursework. She was also the only participant who decried a lack of culturally relevant teaching general training in special education. Karen reported receiving formal coursework in culturally relevant teaching practice in her undergraduate program as well as recalled taking a course in multicultural education for her first master's degree. She recalled illuminating cultural practices being embedded in courses. In her current educational leadership master's program, she is taking a literacy course embedded with the appropriate practices. Karen's perception of culturally relevant teaching might have been influenced by the teachings in her literacy coursework as she noted how they had discussions focused on selecting culturally relevant literacy materials and resources for urban students. Nancy recounted undergrad coursework void of culturally relevant teaching practices. However, she was able to name a professor in graduate school who discussed cultural relevance in her special education coursework. Unlike the other four participants, Nancy was alone in attributing

learning about culturally relevant teaching from working closely with more experienced staff members at the therapeutic school.

Causality cannot be attributed to how background experiences and collegiate opportunities influence the perceptions of self as a culturally relevant teacher. Nor can we be sure of why some remembered a particular idea and others did not. We did not seek to determine the foci of participants' college or master's program. By raising the question in the initial interview conversation about the background in schooling, I might have influenced participants to think about something they might not have considered in their perceptions of self as a culturally relevant teaching professional. Nevertheless, the similarities of all participants having been raised in a mostly White neighborhoods in or near a large city, and all participants who chose to work in urban areas with Black and Brown students are worth noting. Also, the coursework addressing cultural relevance also varied in terms of when they completed their college programs. Those studying for additional graduate degrees more recently referenced culturally relevant teaching studies. It is important to note that the concept and the phrase culturally relevant teaching are relatively new in some college and graduate studies (Ladson-Billings, 1994). In their programs, what was covered, how and why they were covered might have influenced participants' memories and knowledge since conditions and context matter in the learning process.

Self-awareness as part of participants' culturally relevant teaching perceptions and practices. Across the five cases, each participant noted their racial identities and self-awareness were integral parts of their perceptions of culturally relevant teaching practice. Nevertheless, while self-identifying as White and commonly expressing an awareness of the racial and cultural diversity in their classrooms, participants appeared to be at different levels of self-awareness.

Dave was the only participant who described being aware of the cultural diversity around his White neighborhood growing up. His choice to share this information with me could indicate an early recognition of societal structures and groupings. Dave's practice might unconsciously have been shaped by this awareness and his focus to connect with his students by building a bridge. He also valued his beliefs and values to connect and link his classroom content and learning to his students' community. Dave's culturally relevant teaching practice demonstrates how well he can adjust the curriculum and practice to help his students achieve.

None of the other four participants (who happen to be female) shared with me a similar awareness of cultural diversity in their upbringing. Like Dave, Karen grew up in a White neighborhood in a large metropolitan city. However, unlike Dave, she reported having interactions with ethnic diversity in her family and racial and cultural diversity in her professional experience working in the same metropolitan city in which she grew up. Her earliest recollection of diversity came from her and her sister's marriage outside of their culture and ethnicity.

Unlike Dave and Karen who grew up in urban areas, Lesley, Peggy, and Nancy shared similar backgrounds growing up in suburban communities around a large midwestern metropolitan area. Unlike Nancy and Peggy, though, Lesley detailed varied experiences with other races and ethnicities while growing up. She recounted childhood memories of interacting with her father's work colleagues who were Black, her brother's Black friends being welcomed in her childhood home, having family from India and the Philippines, and having a bi-racial son.

Experience with diversity varied with each participant. Peggy did not indicate being aware of diversity growing up. However, similar to Karen, she reported experiencing diversity at her first teaching job in the city. Although Peggy recalled no interactions with Black and Brown

groups, she reported while growing up she developed a keen awareness of disability. She was part of a large family with an uncle who had Spina Bifida. Unlike the other four participants, Nancy recalled interactions and conversations with her Black friends as an athlete in high school.

All participants self-identified as practicing culturally relevant teaching, but Lesley was the only one who labeled herself as culturally relevant. She believed her family background made her respect everyone's cultures, but her responses demonstrated some limited understanding of what it means to be culturally relevant. For instance, when discussing what it meant to be culturally relevant, she chose to use the example of how she recognized her student who is a practicing Jehovah's Witness could not participate in student government. She was proud that she knew about that and the religious restrictions on her student. That was her only example in our interviews. Lesley never specifically referred to the experiences of her Black and Brown students. Inadvertently, Lesley might have been avoiding discussing race with me, a Black woman, or she could have been resistant in reflecting on the racial context in her classroom. On the other hand, she might also not have had the capabilities or understanding to be reflexive of her teaching despite her belief of being a culturally relevant person.

Like Lesley, Karen might also be limited in terms of capacity to be reflexive of her practice. In discussing what it meant to be culturally relevant, Karen chose to relate her connection to other ethnic cultures through marriage rather than link her perception of culturally relevant teaching to her work with Black and Brown students. Unlike the others, Nancy openly discussed racial experiences during her high school, in college, and at work. However, by concluding that numbers are numbers everywhere in the world, Nancy might have unconsciously revealed her lack of clarity about being culturally competent.

Open-mindedness and differences. Just as different experiences contributed to varied expressions of self-awareness, different ways of defining open-mindedness also occurred with the participants. Interestingly, three of the participants described themselves as open-minded. Dave, Lesley, and Nancy reported how they are accepting of other cultures based on their open-minded nature. Each of the three gave similar interpretations as to what they meant by being open-minded. All three described being open-minded as being ready to learn from their students. In addition, Nancy added to the definition by saying open-minded meant to learn from other staff members and her students' parents. Lesley thought she was open-minded also because she is respectful of everyone's cultures. Karen did not describe herself as open-minded. She described herself in ways related to the idea by referencing her intention of being a model of acceptance. She noted how she celebrates differences overall rather than singling someone out for being different.

Peggy did not indicate being open-minded in any of her four interviews. However, she did report being aware of her biases. That was actually a recurring theme across Peggy's interviews. Peggy noted that teachers need to be aware of their biases to practice culturally relevant teaching. Unlike the other three females, and though she is the youngest in terms of age and experience, Peggy shows a keen sense of awareness about her practice. Based on how well she knows her students and, perhaps, an unconscious awareness growing up with her uncle with a disability, Peggy seems to have consciously shaped her culturally relevant teaching perceptions and practice to focus on helping her students develop an awareness of their disability. Additionally, Peggy was the only participant that described being aware of what she called "a school-wide bias" against students with disabilities. She concluded that her school also had norms and practices that seemed to cater to one group of students in terms of language, culture,

and climate while marginalizing other groups. Her perception of such bias might indicate an awareness of the political underpinnings outside her classroom, and an uneasiness that she has no control over it at the school level. She focused on raising awareness with her students in what I understood to be her way of helping them develop self-advocacy skills. Even as she intentionally works to develop self-advocacy and give her students a voice in this manner, Peggy is still evolving in her teaching practice. She is determining how to connect her students' home and school; communicate more effectively with their parents; and understand the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, and disability in her learning environment. The interesting part about Peggy is her desire to improve her practice and set personal goals for herself in that regard.

Recognizing students' lived experiences. Across cases, participants described perceptions of the importance of the practice of what many referred to as bringing their students' cultures into their teaching. For example, all teachers shared resources and materials they believed to be part of their students' communities. Dave brought in videos of people debating political ideas central to the national election, community, and his students. He looked for and used video with persons who looked like his students--Black and Brown persons. He also extended his teaching into the community by using community spaces and activities. Peggy chose topics that she believed helped her students become aware of their disabilities. Nancy utilized examples from her students' experiences in her mathematics lessons. Karen believed that selecting an article and a movie with a diverse cast helped her connect her lessons to her students' communities. Lesley uses the text about Anne Frank, a young teenager persecuted for being part of a disenfranchised group, to engage her students. Both Lesley and Dave recognized and taught about the importance of students studying themselves: for example, doing autobiographical work.

Dave added one unique component, neither mentioned nor alluded to by other participants. He believed his culturally relevant teaching practices were characterized by what he described as providing opportunities for his students to voice their perspectives and opinions. He seemed to do that with earnest intention in his planning and teaching. He created spaces in his curriculum and teaching where his students could express themselves. He wove into his teaching discussion and problem solving issues relevant to his students' community. He drew on community resources as part of enacting and shaping the curriculum. He worked purposefully to help students develop critical thinking skills, which one might suppose is pivotal to students being able to express their voices in various situations.

As the participants shared different perspectives of their understandings of culturally relevant teaching, I could see that their beliefs were impacted by experiences, backgrounds, awareness of self and others, and awareness of their students. In addition, participants' beliefs might have been impacted by their levels of racial awareness and their choices to acknowledge and self-examine their viewpoints. Their beliefs also influenced the choices and reasonings they made about how to focus attention on their students' cultural experiences. Finally, the extent to which students' backgrounds, current views, and overall cultural and linguistic diversity were intertwined into the curriculum and teaching varied. Dave showed the highest quality of integration. Dave's integration could also have been influenced by the content and resources utilized by participants especially during the time of the study.

RQ 2: How do White urban special education teachers with over five years experience foster a learning environment for students from culturally diverse backgrounds?

To analyze how participants fostered a learning environment for their culturally diverse students, I focused on their described practices and our discussions about them. I created three

displays to compare and contrast participants' described behaviors. I examined participants' descriptions of culturally relevant teaching checklist behaviors in their learning environments (see Appendix N). In Table 21, I looked across cases at the percentages of described behaviors related to Ladson-Billings' three tenets: academic achievement, cultural competence, and social consciousness. In Table 22, I compared participants' artifacts from their teaching along with their expected learning outcomes for students. Taken together, these analyses helped me to understand similarities and differences across participants' teaching practices to shed light on their self-reported culturally relevant teaching learning environments.

Descriptions of behaviors in practice. I show similarities and differences in how participants described their learning environments according to the 10 identified teaching behaviors on the checklist (see Appendix N). The most agreement across participants in terms of identifying those behaviors in their lesson excerpts was in three areas: Behavior 1, motivates/non-judgmental toward students ($n = 15$), Behavior 2, linguistics variation ($n = 11$), and Behavior 5, modifies curriculum ($n = 11$). Perhaps the findings from motivating/being non-judgmental and accepting linguistic variations could be regarded as another way for teachers to give their students voices in their classrooms. Having a knowledge of their students translated into being able to modify their curriculum, which was the third most highly rated behavior across cases. Drawing on that, I was able to understand participants' classroom behaviors of how they changed their curriculum to align with their students' lived experiences.

Although the similarities demonstrate common practices across these teachings, I also analyzed the distinct practices participants described for each culturally relevant teaching checklist behavior. The checklist behavior that garnered the most varied descriptions across the participants was in Behavior 7, student strength/interest. There were seven different behaviors

identified across the five participants within that category. Three teachers described peer support and two utilized examples from the community. However, four other behaviors were also described for students' strength/interest. Perhaps by describing behaviors that were more different than similar, participants were indicating that behaviors to support students' strength/interest may be context specific.

Another example of behaviors being context-specific could be seen in Peggy's teaching in which she saw sign language as an example of a linguistic variant. Similarly, for Behavior 3, authentic dialogue, Nancy described having student-teacher discussions in her mathematics class; the other participants, however, noted the examples of teacher-student discussions. Interestingly, only in Nancy's mathematics class do we find scaffolding as a behavior to include in the category of students' background, Behavior 6.

