NARROWING THE CULTURAL DIVIDE: PREPARING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EDUCATORS BY INSTITUTING TRANSFORMATIVE PEDAGOGICAL PRE-SERVICE TRAINING PROGRAMS

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Abstract
This qualitative case study explored how a pre-service training program developed through a partnership between a university and a charter school, and specifically created to prepare and retain urban educators, may lead to efficacious classroom practices. To address the manner in which teachers can be ill-prepared for the realities of urban school settings, this study applied Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy framework with a specific emphasis on teacher efficacy to determine how teachers managed to persevere when faced with challenges. The literature review provided an overview of multiculturalism and culturally responsive pedagogies (CRP), with an emphasis on how these ideologies connect to transformative teaching and learning practices. The following research question guided the study: How do novice urban charter school educators maintain higher degrees of teacher efficacy after completing a teacher education program designed to prepare urban educators? This study examined the teachers’ background experiences and dispositions, the training that they received, their application of the skills to their educational settings, and types of supports and resources offered by the school or university. It simultaneously suggested improvements to support their development and recommendations to enhance the program’s effectiveness to prepare and retain educators. Through an analysis of six teachers, combined with supporting evidence from five professors and liaisons from the training university, this study revealed how committed practitioners with requisite dispositions could experience positive gains in efficacy beliefs from a preparation program that maintains a core philosophy of CRP and provides ongoing support. The key findings could potentially have implications for schools, educators, and policymakers to improve similar programs.

Key words: teacher efficacy, multicultural education, culturally responsive pedagogies, social justice, urban teaching, teacher training, teacher dispositions, transformative practice.
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_Culture is at the heart of all we do in education._


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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Moving beyond sporadic or one-time courses and workshops geared toward diversity, universities and school systems across the United States are developing systematic programs that value the teacher as a transformative agent of equity and social justice. This practice, in turn, serves to endorse a developmental hierarchy of change intended to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse society. Conversely, traditional training programs often lag behind and fail to prepare teachers for the realities of the nation’s school systems. As a result of outdated practices, teacher attrition rates increase, and students are underserved. This study explores efforts to reconfigure obsolete practices by illustrating the potential outcomes of an urban training initiative in the area of culturally responsive teaching pedagogies (CRP).

This scholarly overview begins with the Problem of Practice, a Significance Statement, a Purpose Statement, and a set of Research Questions that will help guide the research process. Teacher efficacy will then be introduced as the theoretical framework. The application of teacher efficacy theory enables the researcher to make assertions about teachers’ behaviors and performances with regard to their teaching preparation and their classroom practices. This study also presents a thorough analysis in Chapter 2 of research studies linked to multicultural education and CRP, as well as other practices that have been designed to prepare teachers for diverse classroom environments. Chapter 2 also addresses the impact that such practices have on teaching and learning to provide a scholarly grounding for the research.

Based on this foundation, the proposed qualitative research study indeed captured the essence of teacher perceptions through the use of narratives, observations, and portfolio contents. This case study analysis included interviews with five education professors and liaisons, along with six teachers who completed a university program specializing in urban teaching preparation.
Also, it explored the extent to which this training afforded these teachers cultural preparedness for the school setting. The study concluded by relating the results to the literature and the theoretical framework, exploring practical applications for comprehensive pre-service training programs, and providing suggestions for future research.

**Topic and Research Problem**

Globally, students with dissimilar ethnic, religious, socioeconomic, and linguistic backgrounds are integrating into classrooms at a rapid pace. However, despite advances, the development and implementation of pedagogical strategies to meet their diverse needs remain stagnant (Gay, 2005). The ongoing ethnocentric trend to educate students as if they all were alike is a method often used by schools to handle cultural multiplicity. As a result, teachers are likely to use their limited backgrounds, cultural values, and ways of living to shape classroom experiences, due in part because a person’s subjectivity tends to structure what they experience, narrate, and perform (Giroux, 1997). For that reason, unless the ongoing trend for universities to prepare teachers for a “one-size-fits-all” approach is challenged and transformed, the cultural gap that currently exists in schools will only become broader. This research problem in educational practice justifies the need for continued research so that schools are afforded an influx of culturally responsive educators. Likewise, this study calls for the identification of viable options to remedy the cultural divide that exists in classrooms and teaching practices worldwide.

**Evidence justifying the research problem.** Realizing the significant role that multiculturalism can have on teaching and learning and on how school professionals can best provide a diverse educational experience for all students, prominent scholars in the field of education have examined existing practices and sought viable alternatives for this problem of practice in the classroom (Banks, 1979; Freire, 1998; Gay, 1995, 1997, 2005; Ladson-Billings,
1995; Nieto, 1999; Sleeter, 2001). However, designing a curricular or pedagogical panacea to solve this dilemma requires an approach so multifaceted that it would need to dissect the makeup of society itself, since each culture and the schools housing this diversity are never fixed environments. Indeed, this constant change creates a universal problem that demands a need for transformative teachers who are eager to adapt their teaching methods to accommodate the uniqueness of each learner.

The process of narrowing the cultural divide for students and educators poses a myriad of challenges; indeed, the larger political, economic, and social influences that exist in culturally hegemonic societies often dictate the content that students are taught and the benchmarks by which they are to be assessed (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Resulting from these challenges, teachers in many nations are required to teach from a prescribed curriculum to prepare their students for often biased high-stakes tests, instruments that often penalize societies’ most oppressed and marginalized students (Ladson-Billings, 2001). With increased governmental control on curricula and an emphasis on efficiency, teacher education programs have a profound effect on defining what qualifies as responsive and effective teaching, a dynamic that can compromise educational commitments to equity and social justice (Sleeter, 2008).

**Deficiencies in the evidence.** Although a broad range of research explores the need for students to experience an education respecting diversity, there remains a shortage of teachers who can effectively provide this pedagogical experience. Commonly absent from schools are teachers who are able to enrich the lives of their students with a rigorous curriculum that is based upon self-reflection, cultural studies, critical thought, and social justice. Also, minimal research attention has been directed toward the use of tools that can effectively identify and measure the cultural competence that teachers develop during their college experience and training, and even
after, teachers have been hired in diverse settings. To provide a more meaningful learning environment for future students, scholarship must examine the outcomes of training programs offered to teacher candidates who value the importance of knowing the community, of pursuing equitable, and of establishing authentic relationships with students (Freire, 2000; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994), and of using their craft as a foundation for reflection and change.

**The audience.** By examining the systemic implications of preparing culturally relevant pedagogical training for pre-service teachers, both in the school setting and in higher education, researchers and school leaders can begin to prepare social justice programs that transform classrooms by structuring a new philosophy of pedagogy that can work to dissolve restrictive hierarchies and that support diversity. With all of the constraints and regulations facing schools, this may seem like a daunting task. Fortunately, however, teachers, university personnel, and school administrators can actively and intentionally help to disband ethnocentric practices by voicing a need to address constraints, thereby encouraging people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds to enter the profession, and by intentionally hiring a field of culturally responsive and globally competent educators who are capable of offering diverse and enriching learning experiences for all students.

**Significance of the Problem**

Exposure to various multicultural experiences within the classroom setting is becoming increasingly commonplace in the daily lives of students and teachers all over the world (Gay, 2005). With such a broad variety of experiences, a great deal can be learned from studying both the use and the effectiveness of pre-service training programs in universities and schools that prioritize the value of developing the skills of teachers so that they may become culturally responsive educators. By establishing urgency to prepare culturally responsive educators through
the institution of transformative pedagogical pre-service training programs, universities in the future can better equip teachers to teach effectively from a position of commitment to diversity and social justice and to adapt to a diverse array of educational settings. Such training and scholarship are particularly important to the profession because such critical prerequisites prepare teachers to have a stronger awareness of multicultural differences in schools and to adapt their courses and pedagogies to address differences so that students find course content to be more relevant to their lives and to their needs.

Despite the steadily increasing numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse student populations in schools, not all teacher education programs readily embrace multicultural education or culturally relevant teacher education pedagogy (Gay, 2002). Resistance to these approaches is often expressed by pre-service teachers who tend to fear what is unfamiliar to them. To achieve relevance in curriculum and pedagogy, evidence supports the need for more comprehensive and diverse pre-service teaching practices—such as the use of immersion experiences, combined with broader curricular applications—to overcome apprehensions and to prepare culturally responsive teachers (Ladson-Billings, 1995). In fact, researchers have recommended that multicultural education training should be integrated in a thorough, persistent, and overt manner to be effective, but this goal is often not included in many programs (Kea, Trent, & Davis, 2002). Therefore, it is imperative that further empirical comparative and longitudinal research on developmentally enriching programs be conducted in universities as well as in a variety of school settings to determine long-term effectiveness of program-training in multicultural education and culturally relevant and responsive teaching. For example, a study examining different university education programs and their respective courses of study, along with the practicum and student teaching experiences, could comprise part of a further scholarly
review, particularly by relating these programs to teacher preparedness in diverse settings. In addition, individual case studies could help researchers to better understand the level to which students feel acculturated and accepted by entry-level teachers.

By articulating clearly what constitutes effective outcomes of quality pre-service preparation training, university leaders can provide the impetus for the development of programs that value the teacher as a transformative agent of equity and social justice. This practice, in turn, would serve to endorse a developmental hierarchy of change that is needed to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse society. Since schools serve as catalysts for political, economic, and social change, it is important that the process of acculturation in schools provides an ideal beginning to elicit broader transformations.

Summary

By exploring this problem of practice, this study aims to discover additional ways to bridge theory and practice, thus enabling the researcher to serve as a catalyst for change so that future professionals can be better prepared to journey out of their often insular mindsets to better understand the intersection of different forms of oppression. Such an understanding could help prepare educators to confront their own ethnocentric worldviews and prejudices and to understand that teaching and learning, regardless of the setting, are not mono-cultural.

Convinced that current educational praxis needs to critically be reconstructed so that students can learn from teachers who provide hope for change, this researcher engaged in this study to establish a foundation from which it is possible to make culturally responsive and socially just practices a priority in schools and communities.
**Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to document the experiences of professors and teachers who are part of a Pittsburgh-based teacher preparation program created and developed to train teachers who are committed to social justice, equity in education, and the transformation of the lives of urban students. Data garnered from this investigation is directed to enrich other training programs that aim to provide teachers and students with a diverse and enriching teaching and educational experience that is also social-justice-oriented. The questions detailed below guided the collection of the data and the research process. These questions were fundamental in guiding the researcher in gaining valuable insight into the training program at the research site, in determining how the trainers and the teachers perceived the value of the program, and in assessing the level of preparedness and competency of teacher candidates entering the workforce.

**Overarching question.** How do novice urban charter school educators maintain a higher degree of teacher efficacy after completing a teacher education program designed to prepare urban educators?

**Intent.** This question was directed at exploring how pre-service teachers perceived the quality and/or the usefulness of their training regarding topics of social justice, culturally responsive pedagogies, equity in education, and to what extent they considered the program had qualified them to teach in diverse school settings. The study examined the ways in which the pre-service teaching program was employing transformative pedagogies built on prior knowledge through dialogue and self-reflective practice.

**Research sub-question #1.** How do the teachers’ background experiences and dispositions enable them to practice culturally relevant pedagogies in an urban setting?
**Intent.** This question helped the researcher to determine the nature of teachers who entered the program, and the degree to which their personal experiences and dispositions shaped their perceived efficacy as culturally responsive teachers to work in diverse school settings.

**Research sub-question #2.** How does the teacher education training help to qualify teachers to be culturally responsive, social justice-oriented educators, and how are teachers applying the skills acquired in the training program to their educational settings?

**Intent.** This question informed the researcher whether or not a relationship existed between a teacher’s perceived efficacy and the type of coursework and training that they received during their preparation to work in diverse school settings. This question was used to delve into the pedagogical methods and content that the teachers were applying in their classrooms.

**Research sub-question #3.** Which types of supports and resources offered by the school or university help to sustain the development of urban educators and their students, and how can the school and university improve upon the support of urban educators?

**Intent.** Because supports and resources are considered to be instrumental in the development and retention of novice educators, this question was designed to help the researcher to identify strengths and weaknesses of the system in relation to the teachers’ perceived effectiveness to work in diverse settings. This question deeply enabled the researcher to make recommendations to improve experiences for future educators.

**Research sub-question #4.** How can the teacher training program improve its effectiveness to prepare and retain urban educators?

**Intent.** This question helped inform educational practice by illustrating areas in which the program examined can make modifications, while also informing similar programs on best
practices, with the overall intent being to attract and develop future efficacious urban educators in diverse school settings.

**Theoretical Framework**

Teacher efficacy theory, a multi-faceted and broad construct that falls under the auspices of social learning theory (Rotter, 1966) or social cognitive/self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977), served as the theoretical framework informing this research study. This theory guided the research questions, data collection, and data analysis because of its aptness as a lens through which to examine teachers’ behaviors and performances with regard to their teaching preparation and their classroom practices in relation to culturally responsive and socially just teaching pedagogies. According to Chester and Beaudin (1996), Bandura’s theory illustrates the extent to which self-efficacy beliefs predict human motivation and behavior, with such beliefs having “the ability to enhance or undermine one's performance (p. 235).” While personal beliefs about teaching effectiveness may be challenging to qualitatively measure, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) explained that “teacher efficacy has proved to be powerfully related to many meaningful educational outcomes such as teachers’ persistence, enthusiasm, commitment and instructional behavior, as well as student outcomes such as achievement, motivation, and self-efficacy beliefs” (p.783).

**Self-efficacy.** Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (p. 3). According to Pajares (1996), central to one’s beliefs of self-efficacy is a self-reflective disposition, as Bandura (1986) “considered self-reflection the most uniquely human capability, for through this form of self-referent thought people evaluate and alter their own thinking and behavior” (p. 2). Bandura (1986) also introduced the concept of triadic reciprocity, as it relates to
self-efficacy, which illustrates the interplay of the environment, personal factors, and behaviors that shape one’s beliefs.

Bandura asserted that individuals base their perceptions of self-efficacy on four sources of information: performance accomplishments or enactive mastery experiences (personal achievement), vicarious experiences (observing and modeling), verbal persuasions (coaching and personal feedback), and physiological or affective emotional reactions or states (levels and nature of feelings, either positive or negative). Bandura (1997) asserted, however, that the most effective way of developing a strong sense of self-efficacy is through mastery experiences. Using Bandura’s assertion that cultural contexts impact the four sources of information, these sources were used to assist in determining how the perceived level of the efficacy of the teachers who participated in this study emerged.

**Self-efficacy and teacher effectiveness.** Self-efficacy is based on perceptions of competence rather than on actual levels of ability (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998). Therefore, as Bandura (1986) explained, one’s beliefs about self-efficacy and student outcomes are considered to be two separate constructs. Nonetheless, as a predictor of behavior, Bandura (1977) postulated, “Efficacy expectations determine how much effort people will expend and how long they will persist in the face of obstacles and aversive experiences. The stronger the perceived self-efficacy, the more active the efforts” (p.194). This premise has also been supported by Pajares (1997) who linked self-efficacy to perseverance, and also by McWilliams (2014) who purported that: “Those who have high efficacy beliefs are able to persevere through adversity and do not see failure and setbacks as impediments to their progress and success” (p.10). Hence, people who demonstrate dispositions of perseverance tend to exhibit higher levels of resilience in challenging situations and are likely to possess the fortitude greatly to impact
student outcomes. This finding was supported by Guskey and Passaro (1994) who found that a teacher’s self-efficacy beliefs directly impact academic achievement.

**Teacher efficacy and lived experiences.** Demonstrating that lived and work experience are predictors of teacher efficacy, Moseley, Bilica, Wandless, and Gdovin (2014) purported that “successful teachers use their students’ life experiences to make the curriculum more relevant to the learner and ensure greater student achievement” (p. 323). This finding is aligned with the research conducted by Chester and Beaudin (1996), who determined that a teacher's age combined with prior experiences and exposure to positive school practices, such as opportunities to collaborate with colleagues, supervisor attention to instruction, and the level of resources available in the school, can serve to counter the decline in self-efficacy beliefs that commonly occur with newly hired educators in urban schools. Chester and Beaudin (1996) further concluded that an individual’s self-efficacy mechanism arises from one’s internalized goals, needs, and aspirations. The work of Chester and Beaudin (1996) is of particular relevance to this study in that their findings illustrated that second-career teachers tend to be more efficacious than their younger counterparts for a variety of reasons, including their desire to be agents of change in urban neighborhoods.

**Variables associated with teacher efficacy.** According to Siwatu (2011), as cited by Moseley et al. (2014), the absence of necessary supports often leads to teacher attrition, given that “teachers who leave the profession have a lower sense of self-efficacy than those who remain (p. 323).” To retain novice educators, several factors which include positive leadership, positive school climate, and a cohesive school culture, combined with influential and supportive principals who foster efficacy, may help new professionals find success. Thus, contextual factors must be considered when determining teacher efficacy, as there exists “reciprocal relationships
between school context (environment) and teacher efficacy beliefs (personal factors)” (Teschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 220). As Teschannen-Moran et al. (1998) elucidated, to be efficacious, a teacher must believe in his or her ability to successfully accomplish a teaching task within a particular context (p. 117)." Teschannen-Moran et al. (1998) built on this premise by explaining that student or classroom effects, such as subject matter and the nature of the students, also may play a role in a teacher’s sense of self-efficacy. Also, of particular importance to this study, Guskey and Passaro (1994) described the efficacious teachers’ mindset as a “belief or conviction that they can influence how well students learn, even those who may be difficult or unmotivated” (p. 4). This finding is aligned with the seminal work of Rotter (1966) and earlier RAND studies which illustrated that teachers who demonstrate confidence in teaching in challenging settings believe they operate within an internal, as opposed to an external, locus of control, meaning that teachers’ strong beliefs in their abilities can serve to overcome any external or environmental factors.

While certain contextual factors such as those experienced in an urban setting tend to have an adverse effect on a teacher’s level of self-efficacy, the power of a school’s collective sense of efficacy (Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy, 2000) combined with strong school leadership may create a positive effect, including the improvement of academic achievement, regardless of socioeconomic status or racial composition of a school (Teschannen-Moran et al., 1998). These researchers also explained that “collective efficacy efforts may be especially pronounced for novice teachers as they are socialized into the profession” (p. 221). Several other researchers found similar connections, such as Hoy and Woolfolk (1993), who found that healthy organizational dynamics support the development of both personal and teaching efficacy. Bandura (1993) also explained how the health of the school climate can be as essential as one’s
own sense of self-efficacy; he further elucidated that collective efficacy impacts student achievement, even in lower socio-economic areas. Chester and Beaudin (1996) also found that a collegial school culture is essential to teacher efficacy beliefs, not only because such contexts typically offer additional support and instructional resources, but also because of the presence of enhanced supervisory practices that promote instructional growth. This finding underpins the work of Moseley, et al. (2014) who found that a strong support system that integrates self-efficacy building activities may help to better prepare teachers for specific contexts.

**Teacher efficacy, culturally responsiveness, and socially just educators.** According to Moseley et al. (2014), “Effective teachers modify their teaching methodologies to meet the diverse needs of their students” (p. 323). They accomplish this by “develop[ing] an atmosphere of care, trust, and mutual respect within their connections with their students” (p. 317). Moreover, Flores, Clark, Claey, and Villarreal (2007), proposed that sociocultural competence, in combination with strong teacher efficacy, may predict teacher success in urban classrooms. In fact, following a study of novice urban teachers in high needs schools, Moseley, et al. (2014) found that a relationship existed between teaching efficacy and cultural efficacy. Their study revealed one resonating theme: They valued positive student-teacher relationships that are established through cultural connections. Therefore, teachers who strive to bridge home and school demonstrate teacher efficacy with regard to CRP. Mosely, et al. (2014) also cited the work of Gay (2000) who asserted: “Effective teachers of minority students are proficient in ‘using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them’” (Gay, 2000, p. 29; Moseley, et al., 2014, p. 316). Moseley, et al. (2014) also identified Gay’s five components of culturally responsive teaching:
● Developing a rich understanding of different cultural and ethnic groups;

● Incorporating knowledge contributions made by the home cultures of students into subject-specific curricula;

● Developing a caring classroom environment with a "community of learners" approach to cooperative learning;

● Employing culturally appropriate communication strategies;

● Matching instructional strategies with diverse learning styles (Gay, 2000, p. 29).

As explained by Mosely, et al. (2014), these components can be used to identify efficacious CRP practices. Whipp (2013) drew from a large body of literature on justice-oriented and culturally responsive teaching to provide an extensive list of indicators for justice-oriented teachers:

● Hold high academic and behavioral expectations for all in a rigorous curriculum;

● Create classroom climates that are warm and demanding;

● Affirm and sustain their students’ cultural backgrounds by drawing from their “funds of knowledge” (languages, histories, cultural practices);

● Connect with their students’ families and communities;

● Advocate for curricular and policy changes that promote more equitable educational opportunities;

● Help students identify and critique historical and contemporary examples of injustice;

● Empower students to actively work toward social change (Whipp, 2013, p. 55).

Importantly, to be efficacious in an urban setting, it is imperative for teachers to create a culture of caring while incorporating the above-mentioned practices in their repertoire. By connecting on multiple levels with their students, they lay the foundation for positive student outcomes.
**Criticisms of teacher efficacy.** The construct of teacher efficacy theory is not without debate. It is used as a theoretical framework to determine an educator’s interpretation or “sense” of effectiveness, which critics question as being an invalid measure of long-term competence, especially since the majority of relevant research studies have been performed on pre-service teachers prior to their actual classroom experiences (Brown, Lee, & Collins, 2015). Moreover, because teacher efficacy is regarded as being context or situation specific, the lack of qualitative research may be attributed to the plethora of challenges associated with designing methods to measure this multifaceted construct (Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001). While instruments such as the teacher efficacy scale (TES) developed by Gibson and Dembo (1984), and the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) designed by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) present foundational tools to measure teacher efficacy, the “conceptual framework and measurement continues to be revised, debated, and tested” (Nie, Lau, & Liau, 2012, p. 414).

Aligned with this assertion, Klassen, Tze, Betts, and Gordon, (2011) explained that understanding teachers’ self and collective efficacy necessitates a foundation of reliable and valid instrumentation. Thus, critical examination of the theory, has promulgated debate regarding the appropriate amount of specificity, both contextual and subject matter-related, needed to measure teacher efficacy. Moreover, there also is question as to how teachers form their efficacy beliefs (Morris, Usher, & Chen, 2016). This level of complexity may explain why, as a developing theory, teacher efficacy remains under researched (Pfitzer-Eden, 2016). In response to this void, Brown et al. (2015) suggested that more longitudinal studies be performed on teachers, with the belief that tracking teachers beginning with their training and through their first three years of teaching may provide a more valid account of their effectiveness. In addition, Morris et al. (2017) suggested that the construct of teacher efficacy theory extend beyond
Bandura’s (1977) four sources of information to include a variety of other sources that may help researchers to determine additional influences of teacher efficacy. While the researcher took these critiques into account, the theory holds its validity as an analytical lens for the purposes of this study because its application permits a more detailed account of the individuals, including their backgrounds and their beliefs, as well as the context, the tasks, and their perceived competence as urban educators.

**Justification to the research study.** In this case study, the researcher used teacher perceptions as authentic evidence and predictive measures of their efficacy. Teacher efficacy theory was appropriate for this study because the researcher sought to determine if a relationship existed between perceived teaching competence and the teacher training that they received through the University. More specifically, if the teachers were able to find some level of success in urban classrooms, then, what factors did they cite as contributing to their success?

Determining teacher efficacy is important because, according to Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998), “Teachers’ sense of efficacy plays a powerful role in schooling (p. 234). Teacher efficacy theory also was aligned with the literature review because the researcher attempted to garner evidence to determine if the teachers applied culturally responsive pedagogies in their classrooms. While the literature demonstrates that “qualitative studies of teacher efficacy are overwhelmingly neglected (Teschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p.242),” its application in this study has the potential to illustrate a more nuanced representation of teachers’ perceptions of their teaching.