Differences in learning environments were also reflected in the category Behavior 8, questioning. Across cases, more than one teacher used different questioning strategies. However, Dave described how he stimulated learning in his social science teaching by using probing questions. Other unique actions were noted in the Behavior 10, other, category. Both Dave and Karen use humor in their classrooms. Peggy commented that she used SEL check-ins. Perhaps that could be seen also as a context-specific practice. Peggy teaches English to students with autism. Perhaps she saw doing check-ins to support students as they learn about their characteristics as part of her overall emphasis on students gaining self-advocacy.

As I compared participants' practices across the teaching behaviors, I noted similarities across learning environments that could be descriptive of how these self-reported culturally relevant teachers fostered learning environments. However, noted differences indicate that no two culturally relevant teaching classrooms are necessarily the same. Even among teachers who

taught similar content (e.g., English), I noted how one used behavior such as sign language as an example for Behavior 2, linguistic variation, and the others did not. In Nancy's mathematics space, student-teacher dialogue, which emphasizes student-first interaction, was an indication of Behavior 3, authentic dialogue, while other teachers in other contexts described teacher-student interaction, which emphasizes teacher-first interactions for the same behavior.

Taken together, the described behaviors show the teachers seemed to value student-centered learning. Across cases, participants emphasized the importance of knowing students' backgrounds and current lived experiences. Perhaps the differences among the participants are another indication of teachers choosing to modify their curriculum, use community resources, and teaching approaches that support diverse students' racial and linguistic backgrounds.

Behaviors aligned with Ladson-Billings' tenets. In Table 21, I compared percentages of behaviors aligned with Ladson-Billings' three theoretical tenets. In her CRP theory, Ladson-Billings had described three tenets: academic achievement, cultural competence, and social consciousness. I aligned the behaviors in the culturally relevant teaching checklist to those tenets to determine whether participants' practices reflected any of them. By drawing on Ladson-Billings' tenets, I was able to compare and contrast how each teacher's practice aligned to a particular theoretical foundation of culturally relevant teaching. To gain an overall picture of the ways each participant fostered a culturally relevant teaching learning environment, I calculated the total percentage of described behaviors across all three VDR sessions for each participant. I arrayed the data to learn how participants demonstrated and addressed each tenet within their learning environments. For instance, Nancy had 59.1% of her behavior descriptions aligned with the tenet of academic achievement, while 27.3% of the total were in cultural competence, and 13.6% were in social consciousness.

Across cases, the highest percentage of described behaviors was in academic achievement and that followed by cultural competence. For social consciousness, the percentage was nearly one half of those for academic achievement. Three of the participants recorded the highest percentage in academic achievement. For instance, while Dave had 57.6% of his behaviors in cultural competence, his percentage in the other two categories were nearly half. Likewise, Nancy had a similar spread. She had 59.1% in academic achievement and nearly the same low percentage as Dave in the other areas. The low percentage could be related to Dave's subject matter, social science; the topic of instruction, the 2020 presidential elections; or his perceptions of his culturally relevant teaching practices. Similarly, Nancy's percentage could be related to her subject matter, mathematics; or the topics she was teaching, budgeting; or her perceptions of her culturally relevant teaching practices.

Table 21

Percentages of Behaviors Aligned with Ladson-Billings' Three Tenets

Participant	Tenet by percent		
	AA	CC	SC
Karen	36.4	39.4	24.2
Peggy	43.8	31.3	25.0
Lesley	38.9	33.3	27.8
Nancy	59.1	27.3	13.6
Dave	18.2	57.6	24.2

Note. AA = academic achievement, CC = cultural competence, SC = social consciousness

Notably, Karen, Peggy, and Lesley had a narrow range amongst the tenets suggesting they were attending to all three tenets somewhat equally in their instruction. All three taught in instructional settings, defined as self-contained classes with all students who have disabilities. All three also taught English but focused on different topics as presented in their VDR excerpts and our discussions.

While three participants, Nancy, Peggy, and Lesley show the highest percentages in the academic achievement tenet, two indicated high percentages in cultural competence. Perhaps, this is an indication that the teachers have high expectations for their students as reflected in their instructional topics and teaching practices. Dave and Karen scored high percentages in cultural competence. Perhaps this indicates the behaviors of these two teachers connect with their students' experiences in terms of identity, culture, and community. Perhaps their high percentages in cultural competence might indicate that their culturally relevant teaching practice is at a level the other participants might be working toward.

Across cases, all five participants reported the lowest percentages of their behaviors in the social consciousness tenet. That tenet is described as teachers helping students identify, understand, and become critics of societal inequities (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Doing that as teachers arguably necessitates being aware of social inequities and how to integrate that awareness into their teaching. Moreover, teachers choose whether and how to teach students the skills and ideas to become social critics. At the least, perhaps the low scores across the participants could indicate the complexity of enacting practice associated with those ideas. Also, perhaps the teachers lack the ability, are unwilling, or not prepared to consider and teach social consciousness skills to their students.

As I compared the percentages across cases, I noticed that all participants' practices reflected all the tenets to varying degrees. The distinction in how high they scored themselves might have been connected to their perceptions, definitions of, and capacities to foster a learning environment for students from culturally diverse backgrounds. Perhaps four of the teachers who scored high in academic achievement perceived they focused on academic success through infusing specific content, materials, and culturally relevant teaching to help their students succeed. Perhaps the narrow range of differences across the tenets for three of the participants might indicate that they draw on curriculum and teaching embedded and enacted with attention to culture and knowledge of students. Perhaps Dave perceived his teaching practice in social science was focused on cultural awareness; yet in his practice, he demonstrated attention to cultural competence. Taken together, I suggest that context-specific and content-specific factors contributed greatly to described teacher practices.

Teacher artifacts and learning outcomes for students. In Table 22, I conducted a cross-case analysis of artifacts shared with me to determine commonalities and differences in the student assignments and teacher expectations. Many of the artifacts shared by Dave, a social science teacher, and three of the English teachers focused on writing skills. For example, students were expected to write an essay, respond to writing prompts, and write answers to questions. Dave provided students opportunities to choose and develop critical thinking skills. His expectations included student reflections and prioritizing and critiquing political and social issues. Peggy created a space where her students think and write about themselves and answer questions about the provided text. In her classroom, Peggy works with her students to improve their writing skills. Like Peggy, Lesley creates a space for her students to think and write about themselves. However, she wants her students to be reflective about socio-political inequalities

and write or use pictures to respond to writing prompts. In her learning space, Karen is like Lesley in her choice of wanting her students to debate social issues. In addition, she wants her student to compare economic disparity. However, unlike Peggy and Lesley but similar to Dave, Karen is focused on student discussions as she expects her students to debate. In her environment, Nancy is focused on her students learning about budgetary constraints and time to help with their independence.

RQ 3: What relationship, if any, exists between teachers' perceptions of culturally relevant teaching and the realities of its implementation?

Across cases, I found evidence of connections between participants' perceptions of culturally relevant teaching and implementation in their teaching; however, it is nuanced. First, each participant believed they had to be racially and culturally aware of the differences between themselves and their students. Each participant proceeded with intention and the belief in the importance to bring culturally relevant resources and materials into their teaching and learning environments.

Table 22

Teacher Artifacts and Learning Objectives From Three Lessons

Names	Artifacts	Objectives
Dave	Issues in My Community	Students choose, research political viewpoints, and share out
	Note Catcher with prompts	
	Values Inventory Summary	Students write reflections
Peggy		Students prioritize personal values
	Essay: All About Me	Students write about themselves
	Teacher made PowerPoint: Erika's Community	Students read, listen, discuss, and answer questions about text
Lesley	Common and Proper Nouns	Students correctly use nouns
	Autobiography Template	Students write autobiography and share
	Jamboard: Anne Frank analysis	Students reflect on text
Karen	Jamboard: music selection	Students respond to writing prompts
	Newsela article on Black resiliency	Students read/listen annotate using highlighters
	Speaking Rubric for class debate	Students explain text and connect it to prior experiences
Nancy	Annie (2014) with Venn Diagram	Students debate
		Students compare lifestyles of rich and poor
	Elapsed Time document	Students learn budgeting skills
	Budget Project Document	Students explain importance of spending and saving
	Teacher's Budget Lesson Plan	Students calculate cost of their wanted items
		Students practice elapsed time on tiered worksheets

Teacher practices promote diversity and interaction. All participants demonstrated teacher behaviors, notably across different subject matters, intended to nurture diversity and promote interactions. For example, Dave's perception of culturally relevant teaching as an avenue to provide voices to the diverse cultures and groups not reflected in his social science curriculum is demonstrated in his classroom practices. His artifacts and learning objectives indicated his intentionality in bringing into his teaching the voices of his students in their lived experiences in their communities. Dave's lived experiences as a person who has been aware of diversity since his early years could contribute to his perception and practices. In his learning environment, Dave's behaviors show efforts to center his students' cultural experience and prior knowledge. He adjusted his curriculum and teaching to do that.

Peggy perceived culturally relevant teaching as an approach to teach her students about their disabilities, and her practices showed that. Rather than focus on issues of race, Peggy chose to focus on her students' disabilities. Peggy's perception of herself as a compassionate person stemmed from her experience with an uncle with Spina Bifida might also have influenced her understanding of this practice. Thus, in her classroom with her students with autism, Peggy's lessons focused on functional academics. She creates content specifically related to helping her students and their parents gain an awareness of their disabilities and develop self-advocacy skills. Perhaps her awareness of the tension existing between Black and Brown students in her school, which she attributed to the school-wide climate of bias, could also have impacted her culturally relevant teaching perceptions and practices.

In her description of culturally relevant teaching, Lesley indicated that it meant she is accepting of her students' cultures and that she can learn and understand their interests and experiences. She acted on those perceptions in her teaching of journalism. She provided

opportunities for her students to write about themselves, express their choices, and examine their experiences by comparing them with those of another teenager by reading a standards-based text, *Anne Frank*.

Karen's perception of culturally relevant teaching was to select materials and videos that represent the diversity of her students. In Karen's learning environment, students read an article on resiliency in the Black community and watched a classic movie that included diverse actors. Karen believed those practices helped students *see* themselves and diversity in general. In contrast, Nancy described culturally relevant teaching as an opportunity to incorporate her students' backgrounds and especially their ethnicity and culture into her lessons. Nancy enacted that belief in her mathematics classroom when she asked her students to share examples of money and time. Specifically, Nancy described how she would incorporate the example of a student from a Hispanic home where there is home cooking into her mathematics lesson.

Across cases, participants' beliefs were reflected in their practices in several aspects. The participants' perceptions were realized in the design and shape of their practices. I saw this across the different subject matters and topics the teachers taught. All participants valued the knowledge of their students and bringing student communities into their classrooms. They could talk about their own experiences to varying degrees, and how those lived experiences shaped their perception and practices. One area that is less clear is how each participant continues to self-reflect on themselves and their practice and determine how they counter their own beliefs with within their learning environments.

Chapter V: Discussion

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore how White urban special education teachers perceive and practice culturally relevant teaching to help their culturally diverse students with special needs learn. For over three decades, the concept of practicing culturally relevant teaching has been the focal point of many scholarly works (Dover, 2013; Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995a, 1995b). Yet, with so many defining terms, understanding and implementing culturally relevant core tenets could be confusing to teachers (Delpit, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Neri et al., 2019, Paris 2012). Furthermore, less is known about the use of culturally relevant teaching in the field of special education even as researchers advocate for teachers to incorporate its practices in the classrooms (Dover, 2013; Gay, 2002; Goldenberg, 2014; Haynes, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1994/1995a/1995b; Nieto, 2017).

Current culturally relevant teaching research is focused mostly on general educators and preservice teachers (Banks, 2001; Gay, 2002; Paris, 2012; Shealey et al., 2011). While there are theoretical ideas about the value of culturally relevant teaching, conceptual and empirical evidence of the classroom practices of White urban special education teachers is scarce. The literature is especially limited as it relates to the perception and practices of culturally relevant teaching through direct interactions and interviews of active White urban special educators. I aimed to contribute to those deficits in my study. Using direct interactions and interviews with five White urban special educators, my goal was to present findings that expanded the cognition and application of educators' practices of culturally relevant teaching.

While exploring multiple meanings of the reflections from the teachers lived experiences, I identified three major themes:

- Theme 1 is the perception of self within culturally relevant teaching as it relates to the findings of identity and self-awareness (Blaisdell, 2016; DeRemer, 2021).
- Theme 2 is the knowledge of students (Danielson, 2007). This theme emerges from participants' culturally relevant teaching definitions and practices as it relates to working with Black and Brown students.
- Theme 3 is focused on the participants' acceptance and involvement in their students' communities.

I integrate the knowledge, thoughts, and actions in this study to discuss how the participants reference these themes within the teaching and learning process.

Perception of Self Within Culturally Relevant Teaching

The concept of identity in teaching is a canopy of how teachers reflect on who they are in the teaching and learning process (Roth et al., 2004; Jupp et al., 2019). Teacher identity is a valuable construct in understanding how White teachers negotiate the creation of learning spaces for their culturally diverse students. In their literature analysis, Jupp et al. (2019) alluded to the complex nature of White teacher identity as they described the following themes that highlighted the spectrum of the teachers' capacities in understanding issues of equity and justice in school practices and structures: (a) racialized silence and invisibility, (b) resistance and reconstruction of White privilege, (c) Whiteness in institutional and social contexts, (d) fertile paradoxes, and (e) reflexive Whiteness. Of note is the emphasis on the interconnectedness among the five themes that shed light on the complexities of White identity.

Like Black and Brown identities, White identity merges at many intersections. The ability to self-identify is, therefore, contingent upon how self-aware and reflexive the White teacher can be (Cho et al., 2013). I deliberately use the word “can” as a verb based on both meanings of *able*

to do and *permitted to do*. The predicament for White teachers who recognize the inequities and injustices within the classroom structures is twofold. I reason that they face two major questions: Do I have the capability to change what I know to be morally unjust and am I permitted to make that change? In addition to these two questions, I argue that White teachers who seek permission to make a change also consider how and where they obtain permission. I suggest this predicament is especially prominent among those White teachers in the racialized silence and the resistance and reconstruction of White privilege groups. Jupp et al., (2019) explained that these groups of teachers have some level of awareness of the inequities within their school system. That could clarify participant Peggy's reference to a school-wide bias. However, Jupp et al. posited those teachers either have an inability to do something about the inequity they are aware of or lack permission to transgress current practices and transform their own practice into a more student-oriented experience. By choosing to render their students' racial identities invisible in their learning contexts, such teachers demonstrate racialized silence and invisibility (Jupp et al., 2019).

To reiterate, several intersections occur concerning White teachers' identities. At one such intersection, the values White teachers bring can be seen that include embedded Eurocentric classroom values and how those juxtapose with the different values of their students. The decision to recognize and acknowledge such an intersection and decide to navigate toward a better environment for the diverse students is a personal one for each teacher. For example, in my study, Dave recognized his intersections: a White male, the teacher of the Eurocentric social science curriculum, and the facilitator who connected the lived experiences of his Black and Brown students to their learning. At that intersection, it would seem Dave made the decision to create a learning space where his students could express their thoughts using their voices. Dave's

ability to re-make his identity within his classroom and build a bridge of coalition with his students is what Jupp et al. (2019) referred to as *reflexive whiteness*. Reflexive Whiteness refers to the teacher's ability to deeply reflect on their White identity and White privilege. Nancy articulated her identity intersection awareness differently. Drawing on Jupp et al. (2019), Nancy demonstrated race-visibility. Nancy was able to acknowledge and describe her students' racial and cultural identities and experiences. However, Nancy's discussions of her students indicated a subtle undertone of naivety about race and culture. She was unable to situate her students' racial and cultural experiences within the global context of societal oppression despite having had experiences in high school with police racially profiling her Black friends. Her behavior is what Jupp et al. (2019) classify as *fertile paradoxes*. Fertile paradoxes refer to the contradictions found in the White teachers who articulate being critically aware of race and racism yet display race-evasion behaviors. Unlike Dave and Nancy, but similar to Peggy and her discomfort around emphasizing her students' racial identities, Karen and Lesley were *race-evasive* by avoiding mentioning their Black and Brown students in their culturally relevant teaching descriptions. By race-evasiveness, I refer to behaviors from White teachers that avoid race and racism while maintaining White privilege (Jupp et al., 2019). In the case of Karen and Lesley, their race-evasive behaviors could be classified as resistance and reconstruction of White privilege (Jupp et al., 2019).

Perhaps, for each of the teachers, their lived experiences were so pervasive that they were unable to reflect beyond who they are within the learning process. Perhaps, the structures of their lived experiences were so constricting that they could not allow themselves to violate their perceptions from those experiences (i.e., the instruction of the teacher as the expert within the instructional setting). Either way, the inability of some White teachers to be self-aware of

foregrounding students' culture might present a challenge as they seek to develop culturally relevant teaching. Such teachers might have difficulties in understanding the tenets and implementing them in their teaching.

The ability to distinguish between the expansive practices of their students, the practices of schooling, and the ideological underpinnings of their own unique identity could be a struggle for White teachers to acquire. The intricate nature of growing up White in a quilted society where Whites are trained to ignore the diversity within the fabrics of the quilt could be burdensome. By the time White teachers step into urban classrooms, they have had years of immersion in particular elements of the White cultural milieu. They have had years of preparation by mostly White teachers and college professors. They have been nurtured within societal spaces where their viewpoints matter. Some might have lived among primarily White, homogeneous communities. Subsequently, when considering White teachers' lived experiences, how are they expected to have a shift in mindset simply by stepping into an urban classroom filled with diverse students? In this sense, it is possible White teachers might lack the skills and capabilities to deconstruct race- and culture-invisibility (Goldenberg, 2014; Neri et al., 2019). Neri et al. (2019) argued that White teachers need support and re-training to de-construct school structures and practices and become racially and culturally visible.

When White teachers become racially and culturally aware, they could develop the capabilities to re-make their identities (Roth et al., 2004). According to Roth et al. (2004), the ability of the teacher to re-make their identity transforms the space where the identity is shaped. Like Dave, it is important for White teachers to re-make identities within their urban teaching and learning contexts. Such transformative understanding of the contradictions in his learning space might have helped Dave shape and re-shape his culturally relevant teaching practice.

For teachers to challenge schooling practices, they require a shift in paradigm (Crowley & Smith, 2015; Roth et al., 2004). Crowley and Smith (2015) emphasized for White teachers to become more racially aware, they must reflect on their lived experiences within the structures binding their interactions with others. By so doing, teachers might understand the essence of a paradigm shift in their classrooms. The teachers might also recognize the impact their identities have on the learning of urban students as they plan instructions and lessons (Blaisdell, 2016; Giroux, 1997; Jupp et al., 2019).

Arguably, with the high number of diverse students in urban classrooms, it is possible many White teachers from non-urban communities teaching in urban classrooms might have their identities challenged. Yet Blaisdell's (2016) description of the racialized context of urban classrooms calls for White teachers to be intentional in deconstructing the structures that maintain Eurocentrism. How each teacher comes to understand their classrooms as racialized spaces, and how each is willing and able to deconstruct the Eurocentric structures within that space might be related to their self-awareness as a White teacher of Black and Brown students. Therefore, to successfully foster learning in their classrooms, White teachers need to be critically aware of their identities (Blaisdell, 2016; DeRemer, 2021; Goldenberg, 2014). The ability to be critically aware might enable White teachers to recognize and confront the impact their identities have within the classroom dynamic (Giroux, 1997). Farinde-Wu et al. (2020) contended that as teachers can confront their racial identities, they are likely to experience a shift toward becoming more racially aware. Perhaps as White teachers become more racially aware, their culturally relevant teaching practice becomes more fluid as they interact with Black and Brown students. However, research cautions the ability to become racially aware and fluid is a gradual process

requiring critical reflection and socio-political knowledge of educational inequities (Blaisdell, 2016).

Many challenges confront the urban White teacher who begins the gradual pathway of becoming racially aware (Picower, 2009). First, it is critical for the teacher to address the binary nature of identity. Teacher identity is dynamic and shows itself through interactions with the curriculum and students. The dynamic element of each interaction is bound by time, space, and participants. In each bounded interaction, the teacher interprets, assigns meaning, and reacts to behaviors based upon their lived experiences, beliefs, and values. Conversely, teacher identity is restricting. The lived experiences, beliefs, and values the teacher brings into each interaction inadvertently limit the scope of meaning they can assign to behaviors and actions within interactions (Roth et al., 2004). To mitigate the limitations inherent within themselves, teachers must integrate approaches that violate current classroom practices. The ability to utilize such approaches and gain awareness is pivotal to the teacher's ability to effectively practice culturally relevant teaching.

Findings in the study support Gay's (2010/2018) assumption that teachers' cultural experiences influence teaching and learning. While my study findings indicate teachers are aware students come into the learning environment with their lived experiences, beliefs, and values, none of the teachers describe an awareness that they also do the same. Perhaps, the failure to describe what they bring into the learning context might be an indication of the invisible lines around their practices that have become quite normalized. Perhaps, the failure to articulate their awareness could be based on how well they understand their position as partners and co-learners with their students.

Positionality and Choice

Gay (2010/2018) and Ladson-Billings (1994) argued that to practice culturally relevant teaching effectively, teachers must be cognizant of how they are positioned in the classroom. The concept of positionality is important. Teachers who continue to maintain teacher-student interactions might inadvertently promote ongoing, pedagogically insensitive practices. Therefore, it is important for White teachers to be willing to shift from a teacher-led mindset to a student-centered learning experience. Logically, as teachers gain teaching experience, they could be challenged to see beyond the invisible lines of normalized practices, deconstruct the learning context, and position themselves as co-learners rather than experts of knowledge (Neri et al., 2019). Neri et al. (2019) contended that White teachers who find it challenging to deconstruct their learning spaces are challenged because they simply do not know how to deconstruct those spaces. Perhaps, years of being enshrouded within the constricting structures of the schooling system have further complicated how to break away from current structures. Examples of some constricting structures hidden under a yoke of exclusionary school practices are Carnegie credits (Carter, 2008; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), grading systems, standardized assessments, and English as the language of instruction (Blanchett, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2003/2010; Sleeter, 2001/2012).

Consequently, for teachers with the intention and desire to chisel away at any one of the constrictors, they must be armed with a different mindset, critical stance regarding educational inequities, and support. hooks (1994) contended that such teachers are on the pathway of a liberating process needed to develop culturally relevant teaching practices. Therefore, it is not unlikely that the White urban special educator with a suburban background and differing cultural experiences from their diverse urban students can be an effective teacher if they can be critically

cognizant of racial spaces and open to embracing a transgressive and transformative nature of teaching (Blaisdell, 2016; hooks, 1994; Sleeter, 2012).