While confusion exists regarding how best to design a predictive instrument to quantitatively measure this construct, as well as to determine how intensive a research study must be to capture the most authentic data, for purposes of this study the researcher applied
teacher efficacy theory as a qualitative measure to capture the true essence of the context, the individual, and the individual’s perception to succeed in the specific setting. The researcher found that rich data was garnered through the interview process that provided a comprehensive view of the teachers’ interpretation of their own effectiveness as well as their long-term outlook as urban educators. The researcher accounted for all of the inherent challenges of using a prescribed scale by making slight modifications through carefully designed research questions to help authenticate the results and to capture valid and reliable data.

While many factors can cause urban educators to experience a decrease in teacher efficacy during their first year, it is imperative that a number of important variables be addressed when preparing teachers for diverse school settings. As the research has suggested, this can be accomplished by employing opportunities to raise perceptions via relevant coursework, during student teaching, and by providing support during practicum experiences and though the first three years of classroom exposure (Pfizner-Eden, 2016). Therefore, to help to develop teachers into culturally responsive practitioners, a combination of reflective practice, carefully constructed coursework, diverse field experiences, and student teaching placements, as well as ongoing professional development opportunities, must be part of the process. As previously mentioned, elements that can drive the process include the use of Bandura’s (1997) four sources of information. Other areas of importance to consider with regard to teacher efficacy are dispositional factors, contexts, school cultures, and evidence of culturally responsive pedagogies. In this case, the researcher sought to determine if teachers believed that they were making a positive impact on the lives of their urban students in the contexts of challenging school settings. Therefore, by documenting urban educators’ beliefs about their preparation and teaching and learning outcomes, the researcher gained deep insights into the teachers’ perceptions of their
degree of self-efficacy within their urban school classrooms; these findings may indeed lead to reformed programming for future candidates.
Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature

The goal of this literature review is to provide an overview of multicultural education and culturally responsive pedagogy, and to outline transformative teaching practices and proposed methodologies informing and justifying the implementation of training programs in colleges and universities that aim to prepare teachers to become culturally responsive so they can address the needs of contemporary learners in America’s school systems. Schools can serve as catalysts for political, economic, and social change, and educators through the process of acculturation, can strengthen the foundation to elicit such change.

These issues are explored in this literature review which is organized into the following sections: multicultural education, importance of multicultural education, approaches to multicultural education in school systems, impact of multiculturalism on teaching and learning, culturally relevant pedagogies (CRP), importance of CRP, approaches of CRP training programs, critical reflectivity, and impact of CRP on teaching and learning.

Multicultural Education

Multiculturalism is an overarching multidisciplinary ideology or mainstream approach from which culturally relevant teaching and pedagogies have emerged. An established discipline in the field of education, multiculturalism constitutes an ongoing process of comprehensive school reform that changes the way schools conceptualize teaching and learning (Nieto, 2000). To build upon this premise, Banks and Banks (1989) defined multicultural education as:

A philosophical position and movement that deems that the gender, ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity of a pluralistic society should be reflected in all of the institutional structures of educational institutions, including the staff, the norms and values, the curriculum, and the student body (p. 435).
Multiculturalism is also a concept of complexity that emerged in the 1960s during the Civil Rights Movement, primarily as a response to critiques of mono-cultural compensatory education programs and discriminatory practices (Banks, 1996; C. Bennett, 2001; Gay, 1983). C. Bennett (2001) asserted, “By the early 1970s, the field had taken on an embraced set of core values and ideals that provided conceptual clarity to its contemporary research and practice” (p. 171). In the 1980s, Banks, a pioneer of multicultural research, began to view schools from a social systems perspective (Banks, 1981). Building on the work of Banks, researchers Geneva Gay, Carl Grant, Sonia Nieto, and Christine Sleeter sought to revolutionize multiculturalism by viewing it as a means to critically examine and transform aspects of the school and society more comprehensively. Today, multiculturalism continues to be a developmental process, constantly evolving and shaping myriad facets of educational practice and theory.

Based on democratic values and cultural pluralism, multiculturalism is grounded in ideals of social justice, educational equity, and critical pedagogy. Proponents of multiculturalism (Banks, 1997; C. Bennett, 2001; Gay 1983; Kahn, 2008; Sleeter & Grant, 1987) have affirmed that the goals of the approach include reducing prejudice and discrimination against oppressed groups, working toward equity and social justice, and developing an equitable distribution of power among members of divergent cultures. Lenski, Crumpler, Stallworth, and Crawford (2005) added that multicultural education “brings light to oppression and social inequality that are based on race, social class, gender, and disability (p. 86).” Furthermore, the authors asserted that to practice multiculturalism, schools must emphasize the importance of democracy, critical consciousness, social action, and bridge-building across oppressed groups (Lenski et al., 2005). When properly applied to educational practice, multiculturalism focuses on how the social, political, economic, academic, and historical experiences and trajectories of oppressed groups
impact student achievement (Gay, 1983; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 1992). As such, its application in the teaching profession necessitates an acute awareness, acceptance, and affirmation of cultural differences (Grant, 1995) so that it can have profound and lasting ramifications for education and society (Banks, 1978; Francis, 1995; Grant; 1978).

Importance of Multicultural Education

As the nation continues to experience a pronounced shift in cultural texture, social conditions, political circumstances, and demographics (Banks, 2006; Gay, 2003; Irvine, 2003), the demand increases for school systems to integrate multicultural education perspectives into the overall curriculum. These perspectives are essential because the “classroom is a meeting ground of cultures where the worlds of students meet the worldview of schools and students” (Cumrot, 2002, p. 14). This convergence necessitates radical changes in the entire school environment so that schools might create equal opportunities for all students (Banks, 1991; Banks & Banks, 1989; Sleeter & Grant, 1987). In order to achieve educational equity, however, teachers must guide students to consider their actions more critically. According to Banks (1993), students become critical thinkers when teachers present them with platforms to learn how knowledge is constructed so that they can be better prepared to develop their own interpretations.

Approaches to Multicultural Education in School Systems

Many researchers (Banks & Banks, 1989; 1995; Bennett, 2001; McLaren, 1994a; Nieto, 2004; Sleeter & Grant; 1987) have developed principles, dimensions, approaches, models, and theoretical frameworks geared toward incorporating multiculturalism into schools. The core of each framework has a foundation in the form of reconstructionism/critical theory or philosophical perspective that focuses on an analysis of the historical roots of social reform. Critical common themes can be derived by comparing and contrasting these foundational designs
of seminal theorists. Some of the themes overlap with, differ slightly from, or complement the other frameworks, while others obfuscate the distinctions or merely address some elements included in the other approaches.

C. Bennett (2001) illustrated the multidisciplinary nature of multicultural education by categorizing four clusters of research: curriculum reform, equity pedagogy, multicultural competence, and society equity. Under these inclusive clusters, the author listed nine basic assumptions and 12 genres that are presented in the form of a concept map. C. Bennett (2001) explained that research studies in the field of multiculturalism may address any number of these facets, including curriculum biases, culturally relevant teaching, the reduction of prejudices, and political activism. In general, however, multicultural education literature and research, according to C. Bennett (2001), are based upon four foundational principles: (a) the theory of cultural pluralism; (b) ideals of social justice and the end of racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination; (c) affirmations of culture in the teaching and learning process; and (d) visions of excellence and equity leading to high levels of learning for all children and youth (p. 173). C. Bennett’s work can provide a deep and broad analysis of multiculturalism that may help to bridge theory and practice by offering a clear perspective on teaching and learning in a diverse society.

While C. Bennett (2001) offered a breakdown of research perspectives, Banks (1995) identified five dimensions of multicultural education: (a) content integration, (b) knowledge construction, (c) equity pedagogy, (d) prejudice reduction, and (e) empowering school culture. These dimensions are viewed as being a “starting point to look at the breadth and depth of multicultural education scholarship” (Miller-Lane & Espiritu Halagao, 2007, p. 9). According to Banks (1995), in this context, schools must move beyond the entry point of content integration to
incorporate each of these important dimensions of multicultural education. Moreover, as schools accomplish such movement, students will be better situated to develop values and to cultivate multiple perspectives. Likewise, teachers will self-transform as they learn to adapt to different learning styles and to create an empowering school climate (Banks, 1993).

A proponent of revolutionary critical pedagogy—particularly Freirian perspectives and of Marxist educational theory—McLaren (1994a) identified three frameworks of multiculturalism: conservative, liberal, and critical. According to McLaren (1994b), conservative multiculturalists favor cultural homogeneity, Americanization, and the assimilation or mainstreaming of minorities into the dominant culture (Jenks, Lee, & Kanpol, 2001). Critical theorists (Apple, 1996; Freire, 1985; Giroux, 1983) asserted that, by practicing conservative multiculturalism, schools will be less personalized and more standardized. While conservative multiculturalism is considered to be Eurocentric and not rooted in critical ideology, the liberal position is more humanistic and embraces tolerance and acceptance of differences, but it does not promote an active stance that might address the core causes of racism or inequality (Jenks, et al., 2001). Conversely, critical multiculturalism contests the dominant ideologies, focuses on injustices, and seeks to identify the historical constructs by which racism and inequality are rooted. McLaren (1994a) and Freire (2008) asserted that the critical framework is transformative in that it challenges the status quo and uses personal narrative and action to help to elicit changes in current policies. Furthermore, McLaren (2003) maintained that the use of critical ideologies can be utilized to break down dominant discourses to help illustrate how politics influence school structures and the hidden curriculum, “the non-subject-related behaviors produced in students and the unintended outcomes of the schooling process” (p.86).
Banks (1990), meanwhile, identified four curricular models—contributions, additive, transformative, and social action—that overlap with the work of McLaren (1994a) and of Freire (2008). Banks’ (1990) models also share commonalities with a framework highlighted by Sleeter and Grant (1987) to illustrate the progressive and critical manner in which multiculturalism can be integrated into the curriculum. For instance, the contributions approach, as identified by Banks (1990), can be viewed as being a blend of McLaren’s conservative and liberal frameworks. Thus, schools that practice the contributions approach may, for example, host diversity celebrations and isolated ethnic recognitions. These activities, from a social justice standpoint, may fail to address the underlying issues of institutionalized oppression. Similarly, the additive approach merges both liberal and conservative perspectives, where schools merely add ethnic-related material to the curriculum. For instance, a school may determine that it needs to incorporate African American or Jewish literature into the summer reading list because such content had previously been overlooked. According to Banks, the aforementioned methods are attempts to supplement an established Eurocentric curriculum. Conversely, the transformative approach centers on revamping the curriculum to include elements of equity and social justice; it builds on the previous elements to encourage critical reflection, the emphasis of historical underpinnings, and the espousal of multiple perspectives among the students. The social actions approach, one that is also endorsed as being the most effective form of multiculturalism by other critical scholars, is a comprehensive method in that it is social justice-oriented and encourages the engagement of political action and critical skills to elicit change.

Assuming a similar sociopolitical stance and drawing from the work of Paulo Freire, Nieto (2004) asserted that multicultural education is a “process of comprehensive school reform and basic education for all students” (p. 346). In addition, Nieto (2004) placed greater emphasis
on the connection of multiculturalism to the context of communities. Nieto (2004) also purported that “multicultural education is anti-racist education, basic education, important for all students, pervasive, education for social justice, a process, and critical pedagogy” (pp. 307-308). Similar to C. Bennett, Nieto (2004) regarded multiculturalism as being a holistic ideology by stressing the importance of the interplay between the school and societal structures. Thus, in theory, both should be part of the multicultural process, with an emphasis on “knowledge, reflection, and action (praxis) for social change” (Nieto, 2004, p. 346). Drawing from personal experience, Nieto (2004) differs from other scholars in that she grounds her work primarily in areas of race, ethnicity, and language. Nieto (2004) also is not concerned with addressing the progressive nature of multiculturalism, as she expresses that multiculturalism maintains critical pedagogy as its underlying principal. Nieto (1996) explained that beyond knowledge, reflection and action provide the foundations for such reform efforts.

Sleeter and Grant (1987), meanwhile, developed a set of sociopolitical approaches for schools to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. These five methods include teaching the exceptional and culturally different, human relations, single group studies, multicultural education, and multicultural social reconstructionism. Similar to McLaren’s (1994a) framework of multiculturalism and Bank’s (1989) contributions and additive approaches, the teaching the culturally different stance assumes a conservative approach to multiculturalism and does not support curricular change (Schellen & King, 2014). According to Schellen and King (2014), this approach maintains that “ethnically diverse students come to school with a deficit” (p. 23). While the human relations approach takes on a liberal angle, in that it encourages teachers to encourage respect and the development of human bonds among students, it has been criticized for its failure to analyze the underlying causes of inequality
Single-group studies, a method used to highlight a particular group by focusing in depth on the history and discrimination that the group has faced, meanwhile, has often been perceived as representing an “add-on” to the curriculum and may unintentionally omit certain groups from the teaching and learning process. Corresponding with Bank’s (1990) transformation approach, the multicultural method affirms cultural pluralism across differences, encourages high-expectations among all participants in the learning process, and seeks to transform the entire academic environment. The multicultural social reconstructionist method focuses on social reform and involves the use of critical theory, inquiry, dialogue, and multiple perspectives, methods that have the potential to change society. Rarely, however, is the multicultural and social reconstructionism approach, endorsed by Sleeter and Grant (1987), practiced in the educational setting.

Analysis of the structures that have been developed by seminal researchers serves as a springboard to help scholar-practitioners to bridge the gap between ideology and practice. Moreover, the study of such perspectives can help future researchers to appreciate that multicultural education is a dynamic, multifaceted, and action-oriented process that challenges all members of the school system to expand their social consciousness toward a more sophisticated view of the world. And, if viewed through a critical lens, one can observe that multicultural education is revealed as extending beyond the use of equity teaching and pedagogies. As such, a resonating theme among critical scholars is one that promotes a transformative approach toward social justice and the acquisition of a global perspective among teachers and students. In the final analysis, many researchers have affirmed that the intention of multicultural education is to prompt change by encouraging all members of society actively to
confront power and privilege. Most importantly, multicultural education, when implemented appropriately, affirms and benefits all people.

Impact of Multiculturalism on Teaching and Learning

Multiculturalism does not provide a panacea to combat racism and oppression. However, “When broadly conceptualized, multiculturalism can have a great impact on students’ attitudes and behaviors” (Nieto, 1992, p. 345). Nieto (1992) emphasized that multiculturalism is helpful in addressing racism and discrimination, structural conditions in schools that may inhibit learning, language diversity, and the impact of culture on learning. As Gay (2000) asserted, “culture is at the heart of all we do in the name of education” (p. 8). In an ideal world, when properly and systemically implemented, multicultural education is paramount to the achievement of academic excellence, human development, education equality, and the democratic citizenship of all students (Banks & Banks, 1989; C. Bennett, 2001; Gay, 2004; Nieto, 2000). Moreover, multicultural education makes schooling more relevant for all learners and instills democracy, equality, and justice (Gay, 2004). Ultimately, the goal of multicultural education is to encourage all students to learn and develop to their highest potential. Unfortunately, however, multiculturalism has not yet become the core principle of teaching, learning, policy, climate, leadership, and evaluation (Banks, 1994; S.V. Bennett, 2013; Gay, 2004; Grant & Gomez, 2000).

This void may be attributed in part to the plethora of teachers who are entering the profession unprepared in multicultural teaching approaches. To alleviate this deficit, many scholars have proposed that colleges and universities better prepare teachers to create culturally relevant classrooms. To see its true impact, researchers have recommended that multiculturalism and culturally responsive pedagogy be integrated throughout pre-service teacher preparation programs (S.V. Bennett, 2013; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Dover (2013) contended that culturally
responsive pedagogy is the integration of “critical pedagogies emphasis on sociopolitical consciousness with multicultural education’s commitment to culturally diverse content” (p. 5). As Rychly and Graves (2012) explained, “culturally relevant pedagogy is one means to the ultimate objective of multicultural education for all” (p. 45).

**Culturally Responsive Pedagogies (CRP)**

Sharing the views of Rychly and Graves (2012), Gay (2002) asserted that “[c]ulturally responsive teaching is an outgrowth of multicultural education” (p. 124). Gay’s research is indicative of this trajectory, evolving from a focus on curriculum to examining teacher instruction and students’ individual cultures. Viewing this shift of emphasis as a fundamental feature of educational practice, Gay (2013) attested that CRP provides a construct to make learning more relevant and to view differences as assets. Gay (2002) defined CRP as the “use of cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (p. 106). According to Gay (2002), teachers who follow such perspectives possess a cultural diversity knowledge base, develop culturally relevant curricula, demonstrate cultural caring, seek to build a learning community, exhibit cross-cultural communications, and deliver cultural congruity in learning instruction.

Closely aligned with Gay’s (2002) definition, Ladson-Billings (1995) preferred to label the theoretical framework “culturally relevant teaching” and explained that it is a “dynamic or synergistic relationship between home/community culture and school culture” (p. 467). In this context, educators who practice culturally relevant teaching help to foster “academic achievement, cultural competence, and sociopolitically critical awareness” among their students (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 474). Ladson-Billings also emphasized that to achieve these competencies, one must learn to reject deficit-based thinking. Thus, rather than focusing on
“majority perspectives and mainstream ideals” (Starker and Fitchett, 2013, p. 39), Ladson-Billings (2001) conveyed that teachers who are culturally competent should “utilize students’ culture as a vehicle for learning” (p. 161).

Presenting a similar analysis, Sleeter (2011) maintained that CRP is a paradigm that fosters learning “through the cultural processes and knowledge students bring to school with them” (p. 11). To support this notion, Sleeter (2011) indicated that a teacher’s pedagogy is shaped with respect to the close relationships formed with a particular group of students. According to Sleeter (2010), “central to CRP are the teacher, his/her expectations of the students, and his/her ability to build upon knowledge students bring and to engage them” (p. 116). Furthermore, Sleeter (2010) insisted that culturally responsive teachers are those who refrain from making assumptions, use students as a resource, think of multiple ways to raise achievement, and critically “examine oneself and one’s teaching as being socially constructed” (p. 117). Such teachers, according to Sleeter, are equipped with the tools necessary to engage their students in social change through political analysis.

Building upon the foundation of these seminal authors and assuming a more pluralistic stance, Paris (2012) proposed the concept of “culturally sustaining pedagogy” to illustrate the dynamic nature of teaching, learning, and culture. The goal of this paradigm is to “perpetuate and foster to sustain linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling and as a needed response to demographic and social change” (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 88). Ladson-Billings (2014) endorsed Paris’ (2012) contemporary conception of pedagogy, for it challenges the static perception of learning, thereby allowing for a more fluid illustration of culture.
As the aforementioned researchers have espoused, to bridge the gap between home and school, educators who are culturally responsive or practice culturally relevant pedagogy embrace students’ historical roots and personal experiences and help them to understand the political and social contexts in which they live (Frederick, Cave, & Perencevich, 2010; Sobel, Gutierrez, Zion, & Blanchett, 2011). Teachers committed to social justice work to incorporate cultures into lessons, strive to overcome stereotypes, maintain an inclusive classroom, and use reflective practices to support academic success (Martins-Shannon & White, 2012). In summation, CRP practitioners are cognizant of how deficit notions reinforce prejudices. They understand how culture and learning are connected, and they value the importance of dismantling traditional Eurocentric practices (Howard, 2003). Such teachers utilize these understandings to help shape their students into critical thinkers, political analysts, and social activists.

**Importance of CRP**

As the United States continues to experience profound shifts in demographics, there is an increased demand for teachers who are prepared to teach in a variety of contexts and in culturally responsive manners (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Such educators must be trained to integrate the school and the community into the curriculum, their teaching practices, and the classroom environment (Kea & Trent, 2013). As S.V. Bennett (2013) explained, “Culturally responsive teachers not only connect class lessons to home, socio-cultural and school experiences, they create a community of learners with empathy and understanding” (p. 382). As a result of these connections, teachers, as well as the low-income and minority students that they teach, find more success (S.V. Bennett, 2013). Moreover, the student outcomes are likely to be favorable because CRP teachers are equipped with the tools necessary to handle the evolving nature of classrooms (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).
As an added benefit of CRP, Gay (2002) contended that “teachers’ beliefs about ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity determine their instructional behaviors” (p.126). Therefore, CRP can be used as means to drive instruction and also to serve as a model for teacher preparation programs (Starker & Fitchett, 2013). Unfortunately, however, many teachers remain inadequately prepared to teach in diverse settings (Gay, 2002), in part because the profession remains largely comprised of White, middle-class, female teachers who may possess limited exposure to communities unlike their own (Frederick, et al., 2010). As a result, the cultural disconnect that these teachers often foster has a profound influence on teaching and learning because, as (Howard, 2003) described, race and teaching are interconnected, and “school achievement along racial lines underscores about who is benefitting from school and who is not” (p. 196). Thus, by analyzing, dismantling, and interrupting racism while highlighting the cultural capital that students bring to the classroom, teachers can work to reduce the achievement gap that currently exists between various races (St. Clair & Kishimoto, 2010). Lessening this divide, however, cannot be attained without adequately preparing teachers to teach in unfamiliar settings.

**Approaches of CRP Training Programs**

Providing an overarching perspective of an approach to CRP training, Taylor (2010) identified five important outcomes for the preparation of culturally relevant teachers. Specifically, as Taylor (2010) outlined, such programs need to be able to develop a culturally diverse knowledge base; design culturally relevant curricula; demonstrate cultural caring and build a learning community; build effective cross-cultural communications, and deliver culturally responsive instruction. Villegas and Lucas (2002) asserted that, to train culturally responsive teachers, universities must instill a specific vision and incorporate systemic practices
throughout their teacher education programs. To accomplish this vision, Villegas and Lucas (2002) insisted on basing the focus of the programs on six strands of coherent infusion: (a) impart strategies to help teachers to develop socio-cultural consciousness; (b) maintain an affirming attitude toward diverse students; (c) possess the commitment and skills to act as agents of change; (d) support constructivist views of learning; (e) display a willingness to know their students; and (f) cultivate culturally responsive teaching practices. The outcomes presented by Taylor (2010) and the vision presented by Villegas and Lucas (2002) provide a comprehensive framework for institutions of higher education to enable teacher educators effectively to prepare teachers to foster equity and social justice in schools.

Although the literature is replete with methods and visions associated with the knowledge, dispositions, and skills used by universities to train teacher candidates to be prepared to teach in culturally responsive manners, cultivating the requisite dispositions to teach for equity and diversity is difficult (Y. A. Lee & Herner-Patnode, 2010). Y. A. Lee and Herner-Patnode (2010) explained that teachers must participate in “continuous and conscious examination of their own existing assumptions and maintain high expectations for all learners, and to practice equitable pedagogy” (p. 222). Dover (2013) emphasized the need for teachers to be committed to achieving social justice. Similarly, Conklin and Hughes (2016) maintained that these individuals need to be compassionate, critical justice-oriented preservice teachers. According to Conklin and Hughes (2016), to enable preservice teachers to cultivate such dispositions, the university program must establish a vision to inspire their teacher educators to build meaningful relationships with and among preservice teachers, prioritize the lived experiences of preservice teachers, and conceptualize innovations that support growth and change. Moreover, as Hollins and Guzman (2005) noted, adequate preparation for diversity requires teacher educators to help
foster CRP dispositions among teacher candidates and also to provide specific CRP course content and pedagogical strategies.