Being transgressive and transformative can only be meaningful for teachers who have learned to understand the concept of self and have the ability to position themselves as co-learners in their interactions (Blaisdell, 2016; hooks, 1994). hooks (1994) clarified that to practice culturally relevant teaching effectively, teachers will need to transgress current structures and norms that maintain inequities. The choice to be transformative depends upon the teacher's understanding of their self and their positionality in the learning environment. The choice to be transformative also depends on a willingness to separate from the inequities that promote educational disparities (hooks, 1994).

An understanding of self is key as one interacts with others (Blaisdell, 2016). Likewise, it is noteworthy to understand that the overt ability to self-identify as White presumes a conscious or unconscious awareness of others as non-White. In my study, each teacher chose to negotiate their awareness of who they are within their own learning space and how well they understood who their Black and Brown students are. While Dave and Nancy negotiated their awareness of diversity in terms of their Black and Brown students' racial identities, three participants avoided identifying their students by race. Peggy described diversity in terms of disability; Lesley explained diversity in terms of religious differences; and Karen described diversity in terms of ethnicity. I suggest the White teachers in the study showed they are at various foundational levels in their culturally relevant teaching practices. Perhaps, the varying points of racial awareness for each teacher might signify the basis of their perceptions and practices of culturally relevant teaching. Furthermore, since learning opportunities provided in each classroom were based on each teacher's awareness and understandings of that awareness, then teachers who are more

racially aware could be more likely to provide more culturally relevant learning opportunities for their students. It might explain how far the teacher is willing and capable of empowering their students and disempower their “self” (Ladson-Billings, 1994/1995a/1995b/2014).

Social Consciousness

Scholars indicated teachers may find it challenging to link their identity, students’ cultural experiences, and their teaching practices (Goldenberg, 2014; Neri et al., 2019) Research findings indicate that teachers are challenged in race-evasive behaviors such as avoidance (Picower, 2009), student empowerment (Gay, 2010/2018; Irizarry, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2014), and lack of social consciousness (Blaisdell, 2016; Paris, 2012; Sleeter, 2012/2017). In my study, all five teachers indicated various challenges that align with the research. As they struggled to link their identities, students’ cultural experiences, and their teaching practice, the teachers’ lived experiences, the concept of the teacher as the expert often conflicted with their perception of culturally relevant teaching practice. According to the principles of culturally relevant teaching, teachers should be critics of the power and inequities within the structures and practices of schooling. Yet, many teachers struggle to do so. In fact, I note that all five participants scored themselves the lowest in enacting behaviors aligned with Ladson-Billings’ tenet of social consciousness. That finding corroborated scholarly work about how challenging it is for teachers to be critics of the practices and structures of schooling (Blaisdell, 2016; hook, 1994; Hyland, 2005; Roth et al., 2004; Sleeter, 2012).

The findings of this study do not indicate how teachers develop social consciousness as part of becoming racially aware. Nor do the findings show how they acquire the skills to support their students in becoming socially and politically conscious. I suppose teachers could develop an awareness of social consciousness through college courses such as multicultural education.

Yet, the experienced teachers included in this study did not indicate any formal coursework in social consciousness. They reported not benefitting from any college coursework that they had prior to teaching. Three teachers reported being enrolled in graduate programs currently and being exposed to some aspects of culturally relevant teaching, but none of the teachers specified being trained in developing social consciousness skills. I do recognize that the scope and curriculum of their college courses related to culturally relevant teaching is unknown and beyond the scope of this study.

When examined through the lens of CRT, how each teacher perceives culturally relevant teaching might impact their willingness to develop social consciousness skills (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). CRT challenges White teachers to recognize systemic school practices, beliefs, and actions that directly impact one racial group as it suppresses others (Farinde-Wu et al., 2020). Farinde-Wu et al. (2020) stressed that White teachers could help culturally diverse students achieve by understanding how their racial identity benefits them. According to CRT, Lesley's inability to perceive that race matters in culturally relevant teaching might be race-evasive and a form of avoidance. When asked about cultural differences in her classroom, she avoided referring to her Black or Brown students. Karen's understanding of culturally relevant teaching is providing different materials she believes are about her students' communities. This belief might indicate Karen's inability to center her students as co-learners within the classroom. It could also indicate her inability to relinquish her teacher power and grant her students agency in their learning. Additionally, Karen was seemingly uncomfortable with discussing issues of race with me. Her behavior supports the scholarly literature that indicates the struggle White teachers might experience when engaged in discussions of race (Crowley & Smith, 2015). With Peggy, her struggle at the intersection of disability and race framed her culturally relevant

teaching practice. Her choice to focus on disability rather than race could also be understood as avoidance. Peggy's actions also confirmed the literature about race and tensions experienced by White teachers (Crowley & Smith, 2015). These three teachers inadvertently maintain one constricting teaching practice--the teacher being the expert.

Of all the participants, Dave demonstrated an ability to center his students' lived experiences and community integration in his lessons. When viewed from the CRT lens, Dave is able to create a space for his students to reflect and engage in learning while maintaining their cultural experiences. He extends his learning beyond his classroom in terms of the topics he chooses and the activities he designs. Dave's behaviors support the research that culturally relevant teaching teachers create opportunities where students can develop socio-political understandings within and beyond their community (Milner, 2007/2011/2017). Nancy's understanding of culturally relevant teaching supports the literature that White teachers make sense of their teaching practices within their lived experiences (Goldenberg, 2014). Neri et al. (2019) suggested the confusion over culturally relevant teaching practices could be a teacher's way to seek clarification about how to implement the practices. It is worthy to note how each teacher represents culturally relevant teaching in different ways, thereby, corroborating the confusion Neri et al. referenced. Perhaps, the willingness of the teachers to participate in the study could be an unconscious way to seek help with their practice.

Data indicate each teacher's good intention towards culturally relevant teaching practice, but Gay (2010) reminded us that having good intentions alone is not sufficient to practice culturally relevant teaching effectively. Hyland (2005) argued that many White teachers have good intentions and would describe themselves as being a *good* teacher of Black students. However, she cautions that the inability of White teachers to recognize the inequity and injustice

in the structures and practices embedded in their classroom results in White teachers with good intentions inadvertently perpetuating racism.

Knowing Students

The five teachers in the study often stated the importance they placed on “knowing students.” They shared different examples of knowing and gaining information about their students. While Dave described knowing his students by giving them choices, Peggy explained knowing them through their disabilities. For Lesley, she referred to knowing her student through their autobiographies and Karen described knowing them through debates and discussions. In her mathematics class, Nancy knows her students by listening to their parents. Like teachers in my study, many educators often refer to the importance of knowing their students. Scholars argued that by knowing their students, teachers can build relationships of trust that positively enhance learning (DeRemer, 2021; Gay, 2010).

The meaning teachers ascribe to knowing students, and the actions they take to fulfill the meaning vary from one teacher to the other. One way to consider the knowledge of students is to draw on definitions such as those advanced in the Charlotte Danielson framework for teaching. According to Danielson’s (2007) framework, the knowledge of students is embedded in the first domain of instructional planning and preparation. Danielson (2007) argued that teachers’ abilities to teach are tied to how well they have learned the strengths, needs, culture, interests, abilities, preferences, and development of students.

While Danielson’s reasoning connects to teacher evaluation and accountability, van Manen (1991/2006/2008) examined the concept from a stance he calls pedagogical sensitivity. He reasons that experienced teachers’ acts of knowing their students provide teachers immediate insight into negotiating the learning process. To become pedagogically sensitive, he suggested

that teachers need to reflect in critical ways. That thoughtful and critical thinking--before, after, and, importantly, during the act--of teaching can help teachers gain awareness as they guide their students in learning. van Manen (2006) argued for a distinction between “reflection on experiences and reflections on the conditions that shape our pedagogical experiences” (p. 86). Many constraints exist on teachers’ reflections embedded “in institutional and political factors that operate in people’s lives” (p. 86). van Manen (2006) said,

As the teacher is expected to treat the job of teaching more and more technically, the teacher is less and less able to reflect on the meaning, purpose, and significance of the educational experiences of students whom the school and the curriculum are supposed to serve. (p. 86)

van Manen (2008) cautioned about the provocative nature of reflection and suggested that teachers may need to use “tact” in reflecting on and negotiating present-day concerns with learning. In teaching, tact demands critical awareness of interactions, and those interactions must remain true and linked to the social human context (van Manen, 2008). In other words, for each teacher, tact is a conglomerate of their personal and moral values, and how those values inherently interrelate to social, cultural, and ethical ideas. van Manen also recognized how current classroom practices are based on models and agendas that sometimes prohibit pedagogical sensitivity and capacities to act on them.

van Manen’s (1991/2006/2008) description of constraints and complexities that experienced teachers face as they consider how they know their students is reflected in my findings. In their practices, teachers showed different levels of effort, goals, and difficulty as they described the specifics of knowing their students. For example, they were challenged with (a) how to know parents, (b) in what ways to connect curriculum to students’ lives, and (c) how to

engage with and within students' communities. It may indicate that what van Manen referred to as "pedagogical sensitivity" is part of the networks of perception and practice associated with culturally relevant teaching. Moreover, for White teachers to practice pedagogical sensitivity, they must consider the betterment of others, especially from traditionally disenfranchised groups such as those in which their Black and Brown students are members. Hence, within the urban classroom, White teachers with pedagogical sensitivity could practice a kind of tact in their mediation of curriculum and knowledge by negotiating with and teaching the students.

While the study findings show the teachers are cognizant of the importance of knowing their students, how they negotiate knowledge of students varies. The variability in how they come to know their students might indicate a point of tension within their culturally relevant teaching practices. I note the point where the teacher's sensitivity and their practice intersects with other structures (e.g., the curriculum they are given to teach or the language of instruction) that could exist outside of themselves. For example, Dave negotiates to adjust the curriculum around what he perceives to be areas of empowerment for his students within their community. Based on his sensitivity to his students, Dave created a learning space where both he and his students could discuss topics such as voting, abortion, and personal values. In fact, his behavior within his learning space supports Danielson's assertion that teachers who gain knowledge of their students are themselves learners.

However, unlike Dave, the other four teachers demonstrated different epistemological pathways about understanding what students bring from their lived experiences. Perhaps the ability to learn about their students is related to the level of awareness the teachers have of their own identities and positioning of themselves in their learning interactions with their students. That also might influence the extent to which they are willing to be student advocates. While

findings from the study show that the teachers seemed open and “accepting of differences” (quoting one participant), their actions indicate subtle conflicts in their understandings of race and racism. For example, Peggy’s understanding of race and racism appears conflicted. Pertaining to her school, Peggy identified school-wide practices that marginalized Black students. Nevertheless, in her classroom she chose to focus on disability awareness while ignoring the racial existence between herself and her students and among her different student groups. Peggy’s ability to choose when to recognize racism (school wide) and when to ignore racism (in her classroom) supports what Picower (2009) described as a stereotypical understanding of race.

The identity conflicts of the teachers in the study support the scholarly work that culturally relevant teaching could and should foster a mindset of growth in teachers (Gay, 2010/2018; Ladson-Billings, 1994/ 1995a/1995b). I argue this variation in their practice highlights Gay and Ladson-Billings’ reasonings that culturally relevant teaching is a process and getting to know and understand students are a part of that process. By demonstrating the ability to grow and learn, the teachers in this study are in the process of shifting from a culture of the teacher as an expert to a culture of the teacher as learner. In this process, teachers could continue to evaluate their practices and mindsets as they address ways that support student success in academic and social learning. While findings show teachers differentiate tasks based on their knowledge of students, it remains unclear how well each teacher understands how students’ socio-cultural influences impact their interpretation of materials, events, and activities.

Community Involvement and Participation in the Community

Another crucial finding in this study is how teachers reported on the importance they gave to linking their practice to the community. DeRemer (2021), Gay (2010/2018), and Milner

(2011) asserted the importance of consistently connecting with students and their communities. The theme of community importance seems quite connected to teachers' practices and goals of knowing their students. The theme also derives from the ability of the teacher to understand the impact the student community might have on the student's learning process. DeRemer (2021) stated that the White teacher could gain an understanding of student values, beliefs, and lived experiences by building a connection that includes their lives within the communities. Gay (2010/2018) and Milner (2011) added that teachers who exercise culturally relevant teaching philosophically invite their students' home and community life into the classrooms.

The aspects of the community to which each teacher chooses to connect, however, might vary. Such variation might be based on how well they understand how their students' identities, cultures, and learning are interrelated. Crowley and Smith (2015) claimed such variation might even be based on the willingness of the teacher to deconstruct their personal involvement and benefits. How teachers come to understand the value of their students' lived experiences remains unclear. What is clear is how far the teachers deconstruct their personal involvement in the learning process is linked to and reflected in the various ways they draw on and learn from their students' communities. Teachers in my study described various connections to their students' communities. For example, Peggy physically took her students into their community. Dave advocated for students to use local resources and apply knowledge learned in their lessons to their communities. He valued advocacy and wanted his students to dig deeper into community values and problems. Dave demonstrated his understanding of the value of his students' communities in their learning, an idea that Blanchett et al. (2009) noted is an advanced kind of community-connection making.

Taken together and based on their different understandings of culturally relevant teaching and how they chose to implement it in their various learning spaces, the teachers deliberately included building connections between their classrooms and their students' homes and communities. This supports assertions by DeRemer (2021) and Nieto (2017) that to be effective, White teachers of marginalized Black and Brown students need to build bridges that connect themselves to their students' lived experiences. Doing so might allow students to engage in learning within urban classroom spaces where their values and cultures are nurtured. Doing so might also allow teachers to develop an awareness of race, confront its overwhelming presence in their classroom and everyday lives, and successfully navigate and deconstruct their classroom practices to act with tact (van Manen, 1991) and in culturally relevant ways.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this qualitative study: the small sample size, controlled inclusion criterion, and the methodology selected. Although using a multiple case study is designed to yield a rich and thick description, the limited number of participants and the non-randomized nature of selection might have made it difficult to generalize findings across the field (Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) cautioned that such a limitation is common among case-study methodology. Five White special educators who teach in urban charter high schools were the selective focus in this study. Yet another limitation is the exclusion of special educators from grade schools and those teaching students with low-incidence disabilities. Additionally, given its descriptive nature and focus solely on teachers' practices, this study did not yield any effects of culturally relevant teaching practices on urban students.

Another limitation is in defining the teaching practices of White urban special educators and excluding Black and Brown teachers. Doing so is not an affirmation of the unimportance of

Black and Brown teachers; however, doing so was a choice made based on available data that projected White teachers will continue to be in the majority in the urban teacher workforce even as the enrollment of culturally diverse students rapidly increases within the next 10 years (NCES, 2020).

In addition, the setting of the study conducted during the Corona Virus pandemic was also a limitation of the study. Because of the pandemic, there were no face-to-face interactions that might have yielded closer observations of non-verbal reactions and feedbacks from participants. Another limitation to note existed in the dynamic between the White participants and the Black researcher. Teacher responses could have been impacted by how comfortable they were with sharing issues of race and cultural differences with me, a Black researcher.

Another study limitation is that teachers were from urban charter high schools. This could make it difficult to generalize to other settings including urban and suburban public high schools. In addition, it is important to note that conducting the research within a 10-week period might be considered a limitation; Creswell (2014) recommended prolonged time in the field to ensure an in-depth understanding of participants in their natural setting. Although case study data are strengthened by extended time in the field, previous special education case study research has utilized similar or shorter time periods (Brantlinger et al., 2005). To address this limitation, multiple data sources were gathered and triangulated. Gathering multiple sources of data over an extended period helped provide robust descriptions for each case (Creswell, 2014). The gathering of multiple data from different sources using different methods ensured a verification process and triangulation of data (Miles et al., 2013). Utilizing multiple data sources strengthens the research and provides the researcher the opportunity to identify how the case study comes together (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2014). However, despite the limitations, the findings of this study

have the potential to support administrators in determining professional developments and provide supports that could help with teacher retention regardless of racial and cultural differences.

Implications

Implications for Research

There are several implications for research on culturally relevant teaching practices in special education and the need to increase our knowledge of how White urban special educators perceive and implement this practice. First, research that focuses specifically on special educators' thinking and practices regarding culturally relevant teaching is needed. Such research could consider several positions: (a) how culturally relevant teaching might impact student post-secondary transition outcomes (i.e., employment, education, and independent living); identify how culturally relevant teaching perceptions could influence the writing of IEP goals and accommodations; and (c) how culturally relevant teaching could factor into ways instructional delivery models are chosen and how to develop wrap-around services for students to achieve within and beyond the classrooms.

Further clarification could derive from additional studies that examine the experiences of all teachers who work with urban students from culturally diverse backgrounds. Providing more illustrations clarifying how teachers understand and connect student experiences to content and context is invaluable. It could also indicate effective practices that might mitigate the educational inequities in schooling (San Pedro, 2014).

Next, the methodology I used for this study did lead to rich, holistic descriptions of urban teachers' practices. The method of recording teaching and then reflecting upon it with another practitioner holds promise for how to continue to improve urban teaching and learning. The

findings from this exploratory study also indicated the need for more research using case studies. Utilizing case studies emerging from interviews, videos, and artifacts of practice, and discussion with the researcher could offer a robust approach to the interpretation of the teaching practices (Merriam, 2001/2009; Mertens, 2014). Merriam (2001/2009) and Mertens (2014) suggested that research in case studies could also deliberately include observations of teacher practices within its natural setting and for a longer period. Extending the time of observations and discussions could also strengthen connections between the researcher(s) and participants.

Another implication from the findings is a need for information about college coursework, formal teacher preparation, and professional development. Recognizing this gap, Sleeter (2017) suggested future research include investigating college coursework and formal preparation that could have prepared teachers to develop culturally relevant teaching practices as well as what aspects of their preparation continue to impact their related experiences.

The findings from this study suggest a need for more content-specific research related to culturally relevant teaching. Such research could explore how content-specific teachers charged with teaching culturally diverse students in the urban special education classroom modify curriculum and adjust instructional practices to reflect students' lived experiences and cultural values. Additionally, findings suggest context matters in culturally relevant teaching practices. Future research should be designed to understand patterns within specific contexts (e.g., in special education, the range of instructional delivery models including inclusion) that could inform and shape culturally relevant teaching practices. Finally, future research could include the perspectives of other stakeholders such as building administrators and students. The views of families and community members are also key and often overlooked. How these stakeholders

experience culturally relevant teaching within and beyond the classroom could provide a wider perspective that impacts teacher practices.

Implications for Practice

One focus is to study how culturally relevant teaching intersects with special education mandates and policies (e.g., development of the IEP, IEP meetings, services, and supports provided to students). A study of collaborative teaching and the crafting of inclusive educational spaces imbued with ideas related to culturally relevant teaching could also yield important information. Another area of implication is in teacher preparation and practice. Findings from the study underscore the need for professional development for teachers and others who interact with urban students from culturally diverse backgrounds. For instance, findings from this study might help school building administrators understand the specific needs of teachers who practice culturally relevant teaching. By gaining an understanding of what teachers need, building administrators could make informed decisions about the resources and training to support teacher growth toward the practice. Additionally, being able to provide high-quality support to all experienced urban special educators might be critical in teacher retention.

In addition, the information from this study could be used to design recruitment strategies to help new teachers understand their role in the urban classroom with respect to their cultural backgrounds and lived experiences. With the aging of the teacher workforce; shortages, especially in special education; and cost implications for school budgets to find and train new teachers; building administrators could investigate best practices necessary to develop in-coming special educators and ensure they are ready to work with diverse learners who could be different (i.e., racially, culturally) from themselves. They could determine resources that could help teachers craft culturally relevant teaching practices while also enhancing teacher satisfaction and

student engagement. Overall, the findings of this study could inform recruiting, training, supporting, and retaining both new and experienced teachers in urban classrooms.

Finally, there is a need for future research to examine the relationship between culturally relevant teaching and students' outcomes in the areas of academic achievement, independent living, and post-secondary education. The political and socioeconomic dynamics underpinning the structures and practices of schooling make it challenging to advocate for changes in school practices and reform without strong evidence. Being able to gather such empirical data after high school could help with shaping urban special education teaching and learning. Having data on the impact of culturally relevant teaching on all students, including White students, could also be helpful when developing social consciousness in students and teachers. That could lead to discourses about racism, classism, and other divisive societal structures. A related implication for practice is for building administrators and urban district leaders to engage teachers and other building stakeholders in social consciousness training and practices. Utilizing effective approaches to develop social consciousness awareness could help teachers learn to understand why and how to empower themselves and their students in building a community where all learning can be meaningful.

Conclusion

At the beginning of my study, I defined my positionality as a Black parent, a teacher of primarily Black and Brown students, and a colleague of many White urban special education teachers. My well-meaning intentions at the time did not prepare me for the level of critical awareness and mindfulness that this study has afforded me. My aim was to provide a robust description of five White teachers' lived experiences as they practiced culturally relevant teaching in urban classrooms. I aimed to highlight the insights and behaviors that developed

from interviews and discussions about their practices. I provided the teachers an opportunity to share their perspectives and experiences based on the questions asked and the meanings they ascribed to in their practice. I also wanted to gain an understanding of how their awareness of self, as White teachers of culturally diverse students, shaped their practice. In the end, I also examined my own interpretations, my assumptions, biases, and preconceived notions about White teachers and the urban classroom. I hope their counter stories will help strengthen our understanding of urban teacher practices. I also hope my findings help support all teachers, including the White urban teachers who show passion and resilience in teaching in today's urban classrooms.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer

SEEKING RESEARCH STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Study Title: White Urban Special Educators: Making Sense of Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices

The purpose of this research study is to learn more about how White urban special educators perceive teaching in culturally relevant ways. To participate in this research, you must be:

- White, non-Hispanic/non-Latinx
- LBS1 licensed or endorsed (K-12) special education teacher with over five years teaching experience in an urban high school
- teach at least one high school core subject
- self-identify as teaching in culturally relevant/responsive ways to teach students with high incidence disabilities (e.g., learning disabilities, behavioral disabilities, or autistic spectrum disorder), in at least one class with at least 70% African American and/or Latinx students

Participation in this study will involve:

- Initial interview (face to face or virtual) lasting approximately 60 minutes • Three video review discussions of your teaching practices lasting approximately 45 - 60 minutes each
- Member check following data analysis

If you believe you may be eligible, would you consider exploring this study with me? Here is the link to the Screener for your convenience:

https://uic.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dnaf6LDRPtyfoX3

WHITE URBAN SPED AND CRE FLYER v1.1 9/11/2020 1 of 2

To find out more information about this study, please contact: Principal Investigator: Abisola Bakare xxxx@uic.edu or 7XX XXX-XXXX or Dr. Parker-Katz @ xxxx@uic.edu or XX2-XXX-XXXX

*Thank you for your consideration in participating in this study

Appendix B: Email Script

White Urban Special Educators: Making Sense of Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices

EMAIL SCRIPTS

INITIAL EMAIL SCRIPT TO MY PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

Dear potential participant,

I am interested in recruiting you for my research study to determine how White urban special education teachers view and practice culturally relevant teaching. As an active special educator who may fit the eligibility criteria, your experiences and perspectives will be invaluable to this study.