In a study used to evaluate the development of CRP in one teaching program, Groulx and Silva (2010) determined that teachers require long-term support to enhance their culturally responsive teaching strategies and dispositions. Sharing views of other CRP development studies, Groulx and Silva (2010) suggested that relevant contextual experiences be provided throughout field experiences and during student teaching. Their study illustrates the value of faculty collaboration, scaffolding of CRP learning experiences throughout a teacher program, and ongoing professional development and support. In summary, the primary focus of CRP programs is to educate teachers about different cultures, to address the effect that difference has on behaviors, and to provide the tools and experiences necessary to make changes to embrace such differences (Gay, 2001, p. 114). Ideally, teachers who are immersed in such programs will carry these competencies and dispositions with them into their own classrooms.

**Critical Reflectivity**

An analysis of the literature relating to the qualities and dispositions needed to teach in diverse settings indicates that the practice of critical reflection is a commonly identified attribute and a requisite skill to develop CRP. Durden and Truscott (2013) defined critical reflectivity as the “process from which pre-service teachers examine how their experiences, beliefs, and experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse students impact teaching and learning” (p. 74). Following their examination of three case studies of teachers who practice culturally relevant teaching, Durden and Truscott (2013) ascertained that teacher education programs need to provide intentional opportunities for teachers to think critically, and that such programs are guided by the tenants of CRP (p. 80). Supporting this notion, Rychley and Graves (2012)
emphasized the importance of teachers formulating dispositions of self-reflection about their own personal beliefs and about other cultures, of being caring and empathetic, and of possessing knowledge about other cultures.

Many similar research studies support the conviction that culturally relevant teaching is impossible to achieve without training programs that instill the practice of critical reflection (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Howard, 2003; O. Lee, 2010; Lin & Lucey, 2010; Muschell & Roberts, 2011). In fact, Starker and Fitchett (2012) explained that reflective practice is the most essential disposition of successful CRP instruction. Building upon this notion, Howard (2003) contended that the development of critical reflection must be a prelude to CRP teacher training. According to Howard (2003), teacher educators must understand the complex nature of diversity as well as the need for teachers to sustain critical reflection throughout their careers. And, as Gay and Kirkland (2003) explained, teacher education programs must create opportunities where critical reflection and cultural critical consciousness are part of the routine, normative demands of students (p. 184).

As a means to encourage preservice teachers to examine their beliefs about difference through reflective assignments, the individuals involved in a study conducted by Muschell and Roberts (2011) participated in a variety of self-reflection activities: narrative imagination, cultural collages, autobiographical explorations, critical literacy, social justice issues, and literature circles. The results suggest a transformation in the teacher candidates’ dispositions for social justice (p. 340). Muschell and Roberts (2011) explained that such assignments and programs must bridge the gap by preparing teachers with the tools necessary to “provide students with multiple entry points for learning and a wide range of pathways for success” (p. 337).
Many researchers (Alviar-Martin & Ho, 2011; Beyer, 1984; Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Giroux, 1988; Herrada, 2008; Marx & Moss, 2011; Merryfield, 2000; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Premier & Miller, 2010; Stachowski & Mahan, 1998) have noted that pairing critical reflection with diverse placement opportunities and practical experiences is an ideal means to prepare teachers for diverse settings. Siwatu (2011) explained that without context-specific training, teachers might feel ill prepared and lack essential self-efficacy beliefs. Siwatu (2011) concluded that preservice training programs must mirror the unique challenges that preservice teachers face while simultaneously offering ongoing support for novice teachers.

Based on the findings of a study designed to determine the extent to which insular views influence teaching practices, Martin and Ho (2011) contended that classroom-based teacher preparation should be employed to bridge social inequality. As such, Martin and Ho (2011) theorized that it is imperative for teachers to experience and reflect upon personal experiences to determine how their perceptions, identities, and pedagogies affect the classroom. Such practices require time from the educator and support from the administration for them to be effective, as expressed in a study by Groulx and Silva (2010) used to evaluate the development of CRP. Building on the premise of the importance of self-reflective practice and the value of first-hand experience, the researchers determined that teachers require long-term support to enhance their culturally responsive teaching strategies. Moreover, they suggested that relevant contextual experiences be provided throughout field experiences and during student teaching. This study illustrates the value of faculty collaboration, of scaffolding of CRP learning experiences throughout a teacher program, and of ongoing professional development.

The positive effects of such efforts, however, are explained by Fitchett, Starker, and Salyers (2012), who conducted a study of teachers who were learning how to ‘review, reflect,
and react” with the goal of developing efficacious attitudes toward culturally relevant teaching to boosting their confidence to work in diverse settings. The work of Fitchett et al. (2012), meanwhile, focused on how culturally relevant pedagogical training, namely reflective practice and immersion opportunities, can lead to dispositional changes. Aligned with Fitchett et al. (2012), Acquah and Commins (2015) determined that, beyond thinking about actions and motivations, teachers must practice critical reflection that is “situated within the moral, political, and ethical contexts of teaching by directly addressing questions pertaining to equity, access and social justice and [recognizing] how these concepts shape the learning experience for many students” (p. 791). Correspondingly, in a qualitative case study conducted by Rushton (2001), narrative self-reflection helped to alleviate pre-service teachers’ fear, frustration, and anxiety while they interned in the inner-city. Rushton (2001) concluded that narrative self-reflection helped the subject gain confidence and empowerment. Rushton’s (2001) study further exemplified the need for self-reflection and first-hand experience in diverse settings. Also, in a study investigating the use of scaffolding of multiple structured courses and field experiences to enhance abilities of critical analysis and reflection among 24 teacher candidates, Barnes (2006) determined that their experiences adequately positioned them to reflect on their own thoughts, to develop new CRP approaches, to practice self-reflection, and to understand how students are influenced by larger socio-political contexts. In a study that reflects the positive results of all of these efforts, Kea and Trent (2013) recommended a modification of field placements and student teaching placements, suggesting that teacher preparation programs reposition culture at the center of all teacher preparation. They explained that it is imperative that principles of CRP be infused throughout the teacher education programs alongside ample opportunities for teachers to merge theory into practice.
As illustrated in the previously reviewed studies, there are many examples of university programs that have offered a variety of techniques to prepare for CRP. However, to train highly qualified teachers to meet the needs of diverse learners, teacher education programs must employ comprehensive pedagogical strategies to prepare teachers to work in diverse settings, including field experiences, self-reflective practices, knowledge about a variety of cultures, and familiarity with diverse learning strategies to accommodate specific learning styles. In addition, Sleeter (2011) explained that teacher programs must help teachers to develop accurate views of CRP, strengthen the research base, and educate teachers on the political factors that affect minority communities. Ideally, teachers who are prepared to teach diverse learners will be able to critically select relevant teaching materials, create an inclusive environment, and incorporate a variation of assessment tools (Y. A. Lee & Hener-Patnode, 2010, p. 222). Teachers who possess these tools and dispositions will likely have the opportunities to have greater impacts on the students whom they teach.

Impact of CRP on Teaching and Learning

As Fitchett, Starker, and Salyers (2012) asserted: “Culturally responsive teaching has been advocated by numerous teacher educators as a proactive pedagogy for meeting the needs of diverse classes and encouraging practitioners to reflect on the diverse needs of their students” (p. 47). Such teaching practices are needed to help students develop academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Beyond scores achieved on standardized exams, Shevalier and McKenzie (2012) elaborated that culturally responsive teaching has an impact on academic achievement, empowerment, and social/emotional growth in urban settings. In fact, Duncan-Andrade (2007) attested that there is a clear link between CRP practices and student achievement. The studies outlined in this section demonstrate how CRP can
boost levels of student engagement and social activism, which are important indicators of student success not easily measured by test scores. For example, in one study, students enrolled in an environmental course taught by a White male teacher became empowered socially, politically, and academically when provided relevant, social justice learning opportunities (Dimick, 2012). The teacher provided the students with social action projects within the community and offered them choices that enabled them to articulate what they had learned. As a result of this practice, students were more engaged in the learning process.

In a similar study of a successful female math teacher in an urban middle school, Tate (1995) discovered that what set this teacher apart from other teachers was her nontraditional pedagogy: she sought to teach students how to solve real-world problems by making connections between their realities and those of African American children. The students identified community problems, conducted research, and devised strategies to resolve the issues. Importantly, the teacher incorporated concepts of social action to help her students develop democratic citizenship. In the end, the teacher's methodology helped students simultaneously to acquire increased levels of confidence, engagement, and math proficiency.

In a study conducted by Aguirre and Zavalla (2013), teachers applied culturally responsive teaching pedagogies through purposeful dialogue to foster thinking, language development, cultural knowledge, and social justice. By drawing upon students’ funds of knowledge (Moll & Gonzalez, 2004), teachers were able to reflect critically on their lessons and set pedagogical goals to enhance learning. Because students demonstrated evidence of learning, this study illustrates the influence that teacher reflection and culturally responsive lesson planning have on teaching practices.
Many educators have developed approaches to teaching their students by tapping into rich resources found in racial, ethnic, and diverse socio-economic conditions. The positive results of these approaches have been corroborated by academic studies. Milner (2010), for example, conducted a case study on a respected culturally responsive White teacher who worked in a highly diverse urban school. Through observations and interviews, Milner (2010) determined that the teacher was able to cultivate cultural competence within his classes and to acquire a deeper understanding of himself by building and sustaining meaningful relationships with his students. Moreover, the educator acknowledged and respected the multiple identities that his students brought to the classroom. He also took risks by addressing issues about race. Findings indicated that cultural and racial convergence created a necessary foundation for academic success (p. 87).

Earlier, Gutstein (2003) conducted a two-year study on a class in an urban, primarily Latino public school, with a class that focused on teaching and learning for social justice. The teacher/practitioner/researcher developed 17 projects that connected with students’ lives and individual experiences. As a result, students examined and critically reflected on issues of inequality and discrimination in their lives and in society. In addition to improved test scores, vignettes written by students illustrated how they became increasingly engaged in coursework and developed as agents of change.

And while many scholars might bemoan contemporary song lyrics, Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2002) incorporated hip-hop and popular culture to create a bridge between urban life and the literary canon to motivate their senior English students to develop academic literacy and critical consciousness (p. 90). These teacher-researchers used these connections to forge “a common and critical discourse” and found ways to develop meaningful relationships with their
students. Recognizing that music transcends the racial divide, they identified hip-hop as being a genre of poetry—from the Post-Industrial Revolution in the United States—to teach Elizabethan, Puritan Revolution, romantic and metaphysical poets from England and the Civil War, the Harlem Renaissance, and the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. The students in these classes were engaged in expository writing and created links between canonical poems and popular culture. Moreover, they were able to relate the texts to larger social and political issues.

The common thread among teacher candidates who acquire competency in CRP is their eagerness to bring life to academic content by forging equitable connections with the students they teach. They accomplish this by relating the coursework to the everyday lives of their students, and they adjust according to individual student’s needs. Teachers who practice CRP are involved in risk-taking, hold high expectations, engage in self-reflective practice, and pass these traits on to their students. In addition to these attributes, students in these classes feel safe to participate in critical analyses and dialogues with their teachers and classmates because they are immersed in a caring environment. Moreover, these teachers recognize the value in countering systemic racism by illustrating to students the interconnectedness of coursework and various sociopolitical challenges because, in the end, students need to feel as if they are part of the solution. Ideally, students who are taught by CRP-trained teachers are engaged and motivated to learn, factors that present opportunities for academic achievement.

**Conclusion**

In summary, this literature review provided an overview of multiculturalism, explored pertinent research, and explained how ideology connects to culturally responsive teaching and learning. Moreover, this review justified the value of preparing teachers to provide authentic learning opportunities for students. Unfortunately, however, many teachers enter diverse settings
with which they are unfamiliar, and they are thus typically unprepared for the challenges confronting them. This divide often leads to low efficacy levels among novice teachers. To address this problem of practice, teachers need to be adequately trained and must acquire the dispositions necessary to understand each student's way of learning. This can be accomplished through the establishment of preservice teacher education programs that employ systemic training and a vision for CRP.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The literature on multiculturalism and CRP indicates that many teachers enter the workforce inadequately prepared to serve as transformative agents of equity and social justice (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1999). Such deficiencies create the need for teacher training programs that are designed to train self-reflective educators who strive to make schooling relevant and authentic for all learners (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Milner, 2003). To support students in feeling more connected, these educators bring life to academic content by forging equitable relationships with the students whom they teach (Gay, 2000; Freire, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Moreover, they instill in their students the skills necessary to identify and challenge societal injustices (Dover, 2013). Unfortunately, however, there remains a shortage of teachers and programs that offer CRP training to implement these practices in their classrooms (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2016; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005).

This study sought to understand the outcomes of a private, liberal arts institution’s teacher-training program designed to prepare culturally responsive educators to work in an urban charter school setting. The researcher conducted this study to identify teachers’ perceptions of their levels of preparedness and aptitude to apply CRP practices after they had experienced this specific training. Results collected from this case study effectively describe the phenomenon and the real-life teaching context in which it occurred. While the university program under investigation was geared toward training educators to be productive teachers in an urban setting, data related directly to those program outcomes had not yet been recorded at the time the study was conducted. Therefore, the researcher sought to use this data to discover if program implementation was linked to program effects and to explore the extent to which the goals of the university were aligned with outcomes aimed at preparing educators to practice CRP in an urban charter school. To facilitate an exploration of the influence this program was having on teaching
and learning, this section identifies the research question that framed the study; it explains the qualitative research approach; it provides an overview of case study research design; and it defines participants, procedures, and methods for data analysis. This section also illustrates criteria for qualitative research and identifies ethical considerations, including elements of credibility, transferability, positionality, self-reflexivity, transparency, and limitations of the study.

**Research Question**

How do novice urban charter school educators maintain a higher degree of teacher efficacy after completing a teacher education program designed to prepare urban educators?

**Qualitative Research Approach**

A qualitative research design was used to investigate teachers’ perceptions of their abilities and dispositions to apply CRP practices in a classroom context. Qualitative research was considered an appropriate method for this study because the researcher sought to investigate the phenomena of multiple constructed realities within a context-specific setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). To conduct this investigation, the researcher directly followed the qualitative design principles of Creswell (2013) to interpret teachers’ “perspectives, meanings, and multiple subjective views” of their training and teaching experiences (p. 46). As Creswell (2013) explained, the principles of qualitative research are appropriately applied when it is difficult to understand, explore, or explain a complex issue that cannot easily be measured statistically.

Qualitative inquiry proved to be a viable means for the researcher to construct meaning through the analysis of teachers’ cultural understandings, communication patterns, and academic and emotional support of students in the classroom setting. As Pratt (2009) explained, the qualitative method provides an “understanding of the world from the perspective of those studied
(i.e., informants); and for examining and articulating processes” (p. 856). Using Pratt’s (2009) definition as a guide to investigate the in-depth processes and actions of a real-life educational setting, the researcher studied and interpreted multiple forms of data: documents, curriculum, classroom observations, and interviews. The researcher asked open-ended questions during the interview process to encourage teachers to reflect upon their own instructional techniques with regard to the tenets of CRP. The interviews included evaluations of the centrality of race and racism in society, the challenge to dominant ideology, the centrality of experiential knowledge, the interdisciplinary perspective, and a commitment to social justice. Approaching the study with the tenets of CRP, the researcher used qualitative inquiry to uncover the following CRP program and teacher outcomes: develop a culturally diverse knowledge base; design culturally relevant curricula; demonstrate cultural caring and build a learning community; build effective cross-cultural communications; and deliver culturally responsive instruction (Taylor, 2010). With these core principles and components serving as an analytical lens, the researcher has provided written accounts of each participant’s background, including their personal, professional, and classroom experiences.

**Constructivist-Interpretivist Paradigm**

The researcher conducted the study using a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm to understand the subjective nature of the proposed case (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988). In this case, the researcher was interested in understanding how the human behaviors and dispositions of teachers were affected as a result of being exposed to specific training and learning experiences. To understand the subjective meaning of this real-world social phenomena, the researcher, applying the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm, worked with the individual to develop an interpretation of this particular case (Schwandt, 1994).
Ponterotto (2005) described the process of co-constructing an interpretation as a hermeneutical approach, a method used by the researcher to encourage the subject to use the process of deep reflection to uncover meanings and hidden messages. Ponterotto (2005) also explained that this dynamic interaction between the researcher and the subject is an essential element in bringing to consciousness the lived experiences of those being studied. Importantly, when the researcher applies the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm, (s)he is able to capture, in dynamic contexts, the subjective nature of teaching and learning. It is the role of the investigator to use this lens to engage the participants in flexible interactions to draw from them the data and interpretations that best illustrate the multiple constructed realities of each case. In this qualitative research study, the researcher used the above-mentioned paradigm to gain a thorough understanding of each participant’s reality, to understand the complexity of human behavior, and to co-construct a reality of teaching and learning that is not generalized or concise (Power & Gendron, 2015).

Case Study Analysis

By examining various theorists’ interpretations of case study methodology, the researcher determined that case study research was an appropriate method to validly develop a holistic interpretation of teachers’ perspectives of urban teaching after they had been trained within a specific and bounded system. To provide further validation, the researcher collected data to determine the extent to which such interventions were sustainable within an urban classroom setting. Because case study methodology is built from constructivist underpinnings, it provided an ideal method for this study, given that it allowed the researcher and the participants to work collaboratively to understand the nature of the teachers’ experiences and their actions in the classroom. Furthermore, the use of this approach effectively shaped the interview research
questions and helped the researcher to investigate the backgrounds and dispositions of a specific cohort of people, to determine the methods by which this group had been trained to be urban educators, to uncover their perceptions of their training, and to gauge their abilities to develop teaching and learning success in an urban school.

Case study methodology was considered to be appropriately aligned with this qualitative study because it fully lends itself to the exploration of a real-life context (Creswell, 2013). Using Creswell’s defining features of the case study method as a guide, the researcher’s intent was to provide descriptive data that indeed led to a thorough understanding of the gap that existed between theoretical college training and hands-on classroom experience. To help bridge the division, this case study incorporated input from a group of teachers as well as from university liaisons and professors who were part of a particular teacher education program.

**Research tradition.** During the first generation of case study research, a methodological division separated the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. The gap was bridged during the second generation, as a movement toward mixed methodologies developed. Although case study research is thought to have emerged in the 1900s in the field of anthropology, the University of Chicago Department of Sociology was likely the first to apply field study research in a contemporary context in the United States (Platt, 1992; Van Maanen, 1988). However, not long after its advent and following the Second World War, the popularity of positivism began to emerge, leading to an increased criticism of qualitative and case study research design. This disapproval was based upon the belief that case study research could not be generalized and that it therefore provided limited validity (Merriam, 2009). The positivist paradigm, by classification, uses quantifiable scientific methods to test a theory or hypothesis. Opponents of hermeneutics,
or, as Ferraris (1996) described, of the “art of interpretation as transformation,” argued that because of the small sampling sizes, qualitative research was an unscientific measure (p. 1).

By the 1950s, quantitative analysis had become the preferred method of research, particularly in the United States. Another shift occurred in the 1960s when researchers Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed the concept of grounded theory, a merging of qualitative and quantitative methods, and the discovery of theory derived from social research. Spanning recent decades and branching off from grounded theory, researchers Flyvbjerg (2006), Gillham (2000), Merriam (1988), Miles & Huberman (1994), Patton (1990) Stake (1995) and Yin (1994), although divergent thinkers, developed modern perspectives of case study designs that allow such methods to be more explicit.

Stake and Yin. According to Stake (1998), a case study is defined by interest in individual cases, not by the methods of inquiry used. Therefore, a case must be specific and bounded, not generalized. Applying a constructivist approach to data collection, Stake (1998) purported that the research process is an active phenomenon and maintained that subjects are largely shaped by their past experiences. This underlying principle illustrates the ways in which qualitative research studies place emphasis on context. Moreover, Stake (1998) was a proponent of subjectivity, in that the researcher is involved in the research, connected to the subjects, and engaged and situated in the social structure. Likewise, Stake’s post-modernist stance required the use of methods that are inductive and flexible and focused on discovery and interpretation to understand the complexities of the case (Boblin, Ireland, Kirkpatrick, & Robinson, 2013). Essential to the qualitative approach, Stake (1995) elucidated that case studies help researchers to refine theory, prompt further investigation, and assist in the curtailment of generalizations in
research. Stake (1994) added, “A case study is both the process of learning about the case and the product of our learning” (p. 237).

Yin (2009) defined a case study as “[a]n empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon set within its real-world context – especially when the boundaries between phenomena are not clearly evident” (p. 18). A post-positivist researcher, Yin (2009) has been instrumental in merging experimental logic with naturalistic inquiry to form a new brand of qualitative research. Furthermore, Yin (2009) developed case study analysis as a research strategy, placing emphasis on the techniques, methods, and the importance of articulating the theoretical perspective. By blurring boundaries, Yin’s (1994) work has relied upon a methodological and structural approach to research to help explain causal differences or generalizations. He purported that a case study can be both quantitative and qualitative, and he explained that this methodology is exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive (Yin, 1993). Case studies from this perspective can be characterized as single, holistic, or multiple (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

According to Yin (1993), the focus of this approach is to answer the “how” and “why” of a particular case. Thus, the use of a case study design satisfies the three above-mentioned tenets of the qualitative method. While there are several case study designs from which to choose, the type of method is guided by the overall purpose and size of the study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). After identifying the case, the researcher determines the intent of the study (Creswell, 2013). Once the details of the case are outlined, the researcher conducts the study in a manner that will provide a thorough understanding of that case. This analysis is accomplished through the process of triangulation, a method of uncovering converging lines from multiple sources of data to reveal common themes and patterns and to establish validity. The process, used in qualitative research,
requires the collection of data from at least three sources: interviews, documents, observations, and focus groups, for example. Triangulation is obtained through in-depth and cross-source interpretation, reflection and verification so that an account as close to authentic as possible is recorded.

A case study analysis provides the researcher the opportunity to view a case from various perspectives, thus enabling a diverse research methodology that includes many sources of information, variables, and qualities, such as time and space. For this reason, a case study must be restricted within certain parameters and present multiple forms of data which allow the researcher to gain a rich, in-depth understanding of the case (Creswell, 2013). The researcher accomplished this insight by conducting an analysis of multiple units – the university and the school system – to move toward a holistic understanding of the cultural systems of action in which the teachers were immersed.

**Participants**

To provide a reliable representation of perspectives, this study involved a purposive and small sample (Patton, 2002) of 6-10 educators and at least two university professors/liaisons from an urban teaching program at a university in the northeastern region of the United States. The study was open to all student teachers from the program who were working in a classroom setting and to contracted educators who were engaged in a position within the charter school located within the city limits. As of July 2017, there were three university cohorts with approximately 30 members enrolled in the program, of various ages, genders, races, ethnicities, and professional backgrounds. The majority of these prospective participants for this study were from Western Pennsylvania. While not all of the cohort members had professional experience in education, all had articulated an interest in pursuing careers as urban teachers.
Cohort members who were part of the program had endured a rigorous selection process and had been chosen based upon their commitment to social justice and urban education. To be eligible for the program, members needed to have a bachelor’s degree in history, science, mathematics, or English or to have come from a program with comparable coursework hosted by an accredited college/university; they were required to have at least a 3.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale; to have experience working with children in an urban setting; to possess Pennsylvania Department of Education clearances—Act 34 (Criminal), Act 151 (Child Abuse), and FBI Criminal History. They were required to not be currently enrolled in or have completed a teacher preparation or certification program, or be eligible for Pennsylvania teaching certification at the time the participants were selected.

Following their completion of the four-term program that includes a residency apprenticeship, stipend, support, and professional development, these teacher candidates were being guaranteed employment in a charter school system that had partnered with the university. The charter school system was comprised of a network of public charter schools that educate children in underserved communities. Formed in 2003, the system, at the time this study was conducted, was serving 3,700 students at 11 locations. In addition to a teaching position, the teachers who completed the program received a master’s degree and a teaching certificate.