I have attached a flyer with more detailed information about what you will be asked to do. Your participation in the study will be confidential. Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during data collection and analysis. There will be small compensation for your participation at the end of this study. Please note, your participation will be a valuable addition to our research and findings could lead to an improvement in how White urban teachers understand and practice culturally relevant teaching.

If you are interested in participating, kindly respond to this email and I will contact. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at XXX@uic.edu

Thank you for your interest in my proposed study.

EMAIL SCRIPT FOLLOWING POTENTIAL PARTICIPANT

RESPONSE Dear _____,

Thank you for your response to my recruitment flyer.

My name is Abisola Bakare. The purpose of my study is to co-investigate how White urban special educators view and describe culturally relevant practices. Let me assure that participation is entirely voluntary. There are no consequences for not participating in the study. I want to assure you that your personal information and the information you share will be confidential.

I would appreciate it if you could take the time to complete the online Eligibility Screener via UIC Qualtrics. The link is provided for you:

https://uic.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dnaf6LDRPtfoX3

If you would like to contact me for further information, my phone number is XXX-XXX-XXXX. I am available from 3pm - 7 pm Monday – Friday and all day Saturday.

If you would like me to contact you, please reply to this email with your phone number and a convenient day and time to call.

Kindly let me know if you any questions.

Thank you.

Appendix C: Eligibility Screener

ELIGIBILITY SCREENER

White Urban Special Educators: Making Sense of Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices

Directions: I am interested in learning about culturally relevant teaching practices. For each of the following statement, please provide the response that best applies to you.

Eligibility screener will be made available for participants to complete online via this link https://uic.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dnaf6LDRPyfoX3 to UIC Qualtrics via the recruitment email.

Statement	Response	
I am an LBS1 licensed or endorsed (K-12) special education teacher	Yes	No
I identify as White/Caucasian; non Hispanic/non Latinx	Yes	No
I have over five years teaching experience	Yes	No
I self-identify as teaching in culturally relevant/responsive ways	Yes	No
I teach students with high incidence disabilities (e.g., LD, BD, or ASD), in at least one class in which at least 70% are African American and/or Latinx students	Yes	No
I am interested in co-investigating what it means to teach in culturally relevant ways.	Yes	No
I teach at least one high school core subject	Yes	No

If you checked “yes” to all the statements above and are interested in co-exploring this topic with me, please provide the following information and I will contact you directly.

Name:

Telephone(s):

Best day / Time to call:

_____/_____ Email

_____ @ _____

Please indicate if you prefer to receive a phone call, email, or text message _____

Contact information for this study: Abisola Bakare at xxx@uic.edu or Dr
Michelle Parker-Katz at xxx@uic.edu

Thank you for your time.

Appendix D: Demographic Profile

White Urban Special Educators: Making Sense of Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Instructions: Thank you for considering participating in this study about White urban special education teaching practices. Please complete the following demographic profile.

1. I have taught students from African American and Latinx backgrounds for **5 10 15 20 25+**

2. What is the highest degree you have completed? If currently enrolled, highest degree received:

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree

Doctorate degree

3. Circle your age range

25 – 30 30 – 35 35 – 40 40 - 45 45 – 50 50 +

4. My role is

Instructional Resource Inclusion Other_____

5. My subject of instruction is _____.

Appendix E: Initial Interview Protocol

White Urban Special Educators: Making Sense of Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices

INITIAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

My interest as a UIC doctoral student and current urban special educator is to understand how White urban special educators perceive they practice culturally relevant teaching. Each school environment is unique, yet one commonality is the changing faces of students with special needs who come from a variety of diverse communities. There will be a maximum of six participants for the study. Today, I invite you to co-investigate this topic with me. Below are my expectations for the study:

To collect data, we will meet four times. Today is the initial meeting. I will explain the expectations and timeline as well as your role as a participant in the study. The data collection will be conducted bi-weekly over an 8 – 10-week period.

Before you leave this meeting, we will set up another meeting within two weeks from today. I will follow up with a reminder email and share with you a copy of the video recording protocol.

We will meet again three times for the Video Review discussions. Prior to those meetings, I expect you to record yourself teaching in what you believe is culturally relevant practice. You will watch those recordings and select a 10 – 15 minutes video excerpt of your instructional practice using your own recording device, phone or IPAD.

Please **DO NOT** video tape any of your students faces. Also, **DO NOT** use any of your students last names in the video recording. If you accidentally mention a student's last name or the school in which you work, such information will be left out of the interview transcripts.

Contingency plan for Covid-19; you may video record your student interactions during remote classroom teaching using your IPAD or phone.

At all our three Video Review discussions, we will watch the three different video excerpts of you teaching in what you believe is a culturally relevant way. I will ask you to describe what you are doing and the meaning you give to what you are doing in each video excerpt.

You can stop me at any time to ask questions and seek clarification.

Currently, do you have any question?

Initial Interview Conversation Guide

Introduction and Background Information

Good _____ **Mr./Mrs./Ms.** _____.

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today and participate in my research. I am interested in what you have to say and therefore, have planned this initial interview as a conversation. Please feel free to expand your answers to give me a complete picture of your experiences.

Do you have any question for me at this time?

1. You signed up, and met the eligibility criteria for this study, you believe you practice culturally relevant teaching, what do you mean by that?

Probe: Tell me about any of your student's cultures

Probe: Share your thoughts and beliefs about teaching as it relates to culture

2. I want you to think of your personal experiences that may have prepared you to practice culturally relevant teaching.

Probe: Any trainings/preparations? Formal or informal

Probe: Personal disposition (values, attitudes, beliefs)

3. Do you believe being White impacts how you teach students from culturally diverse backgrounds?

Probe: Tell me more about that

4. How would you describe your role as a teacher of students from culturally diverse backgrounds?

5. Describe any "aha" moment you have had practicing culturally relevant teaching.

Probe: How did that moment impact you.

Probe: How did that moment impact your students

6. Explain specific practices you believe are important to culturally relevant teaching

7. Describe any barriers you may have encountered as you practice culturally relevant teaching?

Probe: Tell me about how you practice integrating the home and/or community in your teaching.

8. Is there anything else you would like to share, add, or clarify?

Appendix F: Parental Information Sheet

INFORMATION SHEET - PARENT

My name is Abisola Bakare. I am a doctoral student at University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). I am co investigating how White urban special educators' practice culturally relevant teaching in an urban classroom with your child's teacher. I am notifying you that your child may be audio recorded during regular instructional interactions. Your child is not a participant in the study. There are no consequences for your child not participating in the recording. I want to assure you that your child will not be video recorded, nor will his/her last name be used during the audio recordings. Parental permission is required prior to informing the student and including them in the recordings

If you choose not to include your child in the recording, you only need to check the box below. All personal information and the data collected and shared with me will be confidential.

I have attached a flyer with more detailed information for your attention. In addition, teachers may choose to bring a sample of your student's work for review and discussion. Such sample will have all personal identifiers blackened out. Audio/artifacts will be destroyed once data analyses are complete.

Kindly check the required box below indicating whether you permit your child to be audio recorded during instructional interactions and for his/her work sample to be used during discussions. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at xxxx@uic.edu.

Thank you.

Abisola Bakare

I permit my child and his/her work sample to be part of the recorded instructional interactions and reviews.

I do NOT permit my child or his/her work to be part of the instructional interactions and reviews.

Parent Name: _____ Date: _____ Parent

Signature: _____

Appendix G: Student Information Sheet

INFORMATION SHEET FOR STUDENTS

Instruction: Carefully read the information below to your students prior to your recording. This is to make them aware that they are being audio recorded during the instructional interactions.

Say:

I volunteered to participate in a study about what it means for me to teach in a culturally relevant way. For this study, I will be recording how I teach my class. Doing so may result in recording your voices as I interact with you in the classroom. I will not record your faces. Also, I will not use your last names during this time together. I will share a sample of your work with the researcher during this study. All audio recordings and work sample/artifacts) will be destroyed after data analyses

Your parent's permission has been provided for you to be included in the recordings.

Students whose parents have not given permission to be recorded and who are not volunteering to do so can still participate in the lesson by completing independent work during the audio recording. Such students will not have their work samples shared with the researcher.

Do you have any questions?

Appendix H: Video Recording Protocol

White Urban Special Educators: Making Sense of Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices

VIDEO RECORDING PROTOCOL

You may audio record yourself teaching in what you believe is a culturally relevant way in your classroom as often times as you want using your own recording device such as a phone or IPAD. Prior to our meeting, you will review your recordings and select a 10-15 minutes audio excerpt of you practicing what you believe is culturally relevant teaching. It is this selection that you will bring to our video discussions. You will repeat this procedure three times to meet study requirement.

Please **DO NOT** video tape any of your students faces. Also, **DO NOT** use any of your students last names in the audio recording we will listen to together. If you accidentally mention a student's last name such information will be left out of the interview transcripts. Please note the researcher will not receive copies of any of your audio recordings.

Contingency plan for Covid-19: you will have the option to audio record your instructional interactions with students remotely using your personal devices (IPAD or phone). The researcher will not receive copies of the recordings you have made. Each video discussion session will be conducted via UIC Zoom with you presenting and pausing each audio recording for discussions and clarifications as you deem fit.

Please bring at least one artifact to our video discussion session. Examples of an artifact may include one example of teacher resource or student work, with name and any personal identifier blackened out, that you used for the lesson.

At each video discussion meeting, following our initial meeting, we will both listen the audio excerpts of you teaching in what you believe is a culturally relevant way and discuss what we hear. We will meet three times for a total of four meetings for this study.

Each session will be approximately 45-60 minutes.

You may pause the recording at any time to make comments, clarify information, and ask questions during the video discussion session.

Appendix I: Video Review Guide

VIDEO REVIEW GUIDE

Introduction/Background Information.

Good _____ Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____. Thank you for your continued participation in my research. This session is a video discussion session. Since I am interested in what you have to say, please feel free to stop the audio recording to expand/clarify your answers so I can get a complete picture of your culturally relevant teaching experience. We will also discuss the connection between the artifact/item you bring with you and the audio recording.

Do you have any questions for me at this time?

Soon, you and I will review your 10 – 15 minutes audio excerpt of your teaching. I will not receive any recordings you have made and share at the sessions. Together, you and I will co-construct what you understand to be teaching in culturally relevant ways. You have a copy of the CRT checklist. Mark the behaviors that you hear on your checklist. I will complete a checklist also. We will share our data to validate what we heard and tallies recorded and discuss any disagreements.

Any questions at this time?

Phase 1: Prior to video review (Reflection on preparation)

Segment 1: Tell me what made you choose this excerpt?

What was/were the expected outcome(s) for the lesson?

Segment 2: What artifact do you have?

Connect the artifact/item you brought to the audio recording.

Segment 3: Define/Review/Describe the CRT checklist behaviors

Phase 2: Listen to the audio (Reflection on behaviors)

Mark behaviors you hear on checklist (tally frequency; identify evidence)

Share thoughts/clarifications/comments about excerpt

Phase 3: Post video review

Discussion on tallies – compare number of tallies, discuss differences until agreement is reached.