Because the subjects participating in this study were part of a program that provided a cost-free education and employment for educators, the data collected in this study may have its limitations, including lacking transferability to similar programs where teachers pay tuition, do not receive a stipend, and are not guaranteed a job upon completion. In addition, participants in the program were indeed preselected in part because of their commitment to urban education and
a predisposition to teach for social justice. Traditional teacher education programs may have a more diverse pool of subjects who do not share these characteristics.

**Procedures**

Following the acceptance and defense of the current proposal, this researcher received International Review Board (IRB) approval. Once that IRB determination was granted, she worked with the gatekeeper as well as with university personnel to recruit the stipulated number of participants. These individuals were contacted via email by the researcher through the gatekeeper, an assistant professor at the training university and who was at the time serving as the program liaison supervising the candidate's student teaching. At the time of recruitment, the participants were offered a $25 gift card as compensation for their time as incentive; the card was provided after the data collection was completed. Once the participants were identified and had accepted the invitation to be a part of the research study, the researcher contacted each one of them individually via email or phone to arrange interviews.

After the professors and teachers confirmed their interest in participating in the study, the researcher proceeded to email the participants to arrange a time to meet face-to-face, via Skype, or on the phone to conduct the interviews. During the initial interaction, the first priority of the researcher was to build rapport and to establish privacy and confidentiality with all of the subjects who participated in the study. As Creswell (2013) explained, it is the duty of the researcher to gain the confidence of the subjects being studied. The researcher followed with formal, structured interviews with all participants and unobtrusive observations of the teachers working in their classrooms as part of the triangulated collection of data and cross-case analysis to determine the outcomes of the program. Each interview and observation lasted approximately 1-2 hours. As the interview began, the researcher explained the type, purpose, and the nature of
the interview questions. The researcher clarified the length of the interview and assured the participants she would keep their identities and that of the school confidential. Moreover, the researcher provided an opportunity for all subjects to ask questions related to the research process. Then, the researcher proceeded to obtain written consent from all subjects to quote their confidential responses in the research study.

During the on-site observations, the researcher requested copies of curriculum, lesson plans, evaluations, essential questions from assignments, and other supporting program documents. The researcher supplemented this data by taking field notes about the physical space and general ambience in which the subjects were teaching. When all of the meetings and observations were completed, the researcher organized multiple structured and semi-structured interview responses, reflections, documents, and observation notes. Once the data collection was completed, the process of analysis began.

Data analysis. The purpose of analyzing and presenting the data garnered from this proposed study was to apply the lens of teacher efficacy to identify common themes and differences between multiple embedded units within the case, to relate these findings to research on best practices on CRP, and to determine if the goals of the program and the perceptions of the subjects teaching in urban settings were aligned. Therefore, based on specific information gleaned during the research process, the researcher analyzed and interpreted data in this study, codifying it to describe the phenomena by identifying relevant themes, patterns, and concepts related to CRP practices.

The researcher used a laptop to record all interviews. Using a digital recorder as a backup, Rev.com software was used to record interviews of university personnel and teachers. MAXQDA Software was used for transcription and analysis. Once all documents and artifacts
were cataloged, the practice of open coding was applied to help to identify specific categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As the researcher identified themes, data was compared and contrasted to establish similarities and differences. Following this process, categories were organized to answer the specific and prominent research questions. To ensure authenticity, the researcher used an inductive approach which enabled her to develop a theory emerging from the patterns ascertained from the data. These findings were sorted to develop a framework to be used for descriptive case analysis. A descriptive case study was used in this analysis to describe an intervention or phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred (Yin, 2003). The conclusions are presented in narrative form as a means to address the problem of practice and also to provide recommendations for other teacher preparation programs.

**Ethical considerations.** Ethical principles are critical when a researcher interacts with human subjects including procedural, situational, relational, and exiting practices (Tracy, 2010). The researcher must adhere to legal, social, and political standards to ensure the validity of the data and to protect individuals and institutions. Therefore, the researcher must accept responsibility to obtain informed consent from all subjects, to assure privacy and confidentiality, and to follow all rules and responsibilities set forth by the IRB and the Office of Human Subject Research Protection (HSRP).

To maintain the integrity and safety of all parties involved, it is imperative for the researcher to follow procedural guidelines by establishing a trusting relationship with the individuals who volunteered for this proposed study. To provide an honest and trusting relationship, the researcher did maintain the confidentiality of the human subjects under study, the university where they were receiving their training, and the school system where they were teaching. The researcher used encrypted passwords and applied pseudonyms to all data acquired
from study participants. In addition, the researcher ensured the safety and security of all data and information collected from participants, and she assured that all data will be used for research purposes aimed at improving the program under study and other similar initiatives. Data was stored on portable external drives and locked in file cabinets, accessible only to the student researcher and the principal investigator (the academic advisor). Once the data was uploaded and transcribed, it was disposed of—shredded or deleted properly—except for informed consent forms which must be kept according to IRB standards for three years.

To ensure situational compliance, the researcher attempted to dismiss all personal judgments of the contexts in which the study took place. By doing so, a neutral, flexible, and open-minded approach was responsibly maintained throughout the various stages of research, thus allowing the researcher to adjust to any unpredictable circumstances that arose. Throughout the course of the study, the researcher was cognizant that the context is a unique system, and she indeed understood that, by placing judgment or applying personal standards to this system, she risked allowing personal biases to interfere with the credibility of the data.

Pollard (2015) asserted: “The central tenets of relational ethics are mutual respect, engagement, embodied knowledge, environment and uncertainty” (p.364). Developing and maintaining a reciprocal relationship with all human subjects is an essential part of developing relational ethics. To collaborate effectively, the researcher fostered mutual caring and respect with volunteers because she considered it her moral responsibility to be cognizant of how her actions could affect others (Tracy, 2010). Tracy (2010) also suggested that researchers engage in the practice of relational ethics, a process that encourages sharing relevant research findings with the subjects involved.
Connected to relational norms, exiting ethics require that researchers be aware that the manner in which the study concludes may serve to harm or to benefit others. To avoid unintended results when reporting data, the researcher must consider how the participants’ unique perspectives and opinions are portrayed. In addition, data cannot serve to further oppress or marginalize participants. Instead, the data must be presented in a way that avoids future misinterpretation or misuse of findings. The researcher fulfilled this ethical requirement by providing an appropriate disclaimer (Tracy, 2010) and also by conducting member checks with the individuals, a process that provided an opportunity for subjects to read their transcripts and make corrections to clarify meaning and/or to provide deletions or amendments.

**Credibility.** Using triangulation methods, the researcher incorporated the use of multiple data sources—interviews, documents, and observations—to enhance research credibility. The use of these methods increased the likelihood that the study can provide a highly authentic evaluation of the specific context that also has internal validity. As purported by Lincoln and Guba (1985), the application of various credibility constructs can enable the researcher to be confident that the findings are representative of the individuals’ accounts of their experiences and of the context. Using Lincoln and Guba (1985) as a guide in this process, the researcher extended engagement and cultivated deep connections with the participants and with the culture in which these individuals work and study. Therefore, the researcher was able to gain appropriate and approved access to the site and the subjects prior to the beginning of the interview and observation process (Shenton, 2004). Overlapping with various ethical considerations, the researcher was able to attain research credibility by engaging in peer debriefing with colleagues as well as conducting member checks with the subjects. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), such member checks provide an essential facet of establishing credibility. To verify the data, the
researcher and the informants effectively collaborated in the review and amendment of the transcripts. The outlined criteria helped to ensure that the analysis of data provided an accurate representation of the program under investigation and of the participants’ experiences and perceptions (Shenton, 2004).

Transferability. As Merriam (1998) explained, external validity is the extent to which research findings can be transferred or applied to other settings. Building on this notion, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that data garnered in a research study must be presented in a way that will prompt comparisons to other contexts. While this proposed case study investigated teacher practices and dispositions of a specific program in a particular context, the researcher did collect and present data that provides credence to other programs within a variety of circumstances. Importantly, this study can be related to other studies that seek to determine the feasibility and characteristics of programs that prepare teachers to instruct in classrooms that incorporate the value of social justice into the education experience. Of additional relevance, as school systems become increasingly diverse and teacher shortages mount, this study can potentially continue to be relevant and transferable to a wider population, partly because the findings illustrate the unique experiences of urban teachers who are connecting theory and practice around the phenomenon of being trained for and incorporating the tenets of social justice into their curriculum and pedagogy. While this study is mostly applicable to university programs, it has the potential to build scholarship for public and private school systems that are designing professional development for programs that will address areas of diversity and social justice. Moreover, this study extends to classroom teachers who seek to enhance the teaching and learning processes in general in their own classrooms.
While the information-rich case for which this study was created portrays the characteristics of the individual members of a purposive sample, the data collected from this study can potentially generate future implications for teacher attrition rates in urban schools, as well as prompt changes in public policy, and enable teachers and administrators to improve upon professional practice, as they pursue further questions, hypotheses, and scholarship related to social justice. It was therefore the responsibility of the researcher in this case to provide a “sufficient thick description of the phenomena in order to allow readers to have a proper understanding of it” (Shenton, 2004, p.70). Even so, the researcher has acknowledged the limits of transferability. For instance, all of the teachers in this proposed case study possessed specific dispositions and were enrolled in a free program that was guaranteeing them a position in a specific type of urban charter school.

**Internal audit.** To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the proposed study, the researcher conducted an internal audit. According to Shenton (2004), the researcher achieves this process by “tracing the course of the research step-by-step via the decisions made and the procedures described” (p. 72). The researcher maintained and has provided an audit trail in the form of a diagram that includes the research question, research field notes, research journals, memos, audio tapes, annotated transcripts, tables of themes, draft reports, and the final report. This report can serve to support the accuracy of information provided by the informants. As stated by Creswell and Miller (2000), an internal audit provides evidence to an external auditor that the narrative account is credible. Finally, the audit trail will serve as a guide to help future researchers replicate the research process in other settings.
Positionality

I am a White, middle-class educator in a White, suburban school district, and I have a passion for the promotion of equality, human rights, and social justice within school systems. As a member of my school’s diversity committee, I can attest that racism plagues all school systems, not just the ones located in urban settings. Prior to becoming an educator in my current school system, I worked for four years as a residential treatment facility counselor and teacher for adjudicated youth. I spent the next 10 years as the dean of discipline and health educator in an alternative school for at-risk youth. Looking ahead as a post-doctoral student, I would like to work as a consultant or an administrator to improve urban school systems. I am interested in the pursuit of developing the potential of schools that embrace the success of all children, not just those from White, middle, and upper-class neighborhoods. Furthermore, I believe that it is imperative that all children identify with their teachers and have a sense of belonging, no matter where their school may be located. As evident in this proposed study, my beliefs have developed over many years.

During my childhood, I was angered when some of my peers failed to stand up for the rights of others. As an adult, I sought opportunities to work with urban youth who were less fortunate than those growing up in economically comfortable environments. Extending from those experiences, I discovered educational opportunities that deepened my curiosity to confront racism and to end oppressive acts. This interest now extends into my current research objectives which focus on seeking ways to alleviate the consequences of institutionalized oppression and the marginalization of students in school systems serving students from all socio-economic backgrounds. I believe that the consequences of these actions are felt particularly by members of oppressed groups, creating barriers and establishing limitations for them. I consider this to be a
systemic problem, one that necessitates action on the part of universities and school systems worldwide to prepare teachers who possess the dispositions necessary to instruct classes that are centered on social justice and that are void of stereotyping and prejudices, whether these are expressed overtly or covertly.

Social justice in educational practice is critically essential. I firmly believe that it provides the foundation for what we teach, how we teach, and, most importantly, how we lead. Furthermore, I believe that when elements of social justice are absent, threatened, or weakened within a school system, paralyzing effects tend to permeate the organization. These consequences of such shortcomings are felt not only by the teachers and students, but they also extend outwardly to the community. In short, I believe that despite societal pressures towards ethnocentrism, it is our duty as scholar-practitioners to serve as social justice ambassadors to advocate for the equal treatment of one another so that we may ensure that our schools are just and provide a learning environment that will strengthen our communities and society as a whole.

I have pursued social justice throughout my life. Without actually defining myself as an advocate of social justice, from an early age, I recall being easily angered when I observed people mistreating “others” simply because those individuals or groups viewed “others” as being inferior to them. By possessing an acute sensitivity for those who are marginalized or excluded, I would innately intervene and act when I witnessed such “othering” taking place. Jensen (2011) referred to this concept of “othering” as the manner in which people judge other people, based on preconceived biases and stereotypes.

My fervor to eliminate inequalities and the act of “othering” has continued to develop throughout my teaching career. I never accept students being made to feel as if they are inferior based upon their racial, ethnic, sexual, or socio-economic differences. And, as I continue to
interact with people from various backgrounds and become more educated in social justice scholarship, my commitment to eliminating injustice continues to intensify. Within my own classroom setting, I am comforted by knowing that my students are aware that I have no tolerance for prejudices or unequal treatment, and that I am eager to fight for what is right so that all students have a safe place in which to live and learn.

**College exposure.** I first began to articulate my convictions about social justice while enrolled in a diversity course at Point Park University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. To heighten our awareness of current and historically marginalized conditions and to erase blind spots, the professor encouraged us to address our own prejudices and to learn about others so that we could serve to eliminate inequality. We learned to use dialogue to accomplish this, and it was while being enrolled in that course that I was first introduced to the work of Paulo Freire. His writings teach us to learn about ourselves so that we may begin to learn about others, while guiding us to discover that our views are only partial. Freire (2013) discovered “At the point of encounter there are neither utter ignoramuses nor perfect sages; there are only men who are attempting, together, to learn more than they now know” (p. 158). Freire was a scholar who recognized that all of us need to strive to learn more about each other so that we may better interact with each other.

Similar to Point Park, Northeastern University (NEU) provides opportunities to help students to understand the world in which we live, but on an even greater scale. Social justice frameworks, methodologies, and themes are interwoven into the content of each course of the NEU College of Professional Studies (CPS) program and are not provided merely in stand-alone courses or diversity workshops. From leadership courses to curriculum courses, we have been taught the importance of making certain that all groups are treated equally. And without consciously being aware, we have built upon what Bettez (2011) referred to as “critical”
communities that have both a “process and a goal” to support one another in a quest for social justice (p. 80).

The (CPS) EdD program with a concentration in curriculum, teaching, learning, and leadership (CTLL) at NEU has also afforded me the opportunity to become immersed in the philosophies of authors such as Ladson-Billings, John Dewey, Sonya Nieto, Michael Apple, Maxine Green, bell hooks, Elliot Eisner and Nel Noddings. These individuals have provided me with hope that the world can change as long as I and others continue to pursue an activist stance. While enrolled in a leadership course, I became especially inspired by the work of George Theoharis (2007), a school principal and social justice advocate who, in his research, examined the ways that principals enact social justice in public schools, the resistance that principals encounter in their justice work, and the strategies that principals develop to sustain social justice in light of resistance they face within their school systems. Theoharis used his personal experiences as a basis to critically reflect upon and contribute to social justice research. Similar to Theoharis, I believe that self-reflection is a critical element in building the capacity for better school systems while also helping to facilitate ideological shifts in society.

My dissertation. By being exposed to these core beliefs, my passion for social justice has found its way into my dissertation topic. Hence, the goal of this dissertation was to uncover practices that serve to prepare pre-service teachers for the classroom so that they are equipped with the background necessary to develop as transformative agents of equity and social justice. This work also responds to our rapidly changing society and the urgency for teachers to become more culturally responsive than they may have previously been. Recognizing that most universities offer minimal coursework in cultural diversity, I am calling for more programs that are similar to the one that has been developed at Northeastern, ones that serve to incorporate
enriching dialogue and immersion experiences, combined with the use of broader curricular applications. My vision also articulates and develops a need for universities to conduct case studies to determine the effectiveness of their programs, rating students on a continuum that measures their personal growth from ethnocentrism to ethno-relativism before they enter the field.

**Biases.** Even though I am a White, middle-class American female in a position of privilege, I maintain an acute sensitivity to oppressive acts of any nature. I believe that it is an unfortunate reality that the White middle-class is the marker by which all other classes are judged (Yosso, 2006), how curriculum is developed, and how students learn in the American culture. At the same time, I realize that I need to be open to understanding the opinions of others who may not share this same philosophy. Hence, I know that I convey my own set of biases mainly because of my unique experiences, diverse educational training, and my close personal affiliations with people who come from a variety of backgrounds, and this poses its own set of challenges and opportunities. Therefore, to remain objective and to gather reliable data, I have used rigorous triangulation methods to establish a relationship with the participants. I have been stalwartly committed to collecting data that analyzes both the pros and cons of comprehensive university programs and their utility or inefficiency in progressing toward a difference perspective while eliminating a “deficit perspective” (Parsons, 2008) among pre-service teachers. If my preconceptions were not supported, I understood that it was my duty to determine the reasons; yet I also remained steadfast in my obligation to face the reality that no matter how well a program is designed, an individual’s deep-seeded notions may never diminish.

**Self-reflexivity and transparency.** As the researcher, my role has been to maintain self-reflexivity and transparency with regard to my conduct, theoretical perspective, and values. To
ensure trustworthiness and accountability, I have assumed an introspective approach to separate my biases from the study during this research process. Despite these efforts, I realize that my positionality may still have affected the research, outputs, and interpretation of the data. Nonetheless, to the fullest extent possible and in constant awareness of my positionality, I have reported co-constructed, objective data that emerged from the findings collected from the study. To maintain objectivity, I have consistently recorded reflective notes in addition to descriptive notes (Creswell, 2013). This practice effectively prevents an over or under interpretation of the data. As Finlay (2002) explained, a reflexive journal with thick description is maintained by the researcher to address the distortions or preconceptions that may threaten accuracy. Rubin and Rubin (2012) also elucidated the value of transparency, emphasizing the need for the researcher to provide readers with an open, honest, and precise account of the process, replete with feelings and reactions. Rubin and Rubin (2012) further explained that this process helps readers understand how the researcher arrived at conclusions. In addition to maintaining a detailed account of the process, I have performed rigorous cross-checking and counter-checking and I have used qualitative software to re-check my own analysis. And, as previously explained, triangulation methods and an audit trail have deeply enhanced internal validity (Merriam, 1998).

**Limitations**

Leedy and Ormrod (2005), as reported by Ellis and Levy (2009), explained that “every study has a set of limitations, or “potential weaknesses or problems with the study identified by the researcher” (Creswell, 2005, p. 198). These factors may affect the validity of the research and are beyond the control of the researcher. However, such limitations may place restrictions on the case study execution, methodology, and analysis. For instance, as a White female conducting a study in an urban setting, I have been faced with cultural barriers. As a result, I may not have
obtained an authentic representation of data because some subjects at times were not fully comfortable answering questions related to issues of culture and race. This researcher addressed this potential obstacle by emphasizing the importance of privacy and confidentiality, for she is cognizant that this limitation may have somewhat interfered with the inquiry process.

In this case, the researcher must rely solely upon the gatekeeper to serve as a liaison to conduct case study research of unknown research subjects who work in a context to which the researcher is not directly connected. Because the available sample size in the case of this study was limited to 30 members, assembling an adequate representation of teachers was challenging; however, that challenge was overcome, and the sample size was methodologically robust.

Case study design required the researcher to gather an extensive and diverse representation of data from multiple sources through the school and the university in order to accomplish validity. According to Creswell (2014), this is a time-consuming process that poses its limitations for the researcher. Because of unforeseen constraints involved in the interview and observation process, data collection was somewhat restricted. Certain barriers did arise around the researcher entering and observing the classrooms; these were overcome and did not limit the data collection.
Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

The purpose of this case study was to document the perceptions and experiences of urban charter school educators and to investigate how their training through a teacher residency program contributed to their teaching efficacy in that setting. Documentation included their perceptions of their ability to forge meaningful connections through culturally responsive and socially just pedagogies, to influence learning outcomes despite challenges, and to find overall success as urban educators. This study also examined the perceptions of teachers and professors/liaisons of the program design to guide the researcher in understanding the teachers’ experiences and in providing recommendations aimed at improving the program’s effectiveness in preparing urban educators. This chapter includes the findings and results of a case study analysis of the experiences of educators and program liaisons/professors.

History and Context of the Program

In an attempt to attract a diverse pool of educators to work in urban settings, leaders from an urban charter school system met with various education departments from local urban universities offering a proposal to form a partnership in 2014. They were seeking an institutional partner in higher education to train educators who were motivated to teach in an urban environment, who were committed to social justice and education equality, and who were determined to make a difference in the lives of children affected by poverty, injustice, and racial tensions. In addition, the school leaders posited that by providing teachers with the tools necessary to work in an urban environment, they could lower the attrition rate of novice educators. Through the implementation of the program resulting from this proposal, approved apprentices would receive a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) through a teacher residency program, a stipend to cover living expenses plus insurance, three years of full-time employment,
and continuing support and mentorship. Once the school system found a university partner, they formed their inaugural cohort in 2015. Only 5 out of 10 teachers remain from the first cohort. At the time this study was conducted, there were 32 members. When the data collection concluded for this study, the University informed the researcher that only two candidates were accepted into the 2018 cohort.

**Context of the teacher education program.** The university training partner is a small, private, liberal arts, co-educational institution located in an urban setting. The student enrollment at the time of the study was approximately two thousand, with fewer than 75 students in the combined bachelors and masters programs. There were seven full-time faculty members and several adjuncts employed in the education department, and some were affiliated at the time with the charter school. Because the department was suffering from declining enrollment, the university faculty believed that a university-school partnership might offer an ideal way to attract master’s level students.

**Context of the charter school system.** Formed in 2003, the charter system under study is a not-for-profit network of 11 elementary, middle, and high school charter schools serving approximately 4,000 students—nearly 70% of them minorities—in high poverty and low resource communities. The context and culture of each individual school within the system varied and depended on the characteristics of the students, teachers, and leadership. While most of the students qualified for free or reduced breakfast or lunch, all of them were receiving free meals. The schools within the network were engaged in Expeditionary Learning (EL), a method of comprehensive school reform that places emphasis on an interdisciplinary approach to learning. Based on the Outward Bound Model that incorporates personal growth and social skills, the school was employing EL to instill morals, character, leadership, service, and student
scholarship. This model also incorporated an advisory program called “Crew,” which paired teachers with students to help them form relationships, to engage in activities, and to address challenges. In addition to experiential learning practices, the schools prioritized small class sizes, individualized attention, and an extended school day and year to maximize instruction. The schools were offering Advanced Placement (AP) courses and 1:1 technologies. Finally, in addition, students were provided with opportunities to participate in theater, athletics, dance, instrumental music, and technology.

**Teacher education cohort selection process.** Cohort applicants in the program are required to engage in a rigorous application process, but first they must meet minimum requirements to be accepted into the University’s MA program, which is a bachelor's degree in history, science, mathematics, English, or a program with comparable coursework from an accredited college or university with a 3.0 GPA/4.0 scale. Furthermore, eligibility is predetermined by the applicant’s drive to teach in an urban environment, their commitment to social justice in education, and their level of determination to make a difference in the lives of students. The ideal candidate has prior experience working with children in an urban setting, combined with post-college life experience.

Once the interviewers determine that the applicants have met all of the prerequisite qualifications, they invite them to participate in a video interview where they are asked questions such as, "What does social justice mean to you, and can you tell me what that would look like in your classroom?" The initial interview is followed by a Round Robin session that incorporates various exercises, activities, student interactions, and additional prompts, including a one-page reflection on why they believe that they are good fits for the program, and why they want to teach in urban schools. The applicants who advance from the Round Robin session then engage
in a two-day boot camp while being analyzed for attributes such as leadership abilities, relationship building, persistence, and passion. For the leadership task, applicants are required to collaborate on an activity with other applicants and while being observed for their leadership abilities. The applicant’s relationship abilities are assessed by them leading a small group of students through an exercise; observers note how well they interact with and lead each student through the task. To gauge persistence, the applicants are presented with a list of undesirable tasks and are asked to rank their top choice versus their lowest. Once they have identified their least favorite option, they must perform it in front of the group, then reflect on the experience and how it compares to how persistent they have been in their personal life. The passion activity requires verbal reflection through answering a series of questions, as they share their passions and why they want to be a part of the program.

The next part of the selection process includes a role-playing activity in which applicants work in pairs to perform hypothetical scenarios in front of each other. These scenarios range from responding to student behavior to overhearing a colleague in the staff room speaking negatively about a parent. The applicants debrief after each role-play activity, giving responses to each other about how they would handle each situation. Following the role-playing activity, the applicants must conduct a demo lesson. After the demo lesson, the applicants are provided feedback. Then they reteach the lesson with a different group of students so that the interviewers can determine how well they respond to feedback, how reflective they are, and how coachable they are. Following the two demo lessons, the candidates are connected with former residents so that they can ask each other questions and learn more about the experience. Once the candidates complete this activity, they are required to deliver to the superintendent a one-on-one explanation regarding why they want to be a part of the program.
Participants

Participants in the study included novice teachers, pre-service/resident teachers, full-time professors, and a school liaison/adjunct professor. Of the 11 participants, two were teachers, three were pre-service/resident teachers, one served as a pre-service teacher before dropping out of the program, three were full time professors, one was a former employee of the program but served as an adjunct, and one was a school liaison/adjunct professor. Three of the university personnel were White females, one was a White male, and one was an African American female. The teachers included two African American males, one biracial male, one biracial female, and two White females.

The teachers taught a variety of subjects and grades, and they were situated in multiple schools within the charter school system. One teacher was from cohort one, two were from cohort two, and three were from cohort three. The researcher conducted one email interview and ten in-person interviews of participants who were affiliated with the university or program during the spring of 2018. Their personal accounts of the pre-service residency program assisted in the shaping of this study and provided the primary source of data. In some cases, the participants provided evidence in the form of unit plans, lesson plans, student work, and classroom activities to support their teaching practices.

Findings

To help the researcher to understand if the teacher training program led to improved teacher efficacy as noted by teachers, professors, and liaisons, the research questions were designed to uncover teacher backgrounds and dispositions, teachers’ personal accounts of classroom experiences and implementation of social justice and CRP, teachers’ perspectives on the program to prepare them for the urban classroom, and evidence of support provided by the
program. Five themes emerged from the research questions: Teachers’ history influenced teaching efficacy; Teachers’ dispositions contributed to teacher efficacy; Evidence of teacher efficacy as urban educators; Teachers’ perceptions of teacher training programs; and Providing support for the ongoing development of educators.

**Theme 1: Teachers’ History Influenced Teaching Efficacy**

Background experiences such as an urban upbringing, personal struggles, race, and interest in social justice were influential factors of the teachers’ perceived level of efficacy as culturally responsive educators.

**Urban upbringing.** Of the six subjects who were interviewed, four believed that their experiences growing up in an urban environment helped them to connect with their students. One subject explained how growing up in the neighborhood, “…made me who I am.” Another subject shared a similar sentiment as he described how the environment in which he was raised, “…made me everything that I ever wanted to be as a teacher.” Another subject explained, “I was brought up in an urban environment which makes understanding and having empathy for some of their situations easy.” That same subject also noted, “…for me it was different, I come from these areas so the transition was fairly easy.” Another subject who spent a lot of time on the streets in the local neighborhood recognized what the struggles were and what he needed to be successful. These findings indicated that teachers who shared a common milieu with their students possessed a natural ability to forge connections; thus, developing their teaching practices from their own lived experiences.

**Challenging Past.** A common theme among all of the teachers was the struggles: financial hardships, negative school experiences, abuse, and traumatic events that they endured during their past and how those experiences helped them to relate to their students. One teacher
who “considered his backstory to be critical to his success in the classroom,” said every day with his students, he watched life repeat itself:

I know the struggles that a lot of these kids go through on a day-to-day basis. I feel that my life experiences as a first-generation high school and college grad allow me to find the correct motivational tactics to push our kids. I come from a family which had nothing, so everything I have including the two college degrees I had to attain with virtually no help—I am a pretty strong-willed individual.

For another individual who never found success in the classroom as a student, “Everything about school was a bad experience.” Others said they found it natural to relate to student situations because of how their own family lives had been, and it was also easy to understand what the kids were bringing with them as they walked into the school. One of the individuals spoke about growing up in an abusive household, explaining, “I was always told that I wasn’t going to be anything. I was going to be in jail. This was my family.” In describing his life, “I’ve been through enough to where I can kind of help you [students] guide your way to something different or something better.” Another individual honed in on how being poor affected her school experience: “Like I knew that I didn't have money, and that impacted how I felt at school and felt with my peers.” Similarly, another subject recounted how her family struggled with poverty when her father lost his job. She poignantly recalled how, “...conversations [at home] were always about money.” Because the teachers related their own past struggles to the hardships that their students had endured, they felt connected to them. Moreover, the teachers understood that serving as a positive adult figure in the school setting could offset some of the negativity that the students encountered outside the classroom. They believed that their influences, combined with
similar backgrounds, could strengthen their student’s outlook on life and provide them with hope for a better future.

**Race.** Four of the six subjects described how being able to identify with African-American students helped them to work effectively with them, while being White had created barriers. One of the White teachers explained that “it would be easier if I were Black.” In contrast, one African-American teacher perceived that “I kind of talk their language, so it makes it much easier.” While many participants concurred that it helps when the schools have African-American administrators and teachers, they also understood that it remains a challenge for schools to find them. As explained by one of the African-American males, “There were not too many people who looked like me who were successful.” He concluded that many of his African-American students had never had an African American teacher, and, for that reason, “...they were excited and ready to work with me.” He believed that most of his students looked to him as being a role model because of his race, and they often expressed to him that he was making a difference in their lives. Another African-American male elucidated, “I am Black, so the transition was easy.”

Emphasizing that “race is real” throughout his interview, a biracial male said he believed that “being biracial did not qualify me to teach in any atmosphere;” however, he also postulated that there were students who identified with him instantly because they were both of mixed race. He described how being African-American likely encouraged students as it had for him to have the same kind of role models. He recalled an African American male teacher with whom he could identify when he was a student, merely because the man looked like his own dad. With similar experiences, another biracial educator expressed, “When I told the kids that my dad was Black, the immediate respect was there.” The African American teachers who participated in the
study appeared to thrive in their school settings because of their innate ability to draw on their own experiences to address issues of race in the classrooms. Moreover, the African American males were heralded as being heroes or father figures, which motivated students to work harder at their studies. These findings indicated that a relationship existed between the teachers’ cultural backgrounds and beliefs and their effectiveness in the classroom, as well as a need to diversify the teaching profession.

**Interest in social justice.** All of the educators who participated in the research study, regardless of race, expressed their commitment to social justice principles, with some exhibiting those beliefs in their teaching practices as observed by this researcher. While difficult to define, social justice educators generally acutely understand the roots of injustices and use their roles as teachers to actively address inequalities. For one such individual, she and everyone around her quickly recognized that she was an activist, and this awareness led her to begin her career with Teach for America, a corps of teachers who work in low-income schools to increase opportunities for students. When she witnessed her poverty-stricken students being discriminated against, she said, “Wait, this is federal law!” As a master’s student, she recently wrote a thesis about the protests that occurred during the industrialization in the 1980s, and addressed how the divisions along lines of race and class severed relationships within unions. With these experiences, she became increasingly adamant about “getting on the ground” and changing the lives of students, so she determined that the pre-service program was a good fit for her.

Prior to applying to this program, another teacher committed to AmeriCorps, a network of local, regional, and national civil society programs supported by the United States federal government. She followed this path so that she could address critical community needs such as academic achievement, youth mentoring, poverty, and civic engagement. Making a choice to
leave a career in public administration to become an educator after struggling with the repeated injustices that came with her job, another educator chose to put her energy into making a difference in schools. While she worked in public administration with like-minded people who were passionate about poverty and race, she became burned out and could not do her job. This teacher and many other individuals who participated in this study related how personal accounts of unequal treatment that they had endured or witnessed had helped them to develop into social-justice-minded people. Because the teachers maintained a social justice mindset and used those beliefs to create authentic classroom experiences, they recognized that their roles as educators helped to enable their students to make positive changes in their own lives.

**Theme 2: Teachers’ Dispositions Contributed to Teacher Efficacy**

The researcher used teacher interviews, classroom observations, and curricular evidence to uncover the teachers’ personal attributes that contributed to their efficacy. These characteristics included trust and honesty, self-reflection, caring, tenacity, authenticity, and patience. Moreover, in addition to these dispositions, many of the teachers had learned not to take things personally when things failed to go as planned, an approach that is often a form of survival in an urban school setting. As one teacher described:

The biggest challenge is keeping things in perspective. You must constantly remind yourself to not take anything personal when it deals with student behavior toward you and class work completion or participation. Most teachers forget that some students don’t have stable homes, didn’t eat, have abusive home environments, etc., and take it personal when students don’t function or perform in the manner in which the teacher wants. We have to remember that in the minds of some students, school is at the bottom of the list of important things in their life, because of the life they are forced to live.
Trust and honesty. Two teachers stressed that their classroom environments were based upon trust and honesty because, as one teacher explained, “...knowing and trusting that I will always be truthful builds the strong foundation needed for a successful relationship, even during times of disagreement between educator and student.” Adding to that viewpoint, another teacher emphasized, “If you just want them to have the opportunity to do things, they have to trust you.” While most teachers bring a variety of inherent strengths to their respective classrooms, the following dispositions were commonly observed and serve to illustrate the type of teachers who are accepted into the program.

Self-reflection. While teachers possessed all or some of the aforementioned attributes, many noted that self-reflection was another key to their survival within the school setting. As one teacher explained, “Sometimes I just sit after school and process all of it.” Building upon this premise, another teacher said that self-reflection probably was the most critical element, but could only be effective if it was followed by problem solving and action to create a critically conscious classroom. Reflection, however, is not always easy to accomplish in a program that requires teachers to teach all day and attend classes at night. One of the teachers described how he forced himself to have time to reflect so that he could try to fix problems in his mind before the next day “...you better start with this and try to fix that.” Being the reflective person that he is, he explained how he does not walk away with a lot of plusses at the end of the day, “I put a few [moments of reflection] in there because I’m just like, ‘Hey, you tied your shoes this morning. Good job.’” Being self-reflective practitioners was a form of survival for the teachers, as it enabled them to effectively manage their frustrations, make adjustments, discover better solutions, and recharge for the next day.
**Caring.** All of the teachers who participated in the study emphasized that being an urban educator necessitated a high degree of caring and compassion for their students. In fact, five out of six educators explained in detail how caring for their students was a big factor in their success, and how caring and advocacy go hand in hand. One teacher noted, “I am caring and advocate for students.” Another teacher described how “Students want to feel safe and cared about.”

Throughout the observations and interactions with the teachers who took part in the study, a caring nature was, without question, a motivating force for their interest and motivation to be teachers in this particularly challenging setting. The teachers also believed that there was a direct connection between nurturing, trust, respect, and student outcomes.

**Strong-willed, resilient, and tenacious.** Words that described a tendency to be strong-willed, resilient, and tenacious, resonated among the teachers. One teacher recalled how he “...dug his heels in,” saying that “this [school] is the place for me.” He explained, “I know how to work hard. Whatever the result is at the end of the day, I will still continue to push. I will be an educator.” For another teacher, it was a “passionate energy” that drove her. Another teacher described her thought process: “What's going to be different today? What can I do differently? That's something that I thrive off of. I shouldn't say I love it, but I'm okay with constantly adapting. I like that. That's why I don't work at an office anymore, because that drove me nuts, going in and doing the same thing every day.” Similarly, one of the teachers explained, “You’re better off in a place that presents challenges.” Another individual labeled himself as strong-willed, due in part because he said he knew that a strong work ethic helped him to succeed, and he tried to impart that belief in his students. Another teacher referred to his stubbornness as a means of getting through tough days, as he explained, “On the worst days, you just go through it.” The teachers’ high level of tenacity may be related to their ability to overcome adversity as
young adults to become successful educators, as they showed a desire to instill confidence, values, work ethic, persistence, and a sense of connectedness into their students.

**Authenticity/transparency.** Simply stated, one of the teachers explained that to be effective in an urban environment, "You have to be you.” This teacher used many descriptors to explain how one cannot pretend to be something he or she is not in front of the students, clearly expressing throughout the interview process that being one’s true self is crucial to relating to and making connections with students. As another teacher explained, “You can’t be something you’re not just to impress or prove your relationship with a student, but at the same time, you have to understand students as individuals and speak their language.” Other teachers agreed that students can see real from fake, so it is important to “be real” in order to relate. The teachers who participated in the study were emotionally invested and conveyed that teaching did not feel like a job. In all settings—during interviews, student interactions, classroom instructions, and in common areas—the teachers exhibited an approachable demeanor.

**Patience.** Being patient is undoubtedly a quality that most teachers need in order to survive, but in an urban setting, as one teacher explained, “There are going to be a lot of bad days.” He went on to describe a lesson that he put time and energy into creating, one that incorporated technology and a video clip of Wonder Woman. The lesson was relevant to the culture of the Harlem Hellfighters, the 369th infantry of Black combat regiments who fought during World War I, and provided a means through which to analyze discrimination and racism. The lesson, unfortunately, did not go as planned because the students became agitated and lost focus when he ended the Wonder Woman clip, which, instead, was supposed to encourage them to compare and contrast. Instead of being a hook, the opposite occurred when his students exclaimed, Ah, you turned off Wonder Woman!” The teacher explained that being flexible,
patient, and thick-skinned, however, got him through that moment. This example indicated a need for urban teachers to be cognizant that a variety of factors may influence the direction of a lesson, which requires deeper flexibility, and the ability to recover and regroup. Many of the teachers explained that managing behaviors also requires a greater level of patience than what is necessary in many wealthy and homogenous urban or suburban school settings because of the higher incidence of poverty and diversity.

**Theme 3: Evidence of Teacher Efficacy as Urban Educators**

The teachers who participated in this study built their strengths on a foundation of positive student/teacher and home/school relationships. During the short classroom visits, school activities, and student-teacher interactions, the researcher observed classroom and school cultures that were based on social justice principles, culturally responsive teaching practices, and mastery experiences. As one teacher explained, “I try to use their strengths to help them become the best students they can be.” Another teacher believed that his role as a teacher was to make sure that students always have “...some sort of representation in his classes,” and he explained that “it's just about teaching ‘positively’ and about making sure these students are equipped to deal with the harsh reality of American culture, and making sure they have the academic ability along with social skills to carve their own path.” In the brief time that the researcher spent in his classroom, it was evident that the teacher had created an inclusive classroom culture, had an understanding of student strengths and weaknesses, and ensured that the content was culturally responsive. During the class session, students were actively engaged in a project where they assumed the roles of writers, producers, camera/technicians, and anchors for CNN to analyze cultural conflicts. Moreover, he engaged the students in an activity using Post-it notes that honed in on the value of literacy and the consequences of not knowing how to read. In addition to
exhibiting those essential attributes, he stressed that to be effective one needs to be “...secure within themselves and their ability to teach, and to provide these students with some autonomy making them feel vested in the learning process.”

The teachers understood the value of home/school relationships. Bridging the gap between home and school is a challenging, yet essential facet of being an effective teacher in an urban setting. While each teacher expressed varying degrees of involvement with the students, parents, and the communities in which they resided, all of them valued the connection. One such teacher coached the boys’ basketball team to the championship and said he believed that one must live in the community in which they work to make a difference. In addition to being a coach, he commonly sent welcome letters to parents before the school year started. This letter includes his syllabus, class expectations, descriptions of his teaching style, and contact information. According to this teacher, “I try my best to be visible within the community, ensuring that I meet parents and other family members.”

For another teacher, providing parents with her personal phone number and keeping the lines of communication open was imperative to strengthening those relationships, but she still had to remind herself that it is important to focus on the positive. According to her, “Having relationships with the parents where I can call them at any time just to have a conversation, or just talk to them about whatever, is really important.” With regard to the community, she emphasized, “I grew up in a community that some of the kids grew up in.” She provided an example of two boys in her classroom that played basketball and how each of them would torture the other about scores, and about who was better in sports. She made a point to attend their games, adding that she also attends volleyball games, observes the cheerleaders, and participates
in community events. As she described, “Any opportunity that I get to see them outside of school, I always take advantage of it because that means so much to them.”

Another teacher explained how on Friday afternoons he sends emails that state, "Thank you for your son’s or daughter's efforts this week." According to him, little things like that might mean a lot to people: “If a student has a bad week he does not send an email. I only send positive ones,” he explained. As he described, he tries to put a “positive spin” on communication while also being as neutral as possible. “This is what your son or daughter did. As you know, here's the consequence for this,” He said he tries to be frank, by saying, "Look, nine times out of ten, I don't think they're usually a problem in my room. Today they went overboard, and that's the end of it.” This data indicated that teachers possessed practices and beliefs that cultivated home-school relationships, while establishing a climate that focused on student and family strengths and not on deficits. Moreover, the teachers grasped the value in making connections to the lives of students and families outside of school to create a culture of community in their classrooms.

**The teachers demonstrated competence in developing CRP practices.** During the data collection period, the teachers presented an array of evidence that demonstrated their incorporation of culturally responsive elements into the classroom, including teaching and learning practices centering on identity and achievement, equity and excellence, specific developmental needs, whole child teaching, and a positive atmosphere. All of the teachers honed in on the value of relationships, with one teacher emphasizing, “I see children as individuals...they’re all different.” She explained: “I think that building relationships with students is just taking the time to get to know them.” She went on to relate this to a spiritual experience, describing, “...you can see, or sense, or hear inside of a person; the way they move, and the way that they feel, and you have to find a way to respond to that.” Another teacher
described how she creates student-centered content by basing her English skills lessons on her students’ interests, and she had even taken that a step further by allowing her students to co-teach the lessons with her.

In addition to being personally responsive to students’ needs, throughout the interviews, it was evident that literary selections and analyses also were aligned to the students’ specific needs and interests. While the school presented a prescribed scope and sequence that included cultural themes, the teachers also exercised autonomy to create their own lessons. With this freedom, teachers shared examples of taking advantage of teachable moments by developing their own lessons. One such teacher noticed that his students did not understand the passage of time, so he developed a lesson on family trees that was based on timelines. Their specific learning target was titled, “I can illustrate mastery of my personal history with a timeline and family tree.” Recognizing that his students were more likely to be familiar with their mother’s side of the family and not their father’s, he adapted his lesson to allow students to use “father figures” instead of their own biological fathers. As he described, “It just doesn’t happen. It doesn’t exist, but they have uncles, they have grandfathers, they have grandmas, they have aunts that they look at as father figures, or brothers.” After devising his own family tree template to meet his students’ needs, he asked them to write down on their tree everyone with whom they were close, including classmates, and asked them also to include their birthdays. To go a step further, he included a friend branch on the family tree, and he asked the students to include their birthdays as well. In the end, the students had a representation of a family tree that did not make them feel as if they had a broken family, while also teaching them about the passage of time. This educator demonstrated a depth of understanding with regard to students’ contexts and the support systems that may extend beyond common conceptualizations. This data also indicated
that teachers in this setting may not be circumscribed to the norms of the nuclear family, which may not be taken into account in training for CRP.

Another teacher hung inspirational posters displaying sayings, such as handwritten quotes by Martin Luther King and other important African American figures, that fostered cultural appreciation, and others that encouraged the adoption of specific character traits. Her classroom atmosphere was relaxing—jazz was playing, the lights were dim, and a few candles were burning. In the same classroom, the teacher posted the quote of the day: “As soon as you trust yourself, you will know how to live” by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. The students wrote journal entries analyzing both their perceived meaning and importance of the quote. She asked the students, “What does this quote mean to you and what connection can you make?” She explained how this assignment helped her to connect with her students while also encouraging them to express themselves. She also stated that she believed in using the project to make practical applications, as she told her students, “I am asking you to do this because in life, you’re going to have to communicate through written word.” She also showed me a recent project on gun violence in which students addressed the effects of guns on children. The students made posters to show their viewpoints on guns.

Within that classroom, there were opportunities for the students to work independently, as partners, in groups, or as a whole group. As an independent project, she assigned the students to write essays explaining what the central message the poet, Tupac Shakur, is trying to convey in “The Rose that Grew From Concrete:”

Did u hear about the rose that grew from a crack in the concrete?
Proving nature’s laws wrong it learned 2 walk without having feet
Funny it seems but by keeping its dreams it learned 2 breathe fresh air
Long live the rose that grew from concrete when no one else even cared

She encouraged the students to address how the writing style, word choice, theme, and structure of the poem added to their understanding of the message. Students were asked to consider the quote “I want to grow. I want to be better. You grow. We all grow. We’re made to grow. You either evolve or you disappear,” and Tupac’s biography to complete their essays. In this classroom, the teacher strove to make the content relevant by making connections to the students’ lives, but what made her most effective was the personal connection that she provided. As she explained, “I greet them every morning. I treat them like a human first.”

For another teacher who believed that the key to maintaining a culturally responsive classroom was to “stay culturally relating” himself, he found it to be important for his students to “...always have some sort of representation of themselves within my [his] units, [and] to allow students to have autonomy and input.” He explained that he is “...consistently including material and content on current events, and allowing students to research and to have a platform that allows them to express their opinions.” He created a classroom environment that was warm, inviting, and comfortable, a space that encouraged students to open up and engage in conversations about tough topics. He provided forums that included his news crew, student blogs, and television shows that allowed students to speak about and reflect on cultural issues. Because he spoke from his own experience, as he did in a recent lesson on racial profiling, his messages to his students came across as powerful. Evidence gathered from teachers demonstrated that they were committed to developing transformative pedagogies, despite the complex structure and context of the urban setting.

The teachers implemented social justice practices in the classroom. While most of the teachers described their practices during the interviews, the researcher had limited first-hand
exposure to evidence through classroom observation. However, displays in the form of a bulletin board on “Courageous Conversations,” along with student work posted in the classrooms and in the hallways, revealed that social justice teachings were being conducted. As explained by one teacher, “We are lucky to be living in a time...when media, music, and books have touched on social justice issues, and students are already engaged with that kind of media, but they are not thinking of it in that [social justice] way.” For her, making those connections to what the students already knew and valued, such as, “What is Tupac saying about race?” or “What is Kendrick Lamar trying to explain, or what does Black Panther mean for people,” helped them to understand. This teacher believed in building a foundation for thinking in that [social justice] way. As she described, “You want to raise consciousness about race, gender, sex, whatever it may be, in a space that is not personal, then you move forward.” Another teacher who believed in the value of teaching students a work ethic, and “…different ways to become a person of society” explained to his students the importance of rules and “…how rules here [school] will apply to bigger rules later in life.”

A fifth grade teacher explained how her grade level is a “perfect space to teach for social justice because our [school] curriculum is very pitted in those things.” She said she commonly began the year by teaching the students about human rights and “Esperanza Rising,” a novel written by Pam Muñoz Ryan, that tells the story about a young Mexican girl, Esperanza Ortega, who, during the Great Depression, lost her father and her home to violent acts, but learned to overcome those hardships through a will to survive. She also described a lesson that she taught about the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” so that the students could understand that, as children, they had rights. As she described, “It's very ingrained not only in my philosophy, but in what I'm teaching.” During the classroom visit, the students were reading “One Crazy
Summer” by Rita Williams Garcia, which is a story about three young girls that takes place in Oakland, California in the 1960s during the rise of the Black Panther Party. As the teacher described:

I brought in a ton of articles and videos and was like, ‘What's the Black Panther Party? Why should we care about them? What did they do?’ I tell them that I'm active, I tell them that I have strong beliefs and opinions and it's very clear whenever you're in my room that I have very strong opinions and beliefs, sometimes, but if you don't do anything, then it's really kind of a waste.