Any clarifications, additions, comments, questions?

Appendix J: Culturally Relevant Teaching Checklist for Video Review Discussion

Participant and researcher will review audio for evidence/description of the behaviors that show teacher demonstrating culturally relevant practices.

Behavior	Evidence / Description	Frequency		
Motivates/Non-judgmental				
Linguistic Variation				
Authentic Dialogue				
Parental/Community Involvement				
Modifies curriculum				
Evidence from student's background				

Centers student strength/interest				
Questioning				
Filters content through cultural lens of student				
Other behaviors				

Notes: _____

Appendix K: UIC Institutional Review Board Approval Letter**Approval Notice
Initial Review – Expedited Review**

September 13, 2020
Abisola Bakare, MEd
Special Education
Phone: (773) 841-4321 / Fax: (312) 996-5651

RE: Protocol # 2020-0755
“White Urban Special Educators: Making Sense of Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices”

Dear Mr. Bakare:

Members of Institutional Review Board (IRB) #2 reviewed and approved your research protocol under expedited review procedures on September 9, 2020. You may now begin your research.

Your research meets the criteria for approval under the following category(ies): Protocol reviewed under expedited review procedures [45 CFR 46.110] **Category: 5, 6, 7**

Please note the following information about your approved research protocol:

Please note that letters of support from the school(s) are required if recording in-class interactions with students. In addition, Research Review Board (RRB) approval is required for studies involving Chicago Public School (CPS). Please submit the letters and/or RRB approval prior to recruitment/enrollment, via an Amendment.

Please note that minor administrative revisions were made to the protocol and recruitment/consent documents by OPRS staff to update the footers. Please remember to use only those approved (stamped) documents to recruit and enroll subjects into the research.

PIs who wish to begin or resume research involving activities that have been placed on temporary hold by the University due to the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e., non-therapeutic, in-person research) must complete a COVID-19 Human Subjects Research Restart Worksheet for an assessment of their studies prior to resuming or initiating the research. <https://uic.infoready4.com/#applicationForms/1817478>
Please refer to the Human Subjects Research Restart page on the OVCR website for additional information.
<https://research.uic.edu/news-stories/human-subjects-research-restart> The research restart is being managed by the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research (OVCR) and the UIC Center for Clinical and Translational Sciences (CCTS). Questions about the campus research restart may be directed to research@uic.edu.

Please note that as per the revised Federal Regulations (2018 Common Rule) and OPRS policies your research does not require a Continuing Review; therefore, the approved documents are stamped only with an approval date. Although your research no longer requires a Continuing Review, you will receive annual reminder notices regarding your investigator responsibilities (i.e., submission of amendments, final reports, and prompt reports), and will be asked to complete an Institutional Status Report which will be sent to you via email every 3 years. If you fail to submit an Institutional Status Report, your research study will be administratively closed by the IRB. For more information regarding Continuing Review and Administrative Closure of Research:
<https://research.uic.edu/human-subjects-irbs/policies/approval-date-and-approval-period>

Protocol Approval Date: September 9, 2020

Approved Subject Enrollment #: 6

Performance Sites: UIC

Sponsor: None

Research Protocol(s):

- a) White Urban Special Educators: Making Sense of Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices; Version 3; 09/10/2020

Documents that require an approval stamp or separate signature can be accessed via [OPRS Live](#). The documents will be located in the specific protocol workspace. You must access and use only the approved documents to recruit and enroll subjects into this research project.

Recruitment Material(s):

- a) DEMOGRAPHICS; Version 1; 08/01/2020
- b) SCREENER; Version 1.1; 09/11/2020
- c) FLYER; Version 1.1; 09/11/2020
- d) email (Scripts); Version 1.1; 09/11/2020

Informed Consent(s):

- a) online (consent); Version 3; 08/20/2020
- b) In person (consent); Version 3; 09/11/2020
- c) Research involves activities related to screening, recruitment, or determining eligibility per 45 CFR 46.116(g).
- d) A waiver of documentation of consent has been granted under 45 CFR 46.117 for the online/remote research activities; minimal risk; subjects will be provided with an information sheet containing all of the elements of consent.

Assent(s):

- a) Student Info; Version 1; 09/11/2020

Parental Permission(s):

- a) Parent Info; Version 1; 09/11/2020

Page 2 of 3

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO
Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

201 AOB (MC 672)
1737 West Polk Street
Chicago, Illinois 60612

Phone (312) 996-1711

**Additional Determinations for Research Involving Minors:**

These determinations have not been made for this study since it has not been approved for enrollment of minors.

Please remember to:

→ Use only the IRB-approved and stamped consent document(s) when enrolling new subjects.

→ Use your **research protocol number** (2020-0755) on any documents or correspondence with the IRB concerning your research protocol.

→ Review and comply with the [policies](#) of the UIC Human Subjects Protection Program (HSPP) and the guidance [Investigator Responsibilities](#).

Please note that the UIC IRB has the right to ask further questions, seek additional information, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Please be aware that if the [scope of work](#) in the grant/project changes, the protocol must be amended and approved by the UIC IRB before the initiation of the change.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research. If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the OPRS office at (312) 996-1711 or me at (312) 996-9299. Please send any correspondence about this protocol to OPRS via [OPRS Live](#).

Sincerely,

Allison A. Brown, PhD
IRB Coordinator, IRB # 2
Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

cc: Michelle Parker-Katz, Special Education, M/C 147
Norma Lopez-Reyna, Special Education, M/C 147

Page 3 of 3

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Appendix L: Consent for Participation in Research

University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Research Information and Consent for Participation in Educational Research White Urban Special Educators: Making Sense of Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices

Principal Investigator/Researcher Name and Title: Abisola Bakare

Faculty Advisor Name and Title: Dr. Michelle Parker-Katz

Department and Institution: Department of Special Education

Address and Contact Information: 1040 W Harrison St, Chicago, IL 60607

About this research study

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Research studies answer important questions that might help change or improve the way we do things in the future.

Taking part in this study is voluntary

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose to not take part in this study or may choose to leave the study at any time. Deciding not to participate, or deciding to leave the study later, will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled and will not affect your relationship with the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC).

This consent form will give you information about the research study to help you decide whether you want to participate. Please read this form and ask any questions you have before agreeing to be in the study.

You are being asked to participate in this research study because you identify as a White urban special educator with over five years teaching experience and believe you teach students with high incidence disabilities in culturally relevant ways. Additionally, you currently teach one class in which at least 70% of students are African American and/or Latinx.

Four to six participants will be enrolled in this research study.

Important Information

This information gives you an overview of the research. More information about these topics may be found in the pages that follow.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?	We want to find out more about how White urban special education teachers perceive and demonstrate teaching in culturally relevant ways.
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**WHAT WILL I
BE ASKED TO
DO
DURING THE
STUDY?**

Once eligibility screening is completed via link to UIC Qualtrics and requirements met, you will be asked to complete a consent form and a demographic questionnaire made available for you via link to UIC Qualtrics to be provided via the recruitment email.

You will be invited to a UIC Zoom meeting with the researcher at which you will be informed about your responsibilities for the study and have a conversation about what you describe as culturally relevant teaching. This meeting will be audio recorded.

You will be asked to video record yourself teaching as many times as you like using your own device (IPAD or phone).

Contingency plan for Covid-19: teachers will have the option to record themselves as they interact with their students remotely using their own personal device (IPAD or phone).

You will be asked to watch your video recordings, select three 10-15 minutes excerpts, and come to three video review discussion sessions either face to face or via video conferencing to discuss your selected video excerpts.

You will be asked to watch your selected three 10 – 15 minutes excerpts together with the researcher and co-investigate behaviors that show you teaching in culturally relevant ways. You will provide any video you have made to the researcher. Each discussion session will be audio recorded.

You will be asked to bring one or two artifacts to show how student cultural experiences are integrated into the lessons. Examples of artifacts may include rubric; lesson plan showing cultural modifications to the curriculum; multiple ways of assessing; sample of student work showing evidence of cultural variations in response.

You will be asked to complete a checklist to capture each observed behavior and the frequency during the discussion sessions.

If you are able to participate, you will be asked to meet every two weeks for a period of 8 -10 weeks until the initial meeting and three video discussions have been completed.

HOW MUCH TIME WILL I SPEND ON THE STUDY?	<p>You do not require any training to participate in the study.</p> <p>You will spend approximately 15 minutes on the demographic questionnaire and the consent form online.</p> <p>You will need approximately 60 minutes for the initial conversation.</p> <p>You will need approximately 45 – 60 minutes for each follow-up</p>
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	<p>video review discussion session conducted within 2 weeks of the initial conversation interview for a total of three video review discussion sessions.</p> <p>You will also be asked to complete member checks of each conversation/discussion session lasting between 5 – 15 minutes.</p>
ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO TAKING PART IN THE STUDY?	<p>Your participation in the study may not benefit you directly. It is hoped it will benefit urban special educators in the future by helping the researchers learn more about the behaviors that support culturally relevant teaching practices and might promote urban special education student engagement and achievement.</p>
WHAT ARE THE MAIN RISKS OF THE STUDY?	<p>The primary risks presented by this research study are breaches of privacy (others outside of the study may find out you are a subject) and/or confidentiality (others outside of the study may find out what you did, said, or information that was collected about you during the study).</p> <p>You may be uncomfortable with some of the questions you may be asked and/or asked to discuss. This research may include some items about race and racial interactions within the classroom context. Potentially uncomfortable items may include discussions of Whiteness, power dynamic within the classroom, and discussions of those with the PI who is an African immigrant.</p> <p>You can skip and/or not respond to any question that may make you uncomfortable.</p>
DO I HAVE OTHER OPTIONS BESIDES TAKING PART IN THE STUDY?	<p>You have the option to decide not to take part at all or you may stop your participation at any time without any consequences.</p>

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY?	<p>For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study, please contact Abisola Bakare at XXX-XXX-XXXX or email at xxx@uic.edu or Michelle Parker-Katz at XXX-XXX-XXXX or email at xxx@uic.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a study subject; including questions, concerns, complaints, or if you feel you have not been treated according to the description in this form; or to offer input you may call the UIC Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS) at XXX-XXX-XXXX or 1-866-XXX-6215 (toll-free) or e-mail OPRS at uicirb@uic.edu.</p>
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Please review the rest of this document for details about these topics and additional things you should know before deciding whether to participate in this research. Please also feel free to ask the researchers questions at any time.

What procedures are involved?

Data will be collected in two phases. Phase One is our initial meeting following the receipt of a signed Consent form and Demographic Profile via UIC Qualtrics. In that meeting, we will have a conversation about your professional experiences, review expectations for the video recordings, and the three follow-up video review discussions. You will be provided a copy of the Video Review Protocol (VRP) and the Culturally Relevant Teaching checklist via email. The VRP will clarify what you are expected to record. You will be informed that together we will watch the 10-15 minute excerpts you bring to our video review discussions. The conversation will be guided by the Semi-Structured Conversation Interview Protocol (CIP) provide an opportunity for you to describe how you perceive culturally relevant teaching practice, and how you foster a learning environment for your students.

Our conversation via UIC Zoom will be audio recorded. At the end of this first meeting, I will clarify that you are to video record their teaching, according to the VRP provided and set up an appointment to meet within two weeks via UIC Zoom. Once data is transcribed, I will send you a summary of your interview transcript via email for member check.