The teacher modeled her own core principles to her students as a means to prepare them to be contributing members of society and to teach them how to function positively. She accomplished this by connecting literature to what her students currently understand about the Black Panther Party, and also by encouraging them to use their voices to achieve social justice.

One of the teachers shared the success of a nine-week African American unit that she created and implemented, one that incorporated a mix of culturally responsive and social justice elements. Students analyzed various historic social issues within society by comparing and contrasting those issues with issues of concern in today's society. Her lessons were designed to teach the students how to distinguish between tone and mood in a text and how to differentiate between internal and external conflicts. Students demonstrated their understanding of the differences between rioting and protesting by analyzing facts from different examples of activism and then by creating peaceful posters illustrating peaceful methods of protest. In addition, students learned how to identify and define institutional racism by considering its effects on various groups in society and by using that information to create a photo essay that illustrated institutionalized racism in America.
The teacher launched the unit to assess hidden biases by having students take an Implicit Association Test (IAT) which is based on “Blindspot,” a book written by Anthony Greenwald and Mahzarin Banaji. Using the IAT, the teacher demonstrated how most Americans subconsciously prefer Whites over African Americans. She asked students to answer prompts such as, “What institutions can one can find discrimination; for example: healthcare, prison, education, employment?” and “What are some different examples of prejudices that they [students] have faced or have seen other people face?” Within her unit, the students read and provided annotations by using modes of persuasion—ethos, pathos, and logos—for “Black Like Me,” John Howard Griffin’s book that details his journey in the Deep South of the United States during racial segregation. According to the teacher, “Griffin's purpose when writing his book was to persuade them [the readers] to understand the crucial importance of the social cause of tolerance and racial justice. Students filled out a graphic organizer and then analyzed the use of the types of persuasion and provided evidence and links to support their findings from excerpts from the book. She also assigned the students to read and annotate “Freedom is a Constant Struggle,” a book written by African American political activist and author, Angela Davis. In her work, Davis addresses African Americans’ struggles with violence and oppression. In addition, the teacher also referenced the issues of police brutality and racial injustices by including a discussion on the death of Michael Brown, an African American robbery suspect who was shot and killed in 2014 by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. To supplement the discussion, the teacher incorporated Nic Brown’s book, “Dear Martin,” which recounts the life of a young African American male named Justyce McAllister who found himself at the center of racial injustices, which prompted him to journal letters to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as a means of addressing similarities between his time period and Dr. King’s. This section included various
contemporary songs, including “Up in Arms” by Bhi Bhiman, featuring Rhiannon Giddens, and “Chains” by R&B recording artist Usher, rapper Nas, and German singer-songwriter Bibi Bourelly.

Additional topics in the unit included media bias, fake news, and an opportunity for students to defend or oppose the actions of Colin Kaepernick, the American football quarterback who was at the center of the controversy surrounding the “kneel or stand” for the National Anthem that occurred during the 2017-2018 season. The unit concluded with a self-advocacy project based on police brutality. The project included the creation of a video blog where students asked questions and made statements to police officers in the local area. The teacher explained that this activity provided a forum for students to have courageous conversations, to advocate for themselves, and to defend the voices of those who have been affected in the past. Her social justice work connected her students to their community as a means to strengthen relationships, alleviate tensions, and potentially erase misconceptions between themselves and the police.

Another teacher explained, “I am lucky to teach social studies because students have a chance to learn about social justice and injustices that have happened throughout history. My students have the opportunity to re-write history when it comes to subjects like Plessy V Ferguson, the Election of 1977, etc.” His students also created their own platforms through blog sites that allow them to voice their opinions about social justice. In addition to his classroom experiences, his students recently attended a local film event that illustrated historical events and injustices. Because he provided his students with an opportunity to talk about these topics, he demonstrated a commitment to providing students with the agency to be contributing members of society.
One teacher poignantly described his experiences with teaching for social justice as being frustrating. As he described, “I'm in a classroom with many, many minority and diverse children, and I constantly am looking for information that tells that side of the story with mainstream history, and it frustrates me the most when I feel like they don't want to connect with that.” Although he explained, “There have been moments where they do connect with it.” He described a gallery walk where the students presented about Black Codes, Jim Crow, The Freedman’s Bureau, and poll taxes. As he described, “They got super into that, and I'm trying to figure out what that formula was that made that work so well.” He further explained how earlier that day he showed students video clips and had a discussion about minority representation in the armed services to demonstrate how racism still permeates society even though the Civil War was fought over racial issues, but his students did not make the connection. According to him, “That's where I can say as a teacher I get most frustrated, because if you don’t know your history, it’s going to repeat itself.”

When asked about specific methods that he used to encourage students to stand up for their rights, he explained, “We're actually starting to try and touch into that a little bit. It's been a subtle undertone, nothing that's been heavily taught. I have not sat here and been like, ‘this is how you're going to properly organize.’” While he taught the students about social justice organizations, gun violence awareness, and current youth movements, he expressed that his biggest passion was to create young people who wanted to vote. As he described:

Essentially to me, that [voting] is the core of social justice, so I've been doing everything to try and get them to understand that whether you want to or not, your government is going to run, and if you're not going to voice, then you have to be okay with it, and if you're not okay with it, which I know a lot of you are not, what are you going to do?
There is ample evidence to support that teachers who were part of the program were committed to social justice principles, and extending those beliefs into their classroom settings. By providing forums for the students to speak up about their rights to exercising their freedom to vote, these teachers were devoted to taking steps to end oppression and found ways to instill that same drive in their students.

Theme 4: Teachers’ Perceptions of Teacher Training Programs

From feeling unsupported, to struggling to gain respect, and dealing with poverty, the challenges of being an urban educator can be insurmountable. Some of the participants expressed that they were overwhelmed, while others said they felt exhausted. For one educator, the level of investment that she put into the program and into her students, she explained, had left her struggling to find a balance. She said she often stayed after work, sometimes until 8:00 in the evening, and she found it difficult to put her work aside. The routine was similar for another teacher: “[After school] I just try to digest everything that just happened with 86 kids, all with different stories.” Another teacher who was working to adjust to his transfer from high school to middle school described how student behaviors “...become ridiculous at times,” and that it was sometimes hard for him to connect with his students. A common challenge among the teachers was how to find time in the day to be the teachers that they aspired to be, especially for those who were still taking coursework.

Coursework. The teacher training program offered three primary courses that were designed to prepare urban educators: Diverse Family and Community Partnerships, Issues of Poverty and Race, and Teaching in Urban Schools. While some of the teachers specifically expressed how their Classroom/Behavioral Management course provided some benefits to urban teaching, many felt a need for a systemic social justice framework, instruction on critical
pedagogies, and better integration of content geared toward culturally responsive teaching, urban education, and race. One teacher emphasized, “The University does not have a culturally responsive mission.” According to another teacher, “…certain professors were more genuine and true to that aspect than others. Like our Classroom Management class that we had, it was totally designed for people teaching in urban ed.” Expressing similar frustration, another teacher emphasized, “…if you ask any single person they will tell you that the classes are pointless.” Likewise, another teacher expressed, “Not enough. You are provided with strategies to use within the classroom and teachings on how to develop lessons plans and that isn’t enough.” Though he believed that it was hard to prepare for the challenges of the urban classroom, he credited the program for helping him to identify state standards and to create his scope and sequence, along with lesson planning. And finally a teacher recommended a possible solution, saying, “I think the department of education needs to be more specific about what the demands of urban educators are.” This collection of evidence indicated that the teachers would feel better prepared with mainstreamed CRP and a social justice coursework that related specifically to the challenges that they encountered in their urban classrooms.

**Unprepared.** While many of the teachers admitted that the program served as a pipeline for a better opportunity, once they entered the classroom, they felt unprepared for what they faced. As expressed by one teacher: “I really am not prepared. I thought that I would be, but there’s nothing that happened here [The University], or at the school, or within any training, that made me feel like I was prepared to work with urban students. Frankly, just Black students.” As explained by a teacher who struggled during student teaching: “I do not think that there’s much that the residents are taking away during that first year that becomes useful to them.” Another educator said, “I was shocked by poverty and race.” For her, adjusting to the environment was a
challenge, especially managing and responding to behaviors. As she explained, “The sequencing of the program was strange. I took a ton of reading and pedagogy stuff at the start, which is fine, but I didn't know how to manage behaviors.” She thought the transition between her college experience and the classroom was difficult, and that she needed additional behavior management training, specifically, “…more teaching children with trauma and how to respond because they [training program] don’t prepare you for that.” She suggested that the program be more focused on the “antecedents of behavior.” However, that same teacher also expressed that had she not experienced the program, she “…would have crashed and burned and failed.” For her, spending time with a lead teacher before entering into her own classroom was essential to her development as a culturally responsive educator. As she described, “I was able to step into a space, like I was able to be in a class but not have to lead. I was able to kind of sit back and observe, ‘Like, okay. Well, why is she doing that?’” Another teacher echoed that sentiment, and she related that her on-site experiences and interactions with other teachers, including her lead teacher, helped her to “…find her voice through them.”

Another teacher described the program as being both a “blessing and a tremendous opportunity” but, other than describing the success he experienced with token systems and how he learned to write lesson plans, he provided limited detail on how the program specifically prepared him to work in an urban setting. As he explained, “It is hard to prepare for the norm of an urban classroom—it’s never going to be a steady pond—there’s always going to be something happening under the surface, as kids will never tell you everything, but they will show it.” He did, however, explain how he also needed more instruction on how to manage behaviors. Because evidence suggested that student behavior and issues of poverty and race were an
adjustment for some of the educators, they believed that more attention should have been given to these areas before they were placed in their full-time positions.

**Theme 5: Providing Support for the Ongoing Development of Educators**

The educators expressed mixed feelings in regard to the level and the type of supports that they received from the program. With the exception of a university liaison who was assigned to connect with novice educators, the university program was not designed to provide an extensive amount of ongoing support. Instead, the school system provided areas of support to assist all resident educators, including a school liaison, instructional coaches, culture coaches, and lead teachers to work with incoming apprentices. According to the school liaison, “Usually, there's three coaches in a building, two instructional coaches and one culture coach. The job of those people is to support all teachers in the building with improving things in their classroom.” The teachers who felt most supported explained how their school leaders, and the supportive culture that those individuals created in those contexts, were their strongest sources of support. As described by one teacher:

> She's what you look for in a principal. She leads, but she allows us to have the say in a classroom. If there's ever something that needs to be brought to your attention, she'll pull you aside and have that conversation with you and everything will go from there.

Three of the teachers said they felt supported, two expressed a lack of support, and one provided a neutral response. In fact, as one teacher explained, “There’s not enough support in place to combat these [urban] challenges.” He expressed a need for “…better mentoring throughout the program, extending into the classroom.” He also described how he “…picked the brain of some instructors in my current school of employment when it pertains to classroom environment and structure.” Similar to his response, most of the teachers agreed that it is
important practice to seek their own support. According to one teacher, “The biggest takeaway is the resources aren't going to jump out at you. If you are interested in taking advantage of the resources, they're there.” Another teacher explained, “Feedback and how you can use that feedback depends a lot on the relationship you have with your mentor-teacher. If you don’t have a good mentor-teacher, you probably do not enjoy this program.” As explained by another teacher: “I feel so supported, and this is a primary difference between schools. Both my coach and my assistant principal help with instructional planning and management, as well as being knowledgeable about urban ed and seeking out resources about urban ed.” Another teacher expressed, “I feel they're here to support us. I think that's the real reason they started the program was to give opportunities like this.” Another teacher credited the process of induction as a source of support:

First-year teachers have to meet so many times a year in order to whatever. The last thing that teachers want is more meetings and stuff, but I think it's really important for especially new teachers and especially people who are starting off to have a place to vent and to have a place to like, “Oh my God, I tried this and it completely sucked. What can I do differently?” I just think having open lines of communication, and any time that I've felt really upset or challenged, it's because I haven't tapped into that support. I haven't reached out for help.

As described by another teacher:

Complete and utter lack of support. I think there are so many issues affecting people who work at any level in urban communities and urban schools, that the people who are supposed to be supporting you, like an instructional coach, or a school culture coach, are tending to things that aren't their responsibilities. And the people with them are tending to
things that aren't their responsibilities.

That teacher wanted “the opportunity, once a week to sit down with someone, anyone. It can differ every week, for thirty minutes to an hour to just talk about things that are happening so that I can sort through that. Just emotional support, and the opportunity to discuss cultural issues, because that's not happening.” Research indicated that individual teachers required varied levels of support, which was relative to many factors that included school context, personal needs, and a teachers’ perceived effectiveness.

**Increased Stipend.** With a stipend of $1,350, which originally was $850, but increased to $2,000 for new inductees, combined with a rigorous work and course load that involved their working in an urban school all day and attending school at night, four of the teachers struggled to balance work and life. For the ones who had families or were starting a new career, it became tough to manage these simultaneous demands with such limited resources. As one teacher explained, “The stipend is definitely a huge issue, and anybody obviously in education will tell you it's not the income, it's the outcome, but given that, this exact circumstance, it's just not reasonable to live off of that every month. We love what we do, but we also have to survive.”

**More Flexibility.** The teachers stressed that the program leaders should offer more flexibility with coursework and be more attuned to burnout. Because teachers arrived at the program with different backgrounds, lifestyles, and experiences, many said they felt that their prerequisites should reflect those differences. A teacher described her struggles, stating:

That was ridiculous. That was inhumane, probably. How much time we spent in school, and then also teaching during the day, after work, during the day. So it was too much. It's not helping anyone, you're just running them down. You're just running them down, like emotionally. Fatigue is too high. People get angry. I mean, it's too much.
Better alignment of philosophies. Many of the teachers applied for the program because of their interest in social justice, only to discover that the school system itself did not have a social justice focus. Once they entered the schools, they found themselves immersed in cultures with other educators who did not share their passion. As one teacher expressed, “This is not a social justice institution.” Moreover, many teachers noticed how, due to state requirements, African American teachers were not accepted into the program because of a poor grade point average or because they made a bad decision. As one teacher explained, the program was “designed against African Americans:”

My students and I talked about this. We talk about like systemic racism and how everything in life is designed against African Americans or people of minority. You have, for instance, this program, if you think of criminal background and things like that, like the interview process last year, there was a woman who was absolutely phenomenal. I did not think that she would not make it. She had to go through a background check, [and] lost her chance of getting hired because of something that happened when she was a kid. But when you have like all this racism that's deep within and deep rooted, it doesn't allow for you to have the opportunity to have African American minority educators because the system is designed against them.

According to her, “If you're going to build a program specifically to diversify education, allow them [African Americans] the opportunity to be a part of it.” Similarly, another educator explained, “The program was born out of this idea that we need more diverse and social justice minded teachers, but the school system [teachers and administrators] was not developed on that premise...they don't share that mission.” One teacher suggested the need to “…have more Black Americans involved in the creation, development, and recruiting of candidates.” Evidence
garnered from teachers suggested that the school system and the University recommit to the original vision of a social justice partnership with those values being articulated into both contexts.

**Draw and retain more urban educators.** In addition to better training practices and recruitment, the teachers who participated in this study believed that increased pay, better opportunities, and more respect for the profession were necessary elements for recruiting and retaining urban educators. One teacher explained, “You don't want to be undervalued for what you do. Good teachers should go where they're needed, but at the same time, that could be a system playing on people who want to do the right thing.” As one described, a need existed for “...resources, funding, and the abolishment of all the negative notations that are associated with teaching children who live in these areas.” That teacher said he also believed that teachers need an “opportunity for advancement, develop more buy-in from participants...what’s in it for them that makes this worth their while.” Another educator expressed the need for teachers to engage in innovative practice, and she explained: “I think teachers want to work somewhere where they feel like they're making an impact. Some people have major success, they can just go into a place, and magic happens, and they make that impact.” One of the teachers claimed that her students were not interested in becoming teachers, as she recounted:

I tell my students, “You'd be a great educator.” Some of them say “Maybe,” but they're just not interested in being teachers. We've had the conversation of like, you want teachers that look like you, but we have to get more people like us to want to be teachers. Some of it is just they don't want to do it, or they have really high expectations because everything else is against them as minorities, so they're like, “Why be a teacher when I can be a nurse.”
She went on to explain, “They want to go out and make money. They want to know they can make money.”

One of the teachers suggested that the mission of the program could be used to drive a change in mindset for young urban students by “giving a lot of different opportunities for African Americans to step in the classroom and [to] show them that you can do this too one day.”

Evidence of teacher efficacy as noted by professors/liaisons. The professors and liaisons who oversaw the program expressed that teachers must possess a variety of attributes, including their own sense of self efficacy and a culturally responsive mindset to be effective in an urban setting. In addition to race, a diverse background, and real-life experiences, such dispositions included:

- Perseverance;
- Resilience;
- Compassion;
- Persistence;
- Self-reflective;
- Growth mindset;
- Passion;
- Focus;
- Caring demeanor;
- Personalizes instruction;
- Inclination toward social justice;
- Awareness of culture;
● Believes in the value of making connections with families and communities;
● Builds relationships;
● Views students as people;
● Possesses leadership qualities;
● Has a sense of purpose;
● Creates opportunities;
● Has overcome obstacles;
● Teaches students to think independently;
● Fights for students;
● Effective communicator;
● Creative;
● Takes feedback;
● Has a strong work ethic;
● Practices critical thinking.

The University supervisor explained that, to be convinced that a person is the right fit, she would ask: “What stories are you sharing?” or “Where is your heart?” and “How do you talk about the students and their community?” According to the program liaison, “Really, it comes down to their degree of passion, focus, and perseverance to get them from that really hard starting place up to their vision.” She said she believed that the program candidates were “doing better than a traditional first-year teacher coming out of college.” The liaison provided examples of teachers who immersed themselves in the communities in which they worked. She told a story about a teacher who moved a block away from her school: “She walks to school each morning and after school, she walks home. She wanted not just to be committed to her students, but really
be committed to her students and where they live.” The professors understood that for teachers to be an effective in an urban setting, they needed to possess a unique set of characteristics, combined with an unwavering devotion to their students that they served.

**Professor/ liaison perceptions of teacher training programs for CRP, and recommendations.** Both the professors and the school liaison had an acute sense of awareness with regard to the types of changes that were needed to improve the program for future educators. They identified the following improvement areas: (a) find better ways to diversity the teaching pipeline when the selection process is strict, (b) spend more money to prepare and retain teachers, (c) appropriate more money to market the program, (d) develop systemic improvements to enhance coursework with CRP and Social Justice frameworks, (e) align the mission and vision of the University and the school system, and provide ongoing support. This prescriptive list was closely aligned with many of the proposed changes expressed by the educators who were part of this study.

Evidence of culturally responsive pedagogies in the coursework were apparent, such as an asset map project that required students to study a map of the area where their school was located and to be aware of all of the organizations that exist in the area, after-school activities, support organizations, and social work offices; however, exposure to CRP practices was not systemic. As one professor explained, “Culturally responsive curriculum needs to be ingrained in the program.” An African American professor who was teaching a course called Issues of Poverty and Race and leading an Urban Education Book Club shared her sentiments and emphasized: “CRT needs to be lived and breathed.” In addition to immersing her students in the CRP writings of Paul Gorski, Richard Milner, and Lisa Delpit, and engaging them in culturally responsive community experiences, she said she designed her course “…to create transformative
educators that disrupt the education system to ensure that culturally and linguistically diverse students have an equitable and liberating holistic educational experience.” Another professor emphasized, “We need more race professional development.” Moreover, all of the professors agreed that if the intent was to recruit teachers with a social justice mindset, then the school needed to represent social justice. As one professor explained, “They came with the idea that the school system was this social justice institution. When they got here, they were like, ‘Oh, this is not.’” Another professor suggested, “The University needs to be a social justice institution; they need a vision.”

One professor acknowledged: “Many people [African Americans] can't get into the program because they don't meet the state prerequisite skills. GPA.” Echoing the sentiments of the teachers, one professor explained, “The program also needs to be accommodating to applicants who have life challenges, so that it can attract a more diverse pool of candidates.” The professor continued by stating, “While there may have been barriers such as the state requirements that prohibited students from initially entering into the MA program, some professors suggested remedial opportunities combined with a brief paraprofessional career that may enable the candidates to obtain the skills and prerequisites needed for them to become an educator.”

Indeed, one professor stated that he felt the program needed to be a partnership between the University and the school system, and, to accomplish this, “We must be truly collaborative.” But, he said, “It’s more of a business arrangement.” As described by another professor:

I think what we envisioned is not what it is at all. We envisioned a very collaborative program that could really, if you will, turn out some really good teachers, but I feel like the students and people who are leading, it's because they're overwhelmed. They're
overwhelmed with too much classwork, they're not getting enough support, and it's just not working out. I would like to see it extended into a different four-semester program. Most of the professors agreed that not having a shared philosophy within their own department and between the university and the school system weakened the program. According to one professor, “I think for this program to succeed here in this makeup, the two organizations need to be on the same page. Another professor suggested increased flexibility within the program, or “a different sequence of courses with a longer timeline.” While there are many internal supports currently available, the school liaison, recognized that “more is needed [in] year 1 and 2.”

The intent of the partnership was to recruit and prepare urban educators, particularly minorities, for urban school settings. Unfortunately, however, a shortage remained of individuals with the interest or qualifications to fill these roles. Moreover, obstacles such as budgetary constraints, unfair wages, state requirements, and respect for the teaching profession, continuously presented barriers. However, the presence of good leadership tended to make a difference in the schools under study. One professor explained that teachers are devoid of professional respect when they “…feel disrespected and undervalued. People don't quit jobs, people quit bosses.” That professor went on to say that principals needed to involve “a real clear vision for leadership, and supportive leadership.” He provided an example of a principal in Harlem, New York, who made a difference:

She is a leader who respects and pushes, but treats her teachers with respect. And you can see that she's doing incredible things in this school. So allowing teachers to teach and have a professional freedom and responsibility goes both ways. To do so, [requires] having school leadership that knows what they're doing, and knows how to support teachers.
Another professor shared a similar sentiment in regard to leadership and respect:

Leadership, but again, I will say part of that is also respecting teachers and listening to their ideas, and giving them some creativity, and giving them some freedom to be able to teach, and giving them a voice. Giving the teachers a voice. I think that's what it comes down to, and how the students are learning, because the teachers want to really know the students and the environment and the culture.

Conclusion

Collectively, the participants in this research study understood that the future success of the program was dependent on the University and the school system’s level of commitment to make systemic changes. Because the program was still in its infancy, data on teacher outcomes and perceptions prior to this study had been limited. However, data garnered from this case study may serve as a catalyst for the school system and the University to make modifications which could affirm the original intent of the partnership. While some of the participants in this study have identified flaws with the program, many teachers agree that it has provided them with a unique opportunity to honor and dedicate their lives to urban students.
Chapter 5: Discussion of Research Findings

This study examined the experiences of six individuals who participated in a pre-service teaching master’s degree program designed to prepare them to teach in urban charter schools. Specifically, this study examined the teacher’s perceptions of the program’s focus on preparing them to practice culturally responsive and socially just pedagogies. This chapter revisits the problem of practice and provides a review of the methodology employed. The chapter then discusses the major findings in relation to the literature review and theoretical framework, implications for practice, recommendations for future research, and limitations.

Revisiting the Problem of Practice

Urban schools need educators who possess the dispositions and skills necessary to teach students from diverse backgrounds. However, many teachers with limited work and life experiences or who are trained in “one-size-fits-all” programs may not be equipped to handle such challenges. To address the shortage of teachers who are capable of offering diverse and enriching learning experiences for urban students, there exists a need for universities to institute training programs that provide educators with the tools necessary to implement culturally responsive and socially just pedagogies. Such programs have the capacity to develop transformative teachers who are eager to adapt their teaching methods to accommodate the unique character of each learner. In addition to enhancing training programs, it is equally imperative that teachers, university personnel, and school administrators actively and intentionally help to disband ethnocentric practices by encouraging people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds to enter the profession and by purposefully hiring a field of culturally responsive and globally competent educators who are capable of offering diverse and enriching learning experiences for all students. These actions are of particular importance to the profession
because such critical prerequisites enable teachers to have a stronger awareness of multicultural differences in schools so that students may find course content to be more relevant to their lives and to their needs. To reform teacher training programs and to diversify the teaching profession, this problem of practice calls for regulatory changes at both the state and national levels as well as the reconstruction of the current educational praxis.

**Review of Methodology**

This qualitative case study explored how a pre-service training program developed through a partnership between a university and a charter school, specifically created to prepare and retain urban educators, led to improved efficacy, as perceived by teachers, professors and liaisons. Case study methodology was appropriately aligned with this qualitative study because it can fully explore a real-life context (Creswell, 2013). As Ponterotto (2005) explained, the dynamic interaction between the researcher and the subject is an essential element in bringing the lived experiences of those being studied to consciousness. Therefore, by using a case study design, the researcher was able to develop a holistic interpretation of teachers’ perspectives of urban teaching after they trained within a specific and bounded system. The researcher garnered data from this study to discover if a link existed between program implementation and program effects. It simultaneously explored the extent to which the goals of the University were aligned with outcomes aimed at preparing educators to practice CRP in an urban charter school.

**Research Questions**

The following research question guided the study: How do novice urban charter school educators maintain a higher degree of teacher efficacy after completing a teacher education program designed to prepare urban educators?

Four additional research questions guided the data collection and analysis:
**Research sub-question #1.** How do the teachers’ background experiences and dispositions enable them to practice culturally relevant pedagogies in an urban setting?

**Research sub-question #2.** How does the teacher education training help to qualify teachers to be culturally responsive, social justice-oriented educators, and how are teachers applying the skills acquired in the training program to their educational settings?

**Research sub-question #3.** What types of supports and resources offered by the school or university help to sustain the development of urban educators and their students, and how can the school and university improve upon the support of urban educators?

**Research sub-question #4.** How can the teacher training program improve its effectiveness to prepare and retain urban educators?

To explore these research questions, the researcher conducted interviews of teachers, professors, and liaisons, and, in some cases, engaged in observations, observed teacher/student interactions, reviewed student work, photographed displays and bulletin boards, and analyzed unit plans to investigate areas of perceived self-efficacy as they related to teacher preparation for service in urban schools. The researcher also sought evidence from CRP and socially just teaching practices to support efficacy by carefully reading and coding transcripts according to common themes and in alignment with the research questions. These processes enabled the researcher to determine which strategies and structures within the program may have contributed to the teachers’ professional and personal development to work in an urban school environment. The researcher utilized this data to determine how successful the program had been at achieving a desired outcome for the educators who attended the program since its inception.
Discussion of Major Findings

A thorough review of data collected during the case study revealed several significant findings. First and foremost, these findings suggested that the program was successful in attracting a pool of candidates who were passionate about practicing social justice and making a difference in the lives of urban students. By using selective recruiting practices, the program administrators chose individuals who possessed certain backgrounds and dispositions that they believed supported the philosophy of the program. Hence, this program provided these previously committed individuals the structures to exercise transformative pedagogies.

Moreover, the partnership is unique in that it provided context-specific training and pre-exposure to urban schools by pairing pre-service teachers with experienced urban educators through a semester-long internship, which connects to the literature by Siwatu (2011); in that context specific training helps teachers to feel prepared and also will help them to develop self-efficacy beliefs. This also corresponds with research conducted by Groulx and Silva (2010), in that contextual experiences are essential in CRP development. While these caring and connected educators provided evidence of teacher efficacy as urban educators, their perceptions of the training program, and the support that was provided were mixed. Still, the teachers, professors, and liaisons believed that teachers who received the training through the University program were more prepared than those who merely were first-year teachers with bachelor’s degrees.

Such partnerships may be a harbinger of what lies ahead in teacher preparation as universities and urban schools must become more creative in preparing educators who can manage the complexities of challenging school settings. For this reason, this analysis offers breakthroughs and recommendations that emerged from this study and findings that can assist in helping other systems to create the foundational structures for future university-school
partnerships. In this particular case, several assertions related to teacher efficacy were relevant to the central themes that were uncovered in Chapter 4. These findings will be related to the studies that were documented in Chapter 2: The Literature Review.

**Discussion of Findings in Relation to the Literature Review**

The findings in this study connected strongly with the literature presented in Chapter 2 in that a strong relationship exists between multiculturalism and culturally responsive teaching ideologies and teacher effectiveness. In particular, many of the findings in this study were consistent with the literature in that the teachers exhibited evidence of multicultural teaching practices and culturally responsive pedagogies. There was little evidence to suggest, however, that a there was a link between their perceived competence and the coursework that they received at the University. Instead, they indicated that their level of mastery could be attributed more specifically to their field/internship experiences, mentors, and on-the-job classroom teaching, which could have been enhanced through coursework with specified CRP and social justice focus. Nonetheless, these teachers demonstrated adeptness by possessing a combination of dispositions and practices that were indicative of effective teaching applications.

**Lived experiences played a role in the teachers’ efficacy.** The majority of the teachers who were interviewed for this study attested that their diverse backgrounds, including an urban upbringing, helped them to define who they were as educators. They all had unique stories that brought them to urban education. From growing up in similar urban environments to working through financial and personal struggles, the teachers found it to be easy to relate to their students. In this case, having prior lived experiences served as a primary qualifier for admittance into the program, a finding strongly aligned with the literature review as noted by Conklin and
Hughes (2016) who asserted that universities should prioritize in training programs based on the lived experiences of educators.

**Race played a role in the teachers’ efficacy.** While the literature review provided exemplars of White teachers who were successful at CRP, as indicated by Dimick (2012) and Milner (2010), the teachers who participated in this study claimed that being African American or biracial provided added advantages. Those teachers expressed how their race helped them to identify with their students and also to gain their respect. As described in the literature review, this finding indicated that the teachers possessed first-hand experience of how deficit notions reinforce prejudices; they understood how culture and learning were connected, and they valued the importance of dismantling traditional Eurocentric practices (Howard, 2003). Moreover, the natural connection that these African American teachers had with their students also corresponded with the contention made in the literature by Gay (2002) that “a teacher’s beliefs about ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity determine[d] their instructional behaviors” (p. 126). Therefore, this finding suggests that teachers appreciated the value in teaching the historical roots of racism primarily because many of them likely confronted prejudices themselves. Because the teachers, professors, and liaisons who took part in this case study collectively agreed that a combination of lived experiences and race were closely aligned with teacher efficacy, there was strong evidence to support a need for universities to prioritize the recruitment of such individuals for similar training programs.

**Personality traits and dispositions played a role in teacher efficacy.** The findings generated by teachers, professors, and liaisons for this study showed the important role that a teacher’s personality traits and dispositions played when effectively educating students from diverse backgrounds. In all cases, the teachers found a method to overcome their worst days and
to press forward. Their high level of resilience, combined with a tenacious spirit, strong-will, patience, and ability not to take things personally are likely attributed to their being able to work through issues that they endured during their own diverse upbringings, which relates back to life experiences being a determining factor in the selection of viable candidates.

Within the literature review, Conklin and Hughes (2016) maintained that for teachers to be effective, they also need to be compassionate, critical justice-oriented individuals. Evidence of such dispositions, as illustrated by the strong bonds that the teachers developed and the level of compassion that they exhibited for their students, exemplified the care and concern that they held for them. Their unwavering devotion for students is part of what motivated the teachers to remain in their positions. This type of loyalty was demonstrated by one of the teachers who shared how local public school administrators were attempting to recruit similar candidates for their own schools. This one teacher, during the interview, reflected that he rejected other offers because his students needed him, and that he could not work anywhere else. The bonds that these teachers developed epitomized efficacious teaching and helped them to forge a “common and critical discourse” as identified in the literature review by Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2002), which is a notion also strongly supported in literature by Sleeter (2011) indicating that a teacher's pedagogy is shaped with respect to the close relationships formed with a particular group of students.

Thus, at a time when high stakes testing and other requirements sometimes take precedence over teachers’ abilities to form and sustain meaningful relationships with students, these teachers instead in the case of this study prioritized these connections to broaden their own perspectives and to become better teachers, a practice that Milner (2010) determined could enable teachers to cultivate cultural competence to acquire a deeper understanding of themselves.
The importance of forming meaningful relationships with students also is illustrated in the literature review by Freire (1998); Gay (2000); and Ladson-Billings (1994), in that teachers who bring life to academic content by forging equitable relationships with the students whom they teach, feel a stronger connection to them. Moreover, Villegas and Lucas (2002) insisted that teachers display a willingness to know their students. Thus, the findings in Chapter 4 and the research indicates that efficacious teachers understand that educational practice is based upon a foundation of genuine care and concern for students.

The researcher also found that the teachers reflected an unwavering consistency in their personalities, no matter if they were in the classroom, the hallway, or in an interview. They were authentic, true, and “real” in all settings and situations, and the students appreciated the truth they exuded. In fact, one of the teachers who participated in the study developed his teaching on the fundamentals of truth and authenticity, attesting that his approach provided the foundation for a successful student-teacher relationship. This finding parallels the compelling assertions in the literature review by Freire (2000); Gay (2000) and Ladson-Billings (1994) that candidates need to be trained to pursue equitable, authentic relationships with students, a strong disposition to consider not only when recruiting, but also when preparing teachers for urban schools.

**Self-reflective practice played a role in teacher efficacy.** To reconfigure lessons that did not go as planned or to get past rough days, the teachers also heavily relied upon on self-reflective practice as a method to adjust their thinking and to foster personal and professional growth. The conviction that training teachers for self-reflective practice is imperative to the development of CRP and is strongly supported throughout the literature (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Howard, 2003; O. Lee, 2010; Lin & Lucey, 2010; Muschell & Roberts, 2011). Rychley and Graves (2012) also supported this practice within the literature, as these
researchers found merit in teachers who formulated dispositions of self-reflecting about their own personal beliefs and about other cultures, of being caring and empathetic, and of possessing knowledge about other cultures. Importantly, Muschell and Roberts (2011) also purported that embedding self-reflection opportunities in a training program could result in a transformation of the candidates’ dispositions with regard to social justice, a practice that might be helpful to include throughout university coursework. According to literature by Fitchett, Sarker, and Salyers (2012) such training can help teachers to develop efficacious attitudes. Moreover, as evidenced in a study by Rushton (2001), narrative self-reflection may also help to alleviate pre-service teachers’ fear, frustration, and anxiety while interning in an urban setting. These strong connections to the literature review indicate that teacher education programs must intentionally create opportunities where critical reflection is part of the routine and the norm when preparing culturally responsive urban educators.

Based on the premise that it may be a challenge to indoctrinate certain qualities in preservice teachers, the school officials who conducted the selection process were seeking a particular set of desirable pre-requisite dispositions. Conversely, however, research conducted by Fitchett, Sarker, and Salyers (2012) and Muschell and Roberts (2011) found that culturally relevant pedagogical training, namely, reflective practice and immersion opportunities, can lead to dispositional changes. This premise is aligned with the work of Hollins and Guzman (2005), who supported the proposition that adequate preparation for diversity necessitates the action of teacher educators to help foster such CRP dispositions among teacher candidates. In fact, this understanding also corresponds with the findings that Groulx and Silva (2010) described, thus corroborating with the literature the notion that teachers require long-term support to enhance their culturally responsive teaching strategies and dispositions.
Teachers demonstrated evidence of efficacy as urban educators with regard to multicultural and culturally responsive teaching practices. The findings of this study were aligned with Banks (1995) five dimensions of multicultural education: (a) content integration, (b) knowledge construction, (c) equity pedagogy, (d) prejudice reduction, and (e) empowering school culture. While evidence of the first four dimensions was present in each teacher's repertoire, the ones who felt most efficacious as urban educators expressed that they felt as if they were part of a cohesive culture with strong leadership and a diverse curriculum with a scope and sequence. The need to prioritize school culture also corresponds to the assertions of Banks (1991), Banks and Banks (1989) and Sleeter and Grant (1987) that radical changes in the entire school environment and curriculum must take place so that schools might create equal opportunities for all students (Banks, 1991; Banks & Banks, 1989; Sleeter & Grant, 1987).

Many of the teachers showed evidence of moving beyond content integration to the point of empowering students. In each case, the teachers were motivated to use their roles as teachers as an impetus to make a difference in the lives of their students, including pushing them to succeed, a practice which connects to the multiculturalism literature by C. Bennett (2001) in that visions of excellence and equity lead to high levels of learning for all children and youth. These teachers expressed that they believed that they could directly influence how well students learn, even those who may be difficult or unmotivated, as they collectively respected and honored each student’s individuality and used them to shape their curriculum and their pedagogies. In fact, these teachers not only strengthened their students’ abilities to achieve, but they also used their influences to help break cycles.

This was illustrated in one particular case by a social studies teacher who empowered students to be agents of change, which also aligned with the literature by C. Bennett (2001),
Villegas and Lucas (2002), and work of Gutstein (2003). As briefly noted in Chapter 4, he accomplished this by creating a bulletin board titled, “Mr. X, Why do I need to read well?” On the board, he posted several statistics related to the perils of illiteracy, including how it is associated with dropping out of school, as well as rising rates of poverty and crime. To demonstrate their understanding of the connection, each of his students was required to attach Post-it notes to his board to express why it was necessary for them to become literate citizens and contributing adults. Similar to the other teachers who participated in this study, this teacher understood the importance of pushing students to succeed, an indicator of efficacious teaching as illustrated in the literature review by Y. A. Lee and Hener-Patnode (2010), who emphasized that efficacious teachers must maintain high expectations of all learners and practice equitable pedagogy.

The teachers also demonstrated a devotion to social justice pedagogies, a practice which is aligned with literature by Dover (2013) in that teachers must be committed to achieving social justice. As described in Chapter 4, they accomplished this by connecting classroom work to society and to the lives of their students through music, pop culture, and literature. The teachers also based their classroom decorum on democratic values and cultural pluralism, facets of multiculturalism that are identified in the literature by Paris and Alim (2014), C. Bennett (2001), and Sleeter and Grant (1987). They also engaged students in active learning, gave them a voice, provided a relaxing classroom atmosphere, made content relevant, built on students’ strengths, developed culturally responsive unit plans, appreciated complex family and support systems, and cultivated positive student-teacher and school-home relationships.

Anecdotes for success, such as fostering an inclusive classroom, were among those noted in the literature by Martins-Shannon and White (2012), and clearly visible in all of the teachers’
classrooms. Evidence of these principles was posted in one teacher’s classroom by way of established norms and agreements:

We are a community of practitioners/equity-minded citizens;

Be present and bring your full self;

Step up, step back, and use the talk space equitably;

We will use our emotions and not our intellect;

Confidentiality: stories stay lessons leave;

Embrace discomfort and dissonance;

Provide critical feedback: challenge the idea and not the person.

Along with these norms, there also was clear evidence to support that teachers were applying the critical pedagogies, as described in the literature by (Dover, 2013; Freire, 2008; McLaren, 1994a; Nieto, 2004). Moreover, because the teachers encouraged personal expression and narrative, there was evidence to support that they enacted transformative, and social action models (Banks, 1990) in the classroom. This corresponded with what Banks and Banks (1989) described, thus reflecting upon the literature in their definition that teachers understand that multiculturalism must represent a complex society. This finding indicated that these teachers have performed on the axis that Banks and Banks (1989) defined.

The findings indicated that teachers also regarded their work as being a holistic ideology, as they stressed the importance of the interplay between the school and societal structures, which places emphasis on a connection to the context of community, a proposition highly regarded by Nieto (2004). Moreover, the findings provided evidence that the educators developed lessons that embraced students’ historical roots and personal experiences, a strategy that helped them to understand the political and social contexts in which they live, an element of CRP that was
identified in the literature as noted by Frederick, Cave, and Perencevich (2010) and Sobel, Gutierrez, Zion, and Blanchett (2011). This premise also is illustrated in the literature by S. V. Bennett (2013) and Ladson-Billings (1995), with research to support that teachers who connect the school to the home and to the community are more efficacious because such connections enhance learning.

Moreover, in at least four cases, there was evidence of the *multicultural social reconstructionist* perspective, a sociopolitical approach that focuses on social reform and involves the use of critical theory, inquiry, dialogue, and multiple perspectives—methods of teaching that have the potential to change society (Sleeter & Grant, 1987). The teachers who encouraged their students to confront real issues such as gun violence, racial profiling, and other harsh realities of American culture were using their classrooms to prepare them for life. Thus, unbeknownst to these teachers, they had been demonstrating many of the multiculturalism and CRP principles that are described in the literature review.

**The program served as a pipeline for an opportunity but teachers felt they needed stronger preparation.** While the teachers expressed gratitude for the opportunity to obtain a free education and to secure a position to teach urban youth, many initially were unrealistic about the challenges that they would face. To better prepare for these challenges, they voiced a need for coursework that extended beyond the three classes offered so that the program could be better aligned to a systemic social justice framework and the teachings of critical pedagogies, and could provide stronger integration of content geared toward culturally responsive teaching, urban education, and race. To support this assertion, Villegas and Lucas (2002) and S.V. Bennett (2013) recommended that multiculturalism and culturally responsive pedagogy should be integrated throughout pre-service teacher preparation programs to determine their true impact.
Aligned with a need for systemic practice, Kea and Trent (2013) suggested that teacher preparation programs reposition culture at the center of all teacher preparation. This research corroborates the work of Villegas and Lucas (2002) in that to train culturally responsive teachers, universities must adopt a specific vision and incorporate systemic practices throughout their teacher education programs. This same position is also supported by Banks and Banks (1989) who asserted that diversity should be reflected in all of the structures of educational institutions. Additionally, as the literature review has documented, it is the responsibility of teacher training programs to help teachers to develop accurate views of CRP, to strengthen the research base, and to educate them on the political factors that affect minority communities, as proposed by Sleeter (2011). Without such practices, many teachers enter diverse settings with which they are unfamiliar; they are unprepared for the challenges confronting them, a problem which may result in low efficacy levels among novice teachers.

The teachers also expressed a need for intense preparation on behavior management and the specific issues commonly encountered in urban schools. Furthermore, to help these teachers to prepare more effectively for their school environment, literature by Groulx and Silva (2010) suggested that relevant contextual experiences be provided throughout field experiences and during student teaching. This training element was present in this program, but it could be enhanced to more effectively meet the needs of each teacher. Some of the teachers yearned for the University to be more transparent about the realities of urban schools. This finding indicates that, by enhancing the current coursework and extending immersion experiences to better acclimate the teachers to the urban context, their perceptions of their preparation may improve.

**Some teachers expressed a need for additional support.** The teachers who felt most supported were those who knew how to advocate for their own support or who connected well
with their mentor teachers. While support personnel were available in each building, the extent to which these individuals were utilized was highly dependent on the individual teacher as well as on the strength of the leadership and culture of the building. There also was a consensus among the teachers that the support needed to be more structured and ongoing throughout the first three years that they committed to the program. As demonstrated in the literature, Groulx and Silva (2010) suggested that scaffolding of CRP learning experiences throughout a teacher program, as well as ongoing professional development and support, be provided by learning institutions. In addition, the teachers needed more opportunities to talk about the struggles that they encountered in the classroom. The literature supports this proposition, as Siwatu (2011) concluded that pre-service training programs must mirror the unique challenges that preservice teachers face while simultaneously offering ongoing support for novice teachers. These enhancements are also supported by Conklin and Hughes (2016), researchers who established that universities must conceptualize innovations that support growth.

The partnership needs to be true to its commitment to social justice principles, including the hiring of more African Americans. Many of the teachers entered the program because they were excited to exercise their perspectives of social justice, only to discover that those principles were not fully embraced by fellow teachers, administrators, or the organization as a whole. According to the literature review, proponents of multiculturalism (Banks, 1997; C. Bennett, 2001; Gay 1983; Kahn, 2008; Sleeter & Grant, 1987) support reducing prejudice and discrimination against oppressed groups, working toward equity and social justice, and developing an equitable distribution of power among members of divergent cultures. While many of the teachers exercised their passion for social justice in their teaching practices, they believed that the organization needed to strengthen its commitment to social justice when
recruiting new teacher candidates, hiring professors, developing coursework, and providing professional development within the school contexts. Teachers, professors, and liaisons also agreed that more African Americans should be included in the social justice mission. Because race plays a role in perceived teacher efficacy and is vital to the advancement of social justice principles, expanding the involvement of African Americans in multiple aspects of the program is imperative.

**Discussion of Findings in Relation to the Theoretical Framework**

This study was informed through the perspective of teacher efficacy theory, which served as the lens to investigate the teachers' perceptions of their preparation and their practices as it related to teacher efficacy. This theory was applied as a framework because the researcher was interested in determining if the teacher training program served a purpose in recruiting, preparing, and retaining efficacious candidates to teach in an urban school setting. In this case, the researcher asked individuals questions that were related to the teachers’ ability to teach in a culturally responsive manner and to promote students’ learning (Hoy, 2000). This research was designed to investigate the proposition that sociocultural competence, combined with strong teacher efficacy, may predict teacher success in urban classrooms (Flores et al., 2007).

In this case, all teachers demonstrated sociocultural competence and exhibited strengths in multicultural, socially just, and CRP teaching practices. In the end, all but one teacher felt effective as a teacher, yet she possessed strong sociocultural competencies. Her reason for struggling in the program was related to difficulties that she experienced in the context in which she was placed. In another case, the transfer of a teacher from middle to high school affected his perceived level of efficacy. Worth noting, other teachers expressed that contextual factors had a bearing on their success, as each school had a unique environment. As Goddard et al. (2000)
explained, teacher efficacy is thought to be context specific, and it is highly influenced by the “collective” beliefs of the faculty and administrators.

As Bandura (1997) described, to be efficacious, one must believe in one’s ability to perform and achieve. Likewise, people who find success typically demonstrate the ability to persevere despite challenges, as was demonstrated by the teachers who took part in this study. According to Bandura (1997), individuals base their perceptions of self-efficacy on four sources of information: performance accomplishments or mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasions, and physiological or emotional reactions or states. Bandura (1997) purported that performance accomplishments or mastery experiences provided individuals with their primary source of efficacy beliefs. Evidence of such experiences are thought to reveal an authentic form of self-efficacy.

Performance or mastery experiences of urban educators. While all of the teachers expressed some degree of difficulty in their roles as urban educators, aside from one exception, these challenges did not affect their ability to overcome obstacles. As the teachers described the outcomes of their lessons, it became evident that they were not discouraged by failure. Therefore, it is likely that their personal dispositions of resilience and perseverance transferred into their teaching practices. This finding may also be attributed, in part, to the context-specific training that served to promote mastery. Overall, their beliefs about students’ levels of performance and the descriptions of their lessons indicated that they were able to find more successes than failures. As one teacher described, certain essential skills are needed in any setting, such as the ability to demand a student’s respect, to create an inclusive classroom culture, to understand student strengths and weaknesses, and to ensure that the content is culturally relevant, but to teach in an urban setting: “One will need to be secure within themselves and their
ability to teach.” This finding indicates the importance role that diverse student teaching and induction experiences have on the perceived level of efficacy of new hires.

**Vicarious experiences of urban educators.** With one exception, each of the teachers spoke positively of their mentor teachers, indicating that those individuals modeled strong teaching practices which they were able to replicate in their own classrooms. Moreover, the majority of teachers interviewed admitted that they relied heavily on the support of their colleagues and coaches to get them through tough times. As one teacher described:

I think the biggest take away from going through the program is being able to interact with so many different educators. I don't think that's specifically like their goal, but when you're in a program you've got to find what works for you.

In one case, however, a White teacher experienced difficulty relating to the natural teaching ability of her mentor, an African American teacher who had a strong rapport with her students. As described in Chapter 4, she believed that she could not duplicate the same culture of respect and, as a result, this experience as a student teacher had an adverse effect on her own sense of self-efficacy. This finding demonstrates the importance of connecting novice teachers to efficacious mentor teachers and strengthening the supports for novice educators.

**Verbal persuasions of urban educators.** There was ample evidence indicating the extent to which teachers’ levels of self-efficacy were influenced by the encouragement of colleagues, instructional coaches, culture coaches, mentors, and liaisons. In fact, the teachers who specified being in a supportive environment felt the most efficacious. The research findings also indicated that the most effective teachers possessed the agency to advocate for their own support. Moreover, the strength and support of principal leadership in each building was also a factor in their perceived effectiveness. These findings support the importance of having ample
supports in place to provide constructive feedback to assist new hires to help them to reach a desired level of efficacy.

**Psychological states of urban educators.** As indicated by teachers who struggled to find a balance each day, there is no doubt that teaching in any setting can lead to stress, depression, and burnout; however, in an urban environment, the vulnerability for such conditions can be much greater. The majority of the teachers who were interviewed expressed that they felt overwhelmed and were working toward achieving a balance between life and work. As described by one of the teachers who did not make it past her student teaching residency: “I felt passionless. I just felt worn out.” As previously mentioned, another teacher believed that he was less effective following an involuntary transfer from the high school setting to a middle school classroom. He attributed his feelings of self-doubt to the challenges of adjusting to the new age context, primarily because he perceived the behaviors to be worse. As he described, “You’re doing a disservice to a teacher who you’re moving out of an area that they want to teach in to an area that you think they can teach in.” These findings indicate the importance of allowing teachers to have a voice in their placement. Hence, if teachers are teaching in an environment where they feel most confident and effective, it likely will positively affect their classroom performance.

These research findings suggested that self-efficacy can be fostered in individuals who are resilient, possess strong sociocultural competence, demonstrate the ability to build relationships, and teach in a school culture that is replete with supportive colleagues and principals. While a teacher’s level of efficacy can be attributed to certain attributes and dispositions, contextual factors appear to be of equal importance. Thus, those who strived the most were immersed in positive school cultures. This finding connects to the theoretical
framework in that, no matter how challenging the setting, there is a connection between a school’s collective sense of efficacy and an individual’s perceived self-efficacy. Goddard et al. (2000) explained that collective efficacy is based on the premise that the combined efforts of everyone in the school can have a positive effect on the students.

In this case study, all of the teachers demonstrated self-efficacious beliefs and identities while also exhibiting the ability to deliver culturally responsive pedagogies. The researcher reached this conclusion after determining that the teachers believed that they were able to make positive differences in the lives of their urban students. While they demonstrated the aptitude to persevere in these settings, the manner in which they were socialized was of utmost importance in the beginning stages of their training and teaching. These findings indicated the inherent value of sustaining the development of teacher efficacy by providing ongoing support to novice urban educators. While the University did not have a direct influence on the support system within the respective schools at the time this study was conducted, strengthening the partnership and affirming the vision of the program may be essential to differentiating efficacy-building mastery experiences for novice urban educators. This conclusion relates to the collective efficacy aspect of the framework that guided this study, in that a shared vision and intentional development of teacher efficacy are critically important to prepare teachers for the urban setting.

**Implications for Practice**

This study has implications for various groups of educational practitioners, including university administrators and professors, school administrators, urban teachers, as well as teachers in general. This study also has the potential to impact decision-making at the state and national levels as a means of addressing the shortage of teachers, especially African American teachers in urban areas.
Implications for university administrators and professors. As enrollment in teacher education programs continues to suffer and the demand for teachers in high needs areas continues to rise, university administrators and professors will need to be creative in enticing individuals to consider the field of urban education. In the case of this study, a university and public charter school system partnership paved the way for bachelor’s degree graduates to obtain pre-teacher training through an accelerated master’s program designed to prepare urban educators. Similar programs may serve to provide opportunities for transformative agents of equity and social justice while also helping to narrow the achievement gap between urban and suburban students.

This study informs university personnel about the significance of developing a program that has the following elements:

- Attracts educators who are passionate about social justice;
- Hires more African American professors;
- Bases the program on a commitment to diversity;
- Embraces the value that lived experiences have on teaching and learning;
- Fosters dispositions of self-reflective practice;
- Trains teachers how to make community partnerships;
- Challenges ethnocentric ideologies;
- Trains professors in CRP;
- Sustains a systemic CRP and social justice focus in the university program, coursework, and training, as well as in the school setting;
- Creates opportunities to develop mastery experiences which will strengthen self-efficacy beliefs among teachers;
● Emphasizes the importance of culture and relationships on teaching and learning.

● Maintains a reciprocal partnership though collaboration;

● Involves more African Americans in the planning and preparation processes;

● Works to increase diversity among teacher candidates, particularly African American males;

● Provides multiple levels of ongoing support for novice educators during coursework, apprenticeship, and though year four of employment;

● Adapts processes to the fit the specific needs of the teachers and allows their voices be heard;

● Extends an understanding of financial and personal obligations, including providing a better cost of living allowance through scholarships;

● Includes mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, and verbal persuasions in both the support and efficacy training processes while paying attention to physiological or emotional reactions or states of teachers (Bandura, 1997).

These findings indicate the need for university personnel to cultivate a reciprocal mission and vision within both the university and school settings. It is imperative that this shared philosophy be sustained through the recruitment of teachers, hiring of professors, teaching practices of professors, training, and ongoing support of educators. Moreover, the intersection of race and poverty must be embedded in the core of the academic discipline, given the presence these have in urban schools. Hence, if both the education department and the school system are recognized as social justice institutions, a foundation of this core ideology may serve to strengthen this type of program. Because the teachers who were interviewed believed that the changes mentioned above were essential to more efficacious teaching, the focus on building a
foundation on supportive, culturally responsive, and social justice principles likely can positively impact the future of the organization.

**Implications for school administrators.** As Gay (2000) asserted, “Culture is at the heart of all we do in the name of education.” Many of the urban schools that housed the teachers who participated in this study were positioned in impoverished neighborhoods, yet the students were excited and eager to learn, and the teachers were equally enthusiastic to teach them. These teachers continuously sought new ways to connect to their students. They attributed their successes, in part, to the principals who led them. This value of strong, inspiring, and supportive instructional leaders emerged as particularly salient when teachers reflected on their positive school culture. Thus, when school administrators prioritize culture and relationships, the overall system is strengthened. For this reason, this study has implications for school administrators in that it requires them to model the following practices:

- Prioritize culture first;
- Believe that all decisions need to be student-centered;
- Embrace the value of all relationships;
- Dedicate attention to improving teacher efficacy;
- Ensure that teachers have the support that they need, including a one-on-one mentor during year one of teaching;
- Practice authenticity;
- Allow teachers’ and students’ voices to be heard;
- Center professional development on culturally responsive and CRP pedagogies;
- Possess a transformative mindset;
- Maintain a shared vision;
Express care and concern;

Build a culture of respect.

Implications for urban teachers and teachers in general. The teachers who participated in this study were strong-willed individuals who, for various reasons, decided to make a career move into educational practice. They also seized an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of urban youth. None of them quite knew what to expect when they assumed their roles, but they believed that their passions would guide them. For urban teachers, suburban teachers, or teachers who may be considering future careers in education, this study found that an educational program with the following components in place can prepare teachers to successfully incorporate CRP and socially just pedagogies in an urban setting:

- Establishes pedagogical practices that place culture at the center of teaching and learning;
- Creates an inclusive classroom;
- Builds on students’ strengths;
- Strives to overcome stereotypes;
- Possesses a transformational disposition;
- Develops self-reflective practice as a necessary disposition;
- Disbands ethnocentric practices;
- Seeks support when needed;
- Promotes teaching as a career to diverse students;
- Remains current in educational practice;
- Works to change perceptions of the teaching profession.
Implications for decision-making processes at the state and national levels. As addressed in Chapter 1, and considering the means through which the shortage of teachers, especially African-American teachers, in urban areas can be addressed, the larger political, economic, and social influences that exist in culturally hegemonic societies often dictate the content that students are taught and the benchmarks by which they are assessed (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Yet, a shortage remains of teachers who can effectively reverse the trend to disband such ethnocentric practices. For that reason, this study informs legislators about the significance of attracting viable candidates to educate urban youth, and calls for the following changes:

- Appropriate more funding, flexible grants; and resources to teacher training programs;
- Reward highly qualified candidates with fully funded scholarships;
- Help to disband the negative notations associated with teaching and learning;
- Lift heavy prerequisite restrictions on candidates who wish to enter a career in education;
- Offer full-ride scholarships to promote diversity within the teaching field;
- Provide more federal money to hire teachers;
- Eliminate prescribed curriculum and allow teachers to have more autonomy in the classroom;
- Dedicate attention to improve the working conditions in urban schools;
- Use resources effectively to generate respect for the practice of teaching.

Recommendations for Future Research

As stated in the literature by Martins-Shannon and White (2012), teachers who are committed to social justice work aim to incorporate cultures into lessons; they strive to overcome
stereotypes; they maintain an inclusive classroom, and they use reflective practices to support academic success. By relating the literature to the findings, the researcher concluded that these teachers exhibited many strengths as urban educators, but they would have had strengthened their efficacy further had their training been better geared toward their specific needs. To foster emergent social justice and CRP competencies, the teachers, professors, and liaisons believed that a teacher’s specific dispositions can be enhanced with adequate training and support. However, as the data and the research suggested, to experience the full potential of a program like the one analyzed in this study, school leaders must also embrace these propositions. Thus, the teachers, professors, and liaisons recognized that the University and the school system needed to revisit their original mission and vision to make the necessary adjustments to the coursework and to offer enhanced experiences to strengthen their partnership. In addition to these changes, the participants also expressed the urgency to find ways to recruit more individuals with diverse backgrounds, particularly African Americans, to enter educational practice. This can be accomplished by offering greater flexibility and ongoing support, increasing the stipend and salary, and strengthening the core philosophy. Hence, to prepare for the future, it is imperative that two organizations such as the partnership featured in this study become more collaborative. The professors and liaisons indeed proposed that if they truly were a social justice institution, the teachers’ voices needed to be heard.

Limitations of the Study

This research study had access, time, and methodological limitations. First, to protect the confidentiality of the teachers, the researcher relied on University professors to send recruitment emails instructing teachers to contact the researcher to express their interest in participating in the study. By relying on others to contact the teachers, the researcher encountered several
obstacles, the most problematic being lengthy delays in establishing participation. Therefore, because the researcher did not have first-hand access to the teachers, it is possible that the recruitment process hindered or interfered with the study. Second, while the study involved a sufficient sampling of six teachers in four schools, the composition of the teacher participants may not have been representative of the other teachers or contexts within the larger network. Third, in some cases, the researcher experienced limited access to student work, student-teacher interactions, and classroom instruction. While having limited access did not impede the researcher from following through on the requirements to complete the study, this obstacle limited the scope of the analysis and prevented the researcher from collecting substantial evidence to triangulate data. Therefore, the researcher relied mostly on self-reported data which rarely can be independently verified and may also be a potential source of bias.

Considering these limitations, the researcher recommends that future studies begin with an informational meeting that allows the researcher or gatekeeper to explain the rationale of the study and to outline how the teachers’ roles in the process may lead to program improvements for future cohorts. In addition, the benefit of such a meeting could potentially help the researcher to establish an initial relationship with teachers, and it may enable the researcher to gain a better representation of teachers and across contexts. To help the researcher to solve problems of limited evidence, future studies can also be enhanced through a mixed-methods format that incorporates both a teacher-efficacy scale and a survey of culturally responsive and socially just practices that are indicative of efficacious teaching in an urban school environment. This study could also be expanded from a teacher’s first year in the program to the end of their third year of educational practice as a means of determining longitudinal changes in efficacy.
Conclusion

In summation, the research that informed this study supported the premise that teachers who engage in culturally responsive and socially just pedagogies are effective at teaching in a variety of contexts because of their eagerness to find ways to integrate the school and the community into the curriculum, their commitment to specific teaching practices, and their reinforcement of a forward-looking classroom environment (Kea & Trent, 2013). Unfortunately, however, there remains a shortage of teachers who can provide such pedagogies. Collectively, the six teachers who participated in this study were successful in reducing the cultural gap that currently exists in schools. They were instrumental in guiding this transformation primarily because their training program provided them the platforms to exercise their passion to accommodate the uniqueness of each learner. While immersing themselves in making connections with students, they experienced their own self-transformation as they learned to embrace different learning styles and found ways to use their roles to create an empowering school climate (Banks, 1993). While teachers commonly find it difficult to perceive all of the significant accomplishments that they achieve, the effectiveness of these educators can be defined by the excitement generated from their descriptions of lessons and personal bonds that they formed with their students. Therefore, this study found that individuals who have had the benefit of diverse life and work experiences and who possess a genuine interest in embarking on a career of education to make a difference in the lives of urban youth will greatly benefit from a social justice-oriented urban teaching program that is geared toward preparing and supporting teachers for the unique challenges of a diverse school environment.
References


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Theory of Intelligence, Goal Orientation and the Ninth Grade Experience.


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Appendix A: Recruitment Letter

8 January 2018

Greetings.

As a doctoral student at Northeastern University, I am writing you to let you know about an opportunity to participate in a research study. This study pertains to the training that you received at the Pittsburgh Urban Teaching Corps through Chatham University as it relates to teacher efficacy in the urban classroom. Participants will be asked questions that relate to culturally responsive teaching, equality, urban education, and social justice.

I am requesting your participation in a 60-minute interview, classroom observation, and a brief, reflective debriefing session. Participation and your extent of involvement is completely voluntary and your identity will remain confidential. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. A $25 Amazon gift card will be provided to all participants.

Data garnered from this study will be used for purposes of doctoral research and to inform instructional practice.

Participants who accept this invitation will be asked to sign a consent form which will be emailed prior to the first interview and/or distributed and signed during the first meeting.

If you are interested in participating in this study or if you have any questions, please email me for additional information: George.mi@husky.neu.edu. Emails to any other email address regarding this study must be deleted with no response, per Northeastern University IRB.

Please express interest by January 12.

Thank you for considering this research opportunity.

Michelle George
Doctoral Student
Northeastern University
Appendix B: Signed Informed Consent Document for all Participants

College: Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies

Department/Program Curriculum, Teaching, Learning, and Leadership (CTLL)

Name of Investigator(s):

Principal Investigator’s name: Dr. Sara Ewell

Student Researcher’s name: Michelle George

Title of Project: Narrowing the Cultural Divide: Preparing Culturally Responsive Educators by Instituting Transformative Pedagogical Pre-service Training Programs.

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but I will explain it to you first. You may ask me any questions that you have about the study and I ask that you inform me should you decide to participate. You are not obligated to take part in this study. Should you decide to participate, I ask that you sign this statement [signature line at conclusion]. I will provide a copy for your records.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?

As a supervisor or program liaison between [name] you are being recruited to provide insight on the training program.

As a teacher, you are being recruited because you obtained your training though the [name] and are employed by [name].

Why is this research study being done?

The purpose of this study is to document the experiences of professors and teachers who are part of the [PUTC], a program created and developed to train culturally responsive teachers who have pledged a commitment to urban education and social justice equity in schools. Data garnered from this investigation may serve to help other training programs that aim to provide teachers and students with a diverse and enriching teaching and educational experience that are also social-justice oriented. This data will enable the researcher to gain valuable insight into the training program at the research site, to determine how the trainers and the teachers perceive the value of the program, and to evaluate the standards this university program uses to assess the level of both intra and intercultural preparedness and competency of teacher candidates entering the workforce.

What will I be asked to do?

As a university liaison or program supervisor, if you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in one interview session.

As a teacher, if you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to engage in one initial interview, one classroom observation, and a brief follow-up interview.
All participants will be asked a series of research questions related to urban teaching, learning, and culturally responsive pedagogy. There also will be questions centered on the training provided and/or obtained through the PUTC and specific teaching practices employed at Propel Schools. Your role as a participant will be to reflect on the interview questions and to answer to the best of your ability.

For teachers, a classroom observation will be scheduled within two weeks of the initial interview. The researcher will use the classroom observation to gather relevant teaching materials and to document applicable teaching methods/practices.

For teachers, a brief follow-up interview will be scheduled within three days of the classroom observation. During this session, the researcher and the teacher will reflect on the classroom observation and discuss any other relevant details.

**Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?**

You will be interviewed at a place that is convenient for you. The initial interview will take about one hour.

For teachers, at the conclusion of the initial interview, we will schedule one classroom observation and one 15-minute post interview.

**Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?**

We will consider all possible safeguards to ensure that all potential risks are eliminated. A password-protected computer will be used to store all data and all subjects will be instructed to directly contact the researcher though the researcher’s university email so that the participants names/identities are not revealed to the program liaison or other school officials. As a reminder, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and without penalty. If a withdrawal occurs, both electronic and printed data will be properly and promptly destroyed.

**Will I benefit by being in this research?**

While there will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in the study, the information learned from it may help to ensure that the program goals and the outcomes are better aligned. It may also help the coordinators to understand why some teachers leave their urban education assignments prematurely. For teachers, data collected in this study could possibly strengthen supports for urban education, and this may potentially lead to improved teacher efficacy. Data could also help to identify missing elements in a teachers’ culturally responsive teaching repertoire. Ultimately, however, urban students may experience the most benefit from this research, as program coordinators and teachers will be better trained to be culturally relevant teachers and will be able to sustain their passion for urban education.

**Who will see the information about me?**

As the student researcher, I will have sole access to information both in written and audio form. Only the researcher conducting this study will see the information about you. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way or any individual as being involved in this project.

We will adhere to all legal, social, and ethical standards to ensure the validity of the data and to protect individuals and institutions. Therefore, as the student researcher I will accept the
responsibility to obtain informed consent from all subjects, to assure privacy and confidentiality, and to follow all rules and responsibilities set forth by the IRB and the Office of Human Subject Research Protection (HSRP).

To maintain the integrity and safety of all parties involved, I will follow procedural guidelines by maintaining the confidentiality of all human subjects under study, as well as the title of the training university, the program title, and the charter school system that partners with the university; there can be no promise of total anonymity due to the nature of the interview and observation process. This will hold not only for the study and dissertation submission, but also for all future uses of data collected – conference presentations, papers, publications, and supporting materials. I will also use encrypted passwords and apply pseudonyms to all data acquired from study participants. In addition, I will ensure the safety and security of all data and information collected from participants, as well as pledge that all data will be used for research purposes aimed at improving the program under study and other similar initiatives. Only the researcher will have access to the data.

Data will be stored on portable external drives and locked in file cabinets, accessible only to the student researcher and the principal investigator if she requests. Once the data, including audio and video recordings, is uploaded and transcribed, it will be disposed of—shredded or deleted properly. All identifiers and links to identification will be destroyed immediately after the data is encrypted.

In rare circumstances, there may be limits to confidentiality, such as certain legal reporting requirements by law, e.g., child abuse.

In rare instances, authorized people may request to see research information about you and other people in this study. This is done only to ensure that the research is conducted properly. We would only permit people who are authorized by organizations such as the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board [or if applicable the sponsor or funding agency e.g. NIH, NSF, FDA, OHRP] to see this information.

If I do not want to take part in the study, what choices do I have?

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time.

What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?

The researcher will consider all possible safeguards to ensure that all potential risks are eliminated. A password-protected computer will be used to store all data and all subjects will be instructed to directly contact the researcher though the researchers university email so that the participant’s names/identities are not revealed to the program liaison or to school supervisors. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and without penalty. If a withdrawal occurs, both electronic and printed data will be properly and promptly be destroyed.

Please note that no special arrangements will be made for compensation or for payment for treatment solely because of your participation in this research.

Can I stop my participation in this study?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You also can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time. If you do not participate or if
you decide to quit, you will not lose any rights, benefits, or services that you would otherwise have as a teacher, liaison or a program coordinator.

**Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?**

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Michelle George at [George.mi@husky.neu.edu](mailto:George.mi@husky.neu.edu), the person mainly responsible for the research. You can also contact Dr. Sara Ewell at [S.Ewell@northeastern.edu](mailto:S.Ewell@northeastern.edu), the Principal Investigator.

**Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?**

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, Mail Stop: 560-177, 360 Huntington Avenue, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

**Will I be paid for my participation?**

You will be given a $25 Amazon Gift Card following the completion of the post-interview.

**Will it cost me anything to participate?**

As a participant in this study, you will not incur any extra costs.

**Is there anything else I need to know?**

This study will include 4-6 teachers and 1-2 program liaisons/supervisors.

I agree to take part in this research.

____________________________________________  __________________________
Signature of person agreeing to take part Date

____________________________________________
Printed name of person above

____________________________________________  __________________________
Signature of person who explained the study to the participant above and obtained consent Date

____________________________________________
Printed name of person above
Appendix C: Teacher and Liaison/Training Supervisor Questions

Teacher interview questions:

**Interview question #1.** What background experiences and dispositions have helped you to effectively work with urban youth?

**Interview question #2.** How does teaching positively influence students’ learning outcomes despite other environmental influences?

**Interview question #3.** Describe the skills needed to teach in an urban setting.

**Interview question #4.** How do you establish a positive teacher-student relationship?

**Interview question #5.** How do you establish a positive home-school relationship?

**Interview question #6.** What types of culturally relevant classroom practices related to social justice make teachers effective urban educators?

**Interview question #7.** What is the biggest challenge of being an urban educator?

**Interview question #8.** To what extent are the support structure and culture of the school specifically focused on urban challenges?

**Interview question #9.** What types of supports and resources have helped you as an educator to effectively work with students?

**Interview question #10.** How does the school setting and teacher training program support the ongoing development of urban educators?

**Interview question #11.** How does the teacher prep program enable and prepare teachers to be culturally responsive educators?

**Interview question #12.** How do you apply the skills acquired in the training program to your educational settings?

**Interview question #13.** How do you practice culturally responsive teaching in your classroom?

**Interview question #14.** How do you teach for social justice in your classroom?

**Interview question #15.** How do you feel about the preparation you received to work with urban students? How was it effective or not effective? How might you be better prepared than those who did not complete the program?

**Interview question #16.** What could the program do to enhance its effectiveness to better prepare urban educators?

**Interview question #17.** Aside from the program, what else has been helpful in preparing you to become an effective urban educator?

**Interview question #18.** What could draw more teachers to work in urban settings?

**Interview question #19.** What could be done to lower the attrition rate of urban educators who have completed the program?

Training supervisor questions:

**Interview question #1.** What background experiences and dispositions help teachers to effectively work with urban youth?

**Interview question #2.** How does teaching positively influence students’ learning outcomes despite other environmental influences?

**Interview question #3.** Describe the skills needed to teach in an urban setting.

**Interview question #4.** How do urban teachers establish a positive teacher-student relationship?
Interview question #5. How do urban teachers establish a positive home-school relationship?

Interview question #6. What types of culturally relevant classroom practices related to social justice make teachers effective urban educators?

Interview question #7. What are the biggest challenges that urban educators face?

Interview question #8. To what extent are the support structure and culture of the school specifically focused on urban challenges?

Interview question #9. Does the school setting and teacher training program offer a means of supporting the ongoing development of urban educators? If so, please describe.

Interview question #10. How does the teacher prep program enable and prepare teachers to be culturally responsive educators?

Interview question #11. How are teachers applying the skills acquired in the training program to their educational settings?

Interview question #12. What could the program do to enhance its effectiveness in preparing urban educators?

Interview question #13. What could draw more teachers to work in urban settings?

Interview question #14. What could be done to lower the attrition rate of urban educators?