Phase Two will include three “video review discussions”. Prior to each video review discussion session, you will have video recorded yourself practicing what you believe is culturally relevant teaching. You will record using your own personal device, such as an IPAD or phone. You will review your recordings and select a 10-15 minute excerpt of what you believe shows you practicing culturally relevant teaching. That 10 – 15 minute excerpt is what you will bring to the video review discussion session (VRD). Our VRD sessions will only be audio recorded.

Each of the three VRD’s will be guided using a tool I created - the Video Review Guide (VRG). For each discussion, you will be invited to bring one or two artifacts connected to the video excerpt. Also, as we watch the video excerpt together, we will complete the Culturally Relevant Teaching Checklist – another tool I created to help me understand your teaching practices and actions.

Will I receive the results from the study?

You will receive a summary for member checks during data collection. No other results will be made available to you from the study.

What are the potential risks and discomforts of the study?

There are no significant physical or psychological risks involved in your participation. You may feel discomfort discussing about race and race interactions in your classroom. Potentially uncomfortable items may include discussions of Whiteness; power dynamic within the classroom and having conversations with the PI who is an African American immigrant. If you feel such discomfort, you can stop the research at any time. Your participation is voluntary.

What about privacy and confidentiality?

Efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential; however, we cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. In general, information about you, or provided by you, during the research study, will not be disclosed to others without your written permission. However, laws and state university rules might require us to tell certain people about you. For example, study information which identifies you and the consent form signed by you may be looked at and/or copied for quality assurance and data analysis by:

- Representatives of the university committee and office that reviews and approves research studies, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Office for the Protection of Research Subjects.
- Other representatives of the State and University responsible for ethical, regulatory, or financial oversight of research.
- Government Regulatory Agencies, such as the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP).

A possible risk of the study is that your participation in the study or information about you might become known to individuals outside the study. The master list of your personal information and audio recordings will be stored securely on UIC Box server to prevent access by unauthorized personnel. All transcribed data will be coded using pseudonyms and stored in the UIC Box server.

When the results of the study are published or discussed in conferences, no one will know that you were in the study. During the study, no photographs, or videos will be collected. All audio recordings collected will use pseudonyms to protect you and de-identified when the master list is destroyed. You will be presented with a summary of our discussions for member check and only the researcher will have access to all collected data. Data will be destroyed following completion of data analyses.

What are the costs for participating in this research?

There are no costs to you for participating in this research.

Will I be reimbursed for any of my expenses or paid for my participation in this research? You will receive \$100 Amazon gift card after four meetings with the researcher and

upon completion of data collection. If you do not finish the study, you will not be compensated. You will receive your gift card at the end of the data collection.

Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?

If you decide to participate, you have the right to withdraw your consent and leave the study at any time without penalty. The researcher also have the right to stop your participation in this study without your consent if they believe it is in your best interests.

Remember:

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

Signature of Subject

I have read the above information. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I will print a copy for my records.

I consent to participate in this study.

I do not consent to participate in this study.

UIC IRB Social, Behavioral, and Educational Research Informed Consent Template: 11/01/19 Do NOT Change This Field – IRB Use ONLY

Appendix M: Codebook

White Urban Special Education Teachers and Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices Codebook 2021

Data-Driven Codes	Description/Definition	Examples
Personal experiences with Diversity (PAD)	Participants describe experiences with diversity through personal history/interactions growing up	<p>“I had a lack of exposure to diverse cultures growing up.” (D: Init. Int. p 2)</p> <p>“I went to a public high school. We had students from different areas around the community and that opened the whole world to classes with students of way different backgrounds, from Asian to Hispanic to black” (N: Init. Int. p 1).</p> <p>“When I was growing up there was some Mexican population, but it was mostly Polish. There was only like two or three black students in the whole school” (P: Init. Int. p 2)</p>
Perception of role as a Culturally Relevant Teacher (PCrT)	Participants describe their beliefs about what they need to do in their CrT roles	<p>“Need to always be an ongoing learner.” (D: Init. Int. p 3)</p> <p>“Letting them know that my students have a voice and they need to be heard” (N: Init. Int. p 6)</p> <p>“My role is to help them (students) become advocates for themselves - as somebody who helps them find their voice and make</p>

		sure that they're not being taken advantage of.” (P: Init. Int. p 3)
Identity and Self-awareness (ISA)	Participants describe awareness of the racial and cultural differences between themselves and their students	<p>“As a white man, as a white man, as a Caucasian, you know, I need to be self-aware of my privilege.” (D: Init. Int. p.2)</p> <p>“I’m not just a white lady who’s gonna not understand where you’re coming from” (N: Init. Int. p 5)</p> <p>“As a white teacher teaching them like, you know what I mean? It’s awkward.” (P: Init. Int. p.2)</p>
Impact of CrT (IOC)	Participants describe their beliefs about the usefulness of culturally relevant teaching. They express such values from a personal or professional point of view.	<p>“The reaction has been different from my students. They say instead of just being a white man with knowledge and whatever, they’re more responsive, they’re more accepting of the information that I am giving them as a white man, instead of just talking, I think we understand each other better and our classroom is our community too” (D: Init. Int. p 3)</p> <p>“Look at your own biases and kind of reflect on that” (P: Init. Int., p.4)</p> <p>“Even though we all might be different, there’s things that link us together and trying to figure out what those links are, and how to fortify them and how to incorporate them” (N: Init. Int. p 5)</p>

Description of actions that promote CrT (ACrT)	Participants describe actions they believe describe their practicing of culturally relevant teaching	<p>“I include the cultures of the students that I am teaching in my teaching.” (D: Init. Int. p 1)</p> <p>“I rely on the community a lot for real life experiences.” (P: Init. Int. p. 4)</p> <p>“Getting to know your students. Know where they're coming from, their background, taking the time to listen to them. I think that's number one. Two. Talking to the families” (N: Init. Int. p 7)</p>
Diversity extends beyond classroom (DBC)	Participants are aware diversity extends beyond their classrooms.	<p>“I need to be aware that not all Spanish speaking countries are the same...we tend to bunch up all the African American population, but there's so much diversity there.” (D: Init. Int. p 3)</p> <p>“I think having that global sense like the entire city and the entire school system because I've worked in hundreds of schools” (K: Init. Int. p 2)</p> <p>“I knew the city is diverse. So, you could say in a way I was ok with it and I had no worries teaching in my city” (D:Init. Int p 2)</p>
Support of their practicing CrT (SCrT)	Participants describe what they believe supports their practice of CRT. This can include persons, or	<p>“having a good support system within like your department from colleagues. With administrators, I mean, if there's ever issues they have your back, if you will. Like, they</p>

	structures within school, structures outside school.	<p>will understand where I'm coming from.” (D: Init. Int p 4)</p> <p>“Chrystal, being African American, she'd be like, this is how we talk to children” (N: Init. Int. p 4)</p> <p>“sometimes their (students’) parents get involved and are supportive” (P: Init. Int. p 5)</p>
Challenges to their practicing CrT (CCrT)	Participant describes barriers or challenges in trying to practice CRT	<p>“A parent that’s like who are you to be teaching my kid...also, language barriers, cultural barriers.” (D: Init. Int. p 4)</p> <p>“if you're not open minded” (L: Init. Int. p 3)</p> <p>“I feel parents get disappointed that I don't speak Spanish. Sometimes I think that I can't help their kid the same as the Spanish-speaking teacher.” (P: Init. Int. p.4)</p>
Sense of insecurity/inadequacy (SOI)	Participant describes their own uneasiness and tension while practicing CRT	<p>“I think they see me trying even when I try to help my ESL students, and my Spanish is all jacked up, you know, they laugh, but they see me trying.” (D: Init. Int. p 3)</p> <p>“It drives me crazy when the kids are talking to themselves in Spanish. I don't like when they do it out loud to me, because I don't know what they're saying about me” (L: Init. Int. p 3)</p>

		<p>“Sometimes I think that I can't help their (parents') kids the same as the Spanish speaking teacher. Sometimes, I don't think I service them as well but I try my best.” (P: Init. Int. p.4)</p>
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Note. CrT = culturally relevant teaching.

Appendix N: Culturally Relevant Teaching Behaviors Identified by Participants

Culturally Relevant Teaching Behaviors Identified by Participants

Checklist behavior	Tally of similar behaviors		Different behaviors identified
1: Motivates/non-judgmental	5	Praises	Offer/provide help
	3	Peer support	Redirect
	3	Encouraging	
	2	Clear directions	
	2	Let students speak	
2: Linguistic variation	5	Spanish/Ebonics	Sign language
	4	Peer support	
	2	Peer translations	
3: Authentic dialogue	4	Teacher-student	Student-teacher
4: Parental/community involvement	4	Community resources/examples	Communicating with home Parental involvement Sending information home in Spanish
5: Modifies curriculum	3	Activate prior experiences	Pre-teaching
	2	Vocabulary development	Break information down
	2	Chunk information	
	4	Use visuals and pictures	
6: Evidence from student's background	2	Use Spanish	scaffolds
	2	Use examples from community	
7: Centers student strength/interest	3	Peer support	Re-teach difficult concept
	2	examples from the community	examples from student's experiences

			assign roles to students based on strengths Use Spanish words/examples
8: Questioning	2 2 2	open-ended questions Yes/No questions use who, what, when, where, why questions	Ask probing questions
9: Filters content through the cultural lens of students	2 3	Allow Spanish responses examples from the community	Examples from student's experiences Community-specific content
10: Others	3 2	Extra time humor	Explain in different ways Thumbs up; thumbs sideways; thumbs down, SEL check-ins

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VITA

Abisola I. Bakare

Education

- **University of Illinois at Chicago**
Ph.D. in Special Education, Anticipated December 2021
- **American College of Education**
M. Ed. in Educational Leadership
Graduation Date: December 2009
- **Chicago State University**
Masters in Special Education, 2003
Graduation Date: December 2003
- **University of Lagos, Nigeria**
B.A. in English
Graduation Date: June 1983

Professional Experience

- Special Education Teacher, June 2003-Present
Chicago Public High Schools
- Adjunct Faculty, Chicago State University, August 2021-
Course: SED 4301/5301.61
Characteristics of Exceptional Children
- Adjunct Faculty, National Louis University, August 2015 - 2016
Course: SPE 508
Literacy Across the Curriculum for Students with Disabilities

Publications

Editorial Review Board (student member); *Handbook of Research on Diversity in Special Education*. (2016). Editors: Marie Tejero Hughes and Elizabeth Talbott. Publisher: Wiley

Funding

Bakare, A. (2020). University of Illinois Chicago Department of Special Education Dissertation Research Funding. \$700.

Bakare, A. (2019). Albin and Young Award. University of Illinois Chicago Department of Special Education Dissertation Research Funding. \$2,200.

Bakare, A. (2017). University of Illinois Chicago College of Education Graduate Student Council Travel Award. \$400.

Grants

Kumm, S., **Bakare, A.**, Vryhof, J. (2017). *Living Beyond the Walls: Listen to My Voice* University of Illinois at Chicago College of Education Dean's Office Collaborative Community Engagement Grant. \$5000.

Presentations

Bakare, A. (June, 2017). *Urban Special Education Teacher Retention*. TED-CEC presentation Savannah, Ga

Research Experience

- “White Urban Special Educators: Making Sense of Culturally Relevant Teaching” – Dissertation
- “Urban Special Education Teacher Retention” – Pilot Research Project (2017)

Certifications

Professional Educator License and endorsements:

- Special Education Teacher
- CTE Endorsement
- Learning Behavior Specialist 1 (LBS1)
- General Administration

Memberships

- Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)
- Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT)