REDESIGNING CURRICULUM, REIMAGINING EDUCATION: PREPARING PRESERVICE TEACHERS FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR IN URBAN EDUCATION

Sabrina D. Jones

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DePaul University

College of Education

A Dissertation in Education with a Concentration in Curriculum Studies

REDESIGNING CURRICULUM, REIMAGINING EDUCATION: PREPARING
PRESERVICE TEACHERS FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR IN URBAN EDUCATION

by
Sabrina D. Jones

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

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June, 2018
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Dropout rates, suspensions, and expulsions have increased - among urban schools for quite some time. Yet, the number of unmotivated and disengaged culturally diverse students in urban learning environments is steadily increasing. There is a growing number of white female novice teachers who are entering the field of urban education and many prospective/novice teachers overall that are feeling unprepared to reach culturally diverse urban youth. This dissertation by no means suggests that people of other races and cultures cannot teach culturally diverse students in urban learning environments, but it does suggest that those who enter the field of urban education should be taught from a curriculum that is multicultural in its approach, focus, and adequately prepares preservice teachers to be effective urban educators to the population that they serve, urban youth. To better meet the needs of students of color in urban learning environments, a redesign of teacher education curriculum that includes a strategic and effective multicultural approach and other recommendations from teacher educators, novice teachers, and preservice teachers is needed to better prepare future urban educators for culturally diverse urban youth. The purpose of this study is to help stakeholders, administrators, academic and other communities, and educators alike to acknowledge and recognize that we all must rethink or reimagine education, and discover solutions that will work towards the academic success of all students especially urban youth. One solution that is proposed in this research study is to redesign teacher curriculum with a more multicultural context and focus to better prepare preservice teachers for urban youth of color.

This qualitative study uses CRT lenses to examine data, which create a cultural context of importance to help solidify its significance to immediate and permanent change in teacher training and effectiveness. The scope from which the study is conducted is that of my own
academic journey. All of my experience, as both a student and educator of color, guide this research. The results are in some cases both diverse and similar, but all connect to the idea that a redesign of curriculum for prospective teachers is necessary in order to adequately prepare and effectively teach in urban learning environments. It was concluded that a redesign of curriculum is necessary of teacher education programs, and the redesign needs to include a more diverse, extended, qualified, and vigorous field experience. In addition, terms such as urban and cultural competency should be redefined to include a more appropriate and current connectedness of the world and that in some way connects to the view in today’s society. Recommendations mentioned in the study are that of further research addressing how to influence teacher educators to embrace the redesign of teacher education programs to include a more multicultural focus, evaluation tools to determine teacher effectiveness, recruitment of prospective teachers of color, adding, changing, or be more explicit in meanings of words when it comes to being prepared to teach urban youth, effective transformation of teacher education programs, increasing teacher retention, and redesigning quality field experiences.
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This dissertation is the product of my academic journey, life experiences, and future endeavors in the field of education. First, I would like to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for giving me the motivation, drive, perseverance, and abilities to take on such a path of academic success and achievement.

I would like to thank my mother (my number one cheerleader), close friends and family, colleagues and associates for being a great support system, praying for me and consistently checking in wanting to know when I will have this dissertation completed so they can celebrate this milestone.

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DEDICATION

In Memory of Sandra Bland
In Memory of Michael Brown
In Memory of Philando Castile
In Memory of Terence Crutcher
In Memory of Samuel DuBose
  In Memory of Eric Garner
  In Memory of Freddie Gray
  In Memory of Akai Gurley
  In Memory of Trayvon Martin
  In Memory of Laquan McDonald
  In Memory of Paul O’Neal
  In Memory of Tamir Rice
  In Memory of Keith Lamont Scott
  In Memory of Walter L. Scott
  In Memory of Alton B. Sterling
  In Memory of Christian Taylor

In Memory of ALL lives that were taken in our communities, schools, and streets due to any type of shape or form of social injustice that was never documented or acknowledged in the media.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The point is clear: the way we define thinking exerts a profound impact on the nature of our schools, the role that teachers play in the world, and the shape that society will ultimately take. (Nieto, 2010, p. 33)

The Blabberman Experience

Another rainy day...“Rain, rain, go away please come back another day” is the song I sung in my head every time it rained at Dwight Middle School. Every time it rained, I regretted going to Mrs. Blabberman’s 7th grade English Language Arts class. Mrs. Blabberman, a middle-aged Caucasian English teacher, enjoyed teaching the content, but “on the rainy days” disliked her student population and the community where she worked. The student population at Dwight Middle School was predominately minority (i.e. African American and Latino) with a small percentage of White students. My English Language Arts class was also majority African American. I remember the grammar lessons on the overhead that she would attempt to teach us before going into her rant about how her son goes to an immaculate school with carpeting throughout and which was located in a well-to do area.

Afterwards, she reminded us that his school was tremendously different from our assumed ‘poor community,’ where most of us lived, and the local school that we all attended. In addition, she would tell us that the area she lives in is much nicer, and how she has to endure an extremely long travel time to go home. She would conclude her monologue with, “Well at least some of you live near the school. It must be nice to walk to school every day.” Bewilderedly, I would look around the room and ask myself this rhetorical question: “Well, why are you here? Apparently, you do not want to teach us poor Black kids anything!” I felt uncomfortable every time I would enter Mrs. Blabberman’s class on the rainy days. She made me feel that I was incompetent, poor, and unlikely to succeed in life because of my race, the area where I lived, and
the location of my school. After my experience with Mrs. Blabberman, I hoped that I would never encounter a teacher that was not culturally invested in my education or in me as a student. Since, I always questioned and negated White teachers presence in urban schools.

Despite my Blabberman experience, I reflect back on my academic journey as a student of color and I distinctly remember five individuals that positively influenced my educational experience. The five educators that impacted my life were Ms. Jones, Mrs. Jefferson, Ms. Love, Mr. Costa, and Dr. Whiteside. Ms. Jones, an African American woman and principal of my Pre-Kindergarten school displayed a caring personality. Mrs. Jefferson, an older African American woman, a strict eighth grade Social Studies teacher and minister, had high expectations of her students. Ms. Love, an older Caucasian woman, nurtured my love for English Language Arts in the eighth grade. Mr. Costa, an Italian male teacher, taught tenth grade Economics at my high school in a way that was culturally relevant. Dr. Whiteside, a Caucasian male professor, taught my first African American Studies course in college, and helped me embrace my own African American identity through history, literature, and the arts. Overall, the five educators that I mentioned above, demonstrated to me their ways of caring, cultural sensitivity, high expectancy, and culturally relevant teaching strategies in a way that emulate, what I call, effective teaching practices. For this reason, my academic achievement, perception of education, and academic career is influenced by their effective teacher practices, and initiates my own educational philosophy.

My experience with Mrs. Blabberman gave me the conscious effort and the hope to change the way I think about education and the roles of students and teachers, however, that is not always the case for all students of color. As a student of color myself, I have seen first-hand other students of color, after experiencing a much similar or worst experience than my own,
develop negative attitudes about school and teachers. Hence, their actions or reactions turned for
the worst. As a result, they became disengaged with school, unmotivated to learn, and
eventually dropped out of school. In many cases, some of my peers received multiple in-school
and out-of-school suspensions, and some were eventually expelled or pushed out of school
because of the various measurements of accountability the school faced, or in dealing with their
own academic challenges due to personal internal or external factors.

My argument is that if preservice teachers were well trained, and prepared to teach
culturally diverse students, it would increase student engagement, motivation, academic
achievement, and graduation rates in urban schools. In addition, culturally diverse students who
are expected to achieve academically would become more engaged and motivated to learn. I
argue that teacher education programs should better prepare preservice teachers for students of
color, in order to retain and increase the graduation rate of culturally diverse students in urban
schools.

**From Student to Professional**

In contemplating the crisis in urban education today, the academic professional version of
myself reflects on the academic journey of many students of color that is similar to mine. As an
educator today, I see many factors that negatively influence young people’s scholarly
performance. In going through the many struggles as a student of color to obtain academic
achievement, as a professional, I recognize that elements that continue to impact urban youth
today have existed for many years. Thus, the question that I had as a student that yet lingers for
me as a professional is “when will the struggle to obtain academic success minimize and become
fair enough for all students to succeed?”
While trying to unpack this question, as well as work towards closing the academic achievement gap, the one thing I promised myself was to work diligently to create spaces where academically struggling urban youth and students of color can find a voice and experience schooling success. My personal journey was not easy but I would like to use what I learned to help others who are entering into the field of urban education. The way that I seek to assist in solving the problem of the irrelevancy of curriculum and unmotivated youth crisis that exist in the urban education phenomenon is to suggest that the teacher education curriculum be redesigned with a multicultural focus to better prepare preservice teachers for cultural diverse urban youth. I find that including a cultural context within teaching and learning worked well for me as a student and an instructor.

Though my scholarly approach is a panacea for a much broader issue, it is one piece to a puzzle that, when supported through research, holds significant potential for change. For this reason, I present this research study of what I discovered offering both suggestions and recommendations to help resolve this issue and better assist preservice teachers working to increase the life chances of urban youth and students of color.

As a woman of color, student of color, and a culturally diverse educator, I understand the importance of setting high expectations for students of color, and the significance of both embracing and acknowledging culture in the classroom as a driving force for academic success. It is my primary goal to offer ways of reimagining education, and redesigning teachereducation curriculum in order to prepare preservice teachers for students of color in urban schools. It is my obligation to offer ways and understanding on how to decrease the dropout rate and increase the graduation rates of students of color in urban schools.
**Introduction to the Study**

Public education is on everyone’s mind these days. (Tamir, 2011, p. 395)

Rap videos and their materialistic emphasis make our jobs as educators more challenging.  
(Kunjufu, 2002, p. 102)

The racial gap in academic achievement is an educational crisis, but it is also the main source of ongoing racial inequality. (Thernstorm & Thernston, 2003, p. 1)

Learning style is not dictated by race, income, or marital status. Culture is the driving force.  
(Kunjufu, 2002, p. 96)

According to the Alliance for Excellent Education 2009 report, in Illinois alone, research shows that there are increasingly high dropout rates and declining graduation rates for students of color. African American students are graduating at a lower rate compared to students of other racial ethnicities (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009; Chicago Public Schools, 2013; Cotton, 1991). African American students in the state of Illinois are graduating at an estimated four-year graduation rate of 51% (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009). The overall graduation rate of high school students produced in the state of Illinois every four years is about 74% (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009). In other words, African American students are only graduating at a rate of about 51% compared to the overall graduation rate of the entire state of Illinois. On the other hand, it is also reported that the cost of high school drop-outs not only effect those students who decide to drop out, but also the state and society approximately eleven million dollars in lost wages over a lifetime (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009). In addition, research shows that Chicago Public Schools (CPS) are not meeting the needs of students for graduation nor college readiness (Chicago Public Schools, 2013, 2013). Thus, the achievement gap continues to widen, a third of students (123,000) are underperforming, and graduation rates for CPS estimates to about 52% (Chicago Public Schools, 2013). Furthermore, African American students attending CPS have the lowest graduation rates and the lowest
growth rate across all racial groups (Chicago Public Schools, 2013). As a result of low graduation rates and increasingly high drop-out rates, an estimated average of one in two students graduate from this system, which is approximately 52.7% as reported in 2011 (Chicago Public Schools, 2013). However, the challenge is working together to meet the needs of students and reforming CPS and other schools systems across the board by increasing the academic success of not only African American students, but all students of color.

Scholarly research identifies many problems that exist in urban schools. These include unprepared teachers, disengaged/unmotivated students, increasingly high dropout rates, and widening achievement gaps, particularly among students of color. Ongoing efforts, academic recommendations, and educational reforms have attempted to address the academic achievement gap dilemmas, increasingly high drop-out rates, and the overall disengagement of students of color in urban schools (Baker, 2012; Schaffer, 2012). However, the issues listed above continue to exist in urban education, haunting the United States’ educational system, and challenging strategies concerning effectively eliminating or resolving these matters (Baker, 2012).

In order to improve the academic success of students of color, it is essential for educators, especially preservice teachers, to embrace cultural diversity, change their perceptions of students of color, and its influence on their teacher expectations (Darling-Hammond, Griffin, & Wise, 1992; Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Nieto, 2010; Schaffer, 2012). In addition, it is vital that educators discover ways to motivate and engage students of color in the learning process, and expose themselves to opportunities that will provide them with a holistic view of diversity, effective strategies, and teaching practices when teaching students of color (Baker, 2012; Banks & Grambs, 1972; Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Schaffer, 2012).
High dropout rates continue the cycle of underachievement among students of color (Baker, 2012). Baker reveals students’ voices from their own perceptions of school, and their own reasons for dropping out (Baker, 2012). On the other hand, Banks and Grambs (1972) discuss how it is important for students of color to know and understand their self-identity as students and as individuals in society. Scholarly research and studies show that once students of color know and understand themselves (define their self-concept), see positive representations of themselves in both society and in educational environments (think positively about themselves), and teachers’ expectations are high of them, it will motivate and increase their efforts in achieving more academically (Banks & Grambs, 1972; Howard, 2006; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992). It is also imperative that teacher educators and educators who teach culturally diverse students know themselves (are self-aware of their own biases), their perceptions of students of color, and how their perceptions can affect their expectations of these students (Banks & Grambs, 1972; Howard, 2006; Rosenthal, & Jacobson, 1992; Schaffer, 2012).

Lack of preparation from teachers who teach culturally diverse students is a serious reoccurring issue in urban education (Baker, 2012; Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Schaffer, 2012). In order to properly prepare teachers for urban schools it is vital to consider redesigning the teacher education curriculum (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Schaffer, 2012). Teacher education preparation programs should be designed in a way that prepare preservice teachers for multicultural classrooms and society, and stresses the importance of teaching and using materials that are culturally relevant (cultural relevant pedagogy), and incorporating multicultural perspectives in classrooms.
Studies show that culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally diverse curriculum engage and motivate students to learn (Baker, 2012; Banks, 1993; Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Nieto, 2010; Schaffer, 2012). Although, the redesigning of curriculum for teacher education programs is not the only answer for preparing preservice teachers for students of color, and decreasing dropout rates of unmotivated students, it is however, a significant start in tackling these educational concerns in urban education. The review of literature that is presented in the next chapter, examines recommendations and strategies to help teacher education programs better prepare preservice teachers and retain students of color in urban schools. The recommendations and strategies discussed throughout this review of literature are analyzed through the lenses of theory, policy, and practice.

The discourse of education and all aspects of it (i.e. administration, educators, pedagogy, and effective strategies) are all interrelated through theory, policy, and practice. Theory helps us to understand the background or historical perspective of an issue, policy provides us with a strategic plan(s), roadmap, or layout of what has happened in the past or currently happenings to improve efforts of all students, schools, educations, and administrators alike. Lastly, practice provides for us the different pedagogical methods of educators, used or mandated to assist with the improvement of learning capabilities of all students, especially those in underprivileged or underrepresented areas.

A strong detailed look at urban identity, federal mandated policies, and the implementation of a cultural diverse outlook (i.e. multicultural education, cultural competency,
cultural relevant pedagogy), are all interchangeable elements that can help redesign teacher education in a way that is more effective in preparing teachers for students of color. As a person of color, reflecting back on my own academic journey as a student of color, I came across five culturally competent teachers that demonstrated effective teaching strategies that are yet impactful today. At the time our paths crossed, I was unlearned of the technical linguistics of what they were doing; I just knew that I connected with them in some way. However, as I have researched and studied education and teacher education more in-depth, I can now relate and understand their philosophy, concepts, and ideas and it makes me appreciate them and their positive influence even more. I hope that all students will have the opportunity to experience learning with cultural competent teachers and effective teaching strategies that was introduced to me earlier in my academic career.

Redesigning teacher education to prepare more culturally competent teachers is one way to change urban education. Numerous research and studies argue that teachers who are culturally invested in their students’ learning, especially those in marginalized low-income urban schools, increase and/or improve student achievement. Although, there are other significant factors that contribute to education reform such as: school structuring, various early childhood interventions, curriculum change, and improving teacher effectiveness, I choose to focus on cultural competency and teacher education because of my own passions, interests, and personal story of my own academic journey.

**Research Problem**

Research shows that preservice teachers are unprepared to teach students of color (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Nieto, 2010; Pollack, 2012). As a result, students of color are not excelling
academically as much as their white counterparts, due to certain internal factors (i.e. learning
disability…etc.), external factors (socio-economic status, low-income, parental
involvement…etc.) in what Ladson-Billing (2001) describes as pseudo-psychological
explanations. For this reason, students of color are disengaged and dropping-out of school in
large numbers.

The purpose of this study is to present strategies and recommendations that would better
prepare preservice teacher for students of color. The following questions will be explored in
order to fully examine this topic.

1. **Central research question**: How would the redesign of teacher education programs
that include the utilization of cultural lenses, culturally relevant pedagogy strategies,
and multicultural educational frameworks, better prepare preservice teachers to teach
students of color?

2. **The thematic critical sub-question**: Are teachers unprepared to teach culturally
diverse students?

The next chapter is a review of literature. In this chapter, I examine literature that
discusses the internal and external factors that cause student disengagement and increased
dropout rates of African American students who attend urban schools. In addition, I will discuss
how teachers’ perceptions of students of color are critical to their expectations of them
academically, the importance of implementation of a cultural perspective in teacher education
programs, and the need to have better prepared teachers for culturally diverse learning
environments. The perspective from which I plan to answer the research questions, through the
review of literature, is from a student of color and female educator lenses. Chapter 3 will discuss
the methodological approaches that were used in this study and in the data collection process.
Chapter 4 will give an overview of responses from interviews, emerging themes found in those responses, and an analysis of those themes using CRT lenses. Chapter 5 will conclude the dissertation by explaining the findings and/or summarize main points; explain whether they support the hypothesis; whether they align with, or differ from, other researchers' findings; discuss limitations of the study; implications of the findings; provide practical applications and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The Black Self-Concept

Urban teaching is identity work. (Milner, 2010, p. 15)

**Who am I?** The struggle concerning African Americans’ identity has been a foreshadowing issue in history, literature, and scholarly discourse. Unfortunately, people of color are still finding ways to fit in or identify within a group in the dominant society. W.E.B. DuBois in his book, *The Soul of Black Folks*, describes an inner-struggle that exists in Black America. He calls the struggle of African Americans a double-consciousness, where culturally diverse people adopt to a dual reality. DuBois explains that the first reality is being a person of color, and the second reality is being American. The struggle comes in at trying to identify within their own culturally diverse group and dominant society without losing themselves in the process. DuBois’s notion of double-consciousness still haunts students and people of color today, as they are struggling with identifying themselves in a way that is socially acceptable. As a student of color, I often times questioned my own identity, and it was also challenged by family, friends, foes, peers, and colleagues. It was not until I studied my own cultural makeup and history that I realized that this trial (identity crisis) that I continued to face as an educated student of color is a reoccurring one throughout African American history. After discovering this reality, I began to understand why people of color struggled with their identity; as well as, being socially accepted in dominant society and in their own communities.

Banks and Grambs (1972) discuss numerous historical factors that make up the African American identity (self-concept) and the challenges that African Americans face, embracing the uniqueness of their own identity. One significant event that blueprinted the obstacles of inheriting a new identity for African Americans is the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. During this time, Blacks were encouraged to gain control of their schools, and the politics in
their communities (Banks & Grambs, 1972). Meanwhile, Black youth in particular pursued new identities that rejected Anti-Black labels or enforcements in exchange for a more expressible “Black is Beautiful” and “Black Power” perspective (Banks & Grambs, 1972). Due to the assassinations of strong powerful Black leaders of that time, African Americans seemed to have lost hope and gained more insecurity about themselves and fear of the unknown (Banks & Grambs, 1972; Kunjufu, 2002). Reality set in:

Blacks were still the last hired and the first fired. Their children attended the worst schools, and efforts for community control of black schools had been largely unsuccessful. Many teachers, both black and white, believed black youth could not learn on a par with white children. All of these events had an impact on the evolution of black identity. (Banks & Grambs, 1972, p. xii)

Therefore, the need to discuss African American identity is pivotal here, because there is a strong connection between education, society, and development of Black youth (Banks & Grambs, 1972). The discussion that follows will explain the relationship that exists between education, society, and Black youth development, which causes them to either denounce, develop, or embrace their self-identity (self-concept). In all, the factors that exist in the development of African American youth ultimately effects their educational opportunities, achievements, and other external factors that represent or misrepresent them in society (Banks & Grambs, 1972). As I reflect on my own academic journey, I remember five educators who strongly influenced my academic drive, perspective of life, and shaped my educational philosophy. Although three out of the five educators were Caucasian and/or of Caucasian influence, their effort to connect with me culturally in order to help me understand a particular skill and its connection to everyday life is one that I will never forget as I continue this academic
journey as a future scholar. All five educators, regardless of their skin color or mine, majored in my potential for academic success.

**Racial Identity**

If serious steps are not taken *immediately* to eliminate racism in America, we will not only fail to help black children develop positive self-concepts, but we may fail as a human society. (Banks & Grambs, 1972, p. 30)

Racism is one factor that has hindered many African Americans from achieving the American Dream (Banks & Grambs, 1972; Howard, 2006; Kunjufu, 2002). As a result, some African Americans have rejected their own identity in order to look for other avenues to create a new identity that will validate them in a way that is acceptable to dominant society. With much regret, African Americans have yet to this day found a categorization that makes them identical to both groups. Racism and racial prejudice must be attacked head on, and the racial attitudes of educators must change in order for Black youth to have a more positive self-concept of themselves (Banks & Grambs, 1972; Kunjufu, 2002). I can recall various accounts of experiences facing racism from teachers. The one occurrence that stands out the most vividly to me, is what I call *The Blabberman Experience*. Although a painful experience, I learned multiple lessons about racism, the impact or influence of teacher attitudes towards minority students, my assumed role as a student of color, and what it means to achieve academic success as a culturally diverse student. Even though, I hate to admit it my insecurities and self-discovery began at that moment, as I question that teacher’s integrity and motive. Mrs. Blabberman, a Caucasian female teacher, who worked at a school that was heavily populated with African American and Latino youth, would often rain onto us her frustration and heroism of teaching us assumed poor Black kids.
In order to help eliminate racism, and develop positive self-identities for Black youth, we must modify the racial attitudes of Whites, and White educators, and their perceptions of students of color (Howard, 2006; Kunjufu, 2002). On the other hand, if racism continues it will be challenging for Black youth to accept the meaning of Blackness, and in-turn create low self-esteem and insecurities that will eventually lead to self-hate (Banks & Grambs, 1972).

Hence, in order to change the racial attitudes of children we have to modify the racial attitudes of adults; since, youth are conformed in some way or another to the belief systems of both their teachers and families (Banks & Grambs, 1972; Howard, 2006). Teachers, along with parents are significant people in children lives, and their racial attitudes toward their students/children are a direct reflection of how children see themselves (Banks & Grambs, 1972; Howard, 2006; Kunjufu, 2002).

Ironically, every time I entered Mrs. Blabberman’s classroom on the rainy days, I felt inferior, inadequate, and incomplete. Mrs. Blabberman had a knack of comparing our learning environment to her son’s school. She would rant and rave about the location of the school, its beautiful edifice, and interior design. She would have us to believe that her son’s school met the standard of quality education and we would never reach that point of academic achievement. I almost felt like that school was the American Dream of education, and because attended a neighborhood school that I could not or did not meet the standard. When it rained, I always had an uneasy feeling in Mrs. Blabberman’s class. I would often times anticipate my next class, Social Studies, with Mrs. Jefferson. Although Mrs. Jefferson was a strict older African American woman and minister, she would make us appreciate our culture and imbed in us that we are somebody. Every time I left the rain in Mrs. Blabberman’s class, I knew sunshine was coming with Mrs. Jefferson. She taught us hope and that we as a people were rich in culture,
Despite the assumptions that was placed on our school, our community, and on us as a people.

Inspiration, encouragement, empowerment, and high expectations are what I felt in Mrs. Jefferson’s class. Despite, what Mrs. Blabberman thought of us, Mrs. Jefferson reminded me that “I am somebody!”


It is February a celebration, a celebration of Black History. Mrs. Jefferson was ecstatic and a little lenient, I might add, when February came around. I did not know at first what caused this excitement, but now I do, she was excited to teach us about our history as African Americans. Since January, she had forewarned us about our upcoming social studies report that was due at the end of February (Black History month). I was very ecstatic about the report I had no worries because I knew what I was writing my report on Dr. Martin L. King Jr. Yes indeed, everybody knew about him and I felt that I did not have that much to report because we learned about him EVERY February. Now, February is here I can whip up a nice little report and be done with it so I thought…. A week or two weeks before the report was due, I began to tell my mom about my report that I needed to write. I felt like it would cut down on the number of chores I had to do and help me focus more on my report. My mother was so happy that I was learning about my African American history and assigned to write a report on a significant
African American person. She asked, “So who are you writing your report on?” I said enthusiastically “Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.!” Silence entered the room abruptly and suddenly my mother said, “No, you will report on Mayor Harold Washington.” “Mayor Harold Washington?” I said. “Yes” my mother replied. “But mom I do not know much about Mayor Harold Washington, everybody knows about Martin L. King Jr. and it would be easier to report. If I report on Mayor Harold Washington I will need more time to research him,” I said pouting and with disappointment. “My point exactly, Mayor Harold Washington was the first black man to become mayor of Chicago. It is a lot of history to learn from that and I guarantee you not many students will write a report on him. Learn to be different Sabrina, be open to learn about other Blacks that made history and our culture” she responded. “I’ll be back,” she says as she leaves the room. As she returns, I see a newspaper clipping in her hand. “Look Sabrina” she says as she walks towards me smiling. “Here’s a newspaper article about Harold Washington this should help you find everything you need to know about your report. I saved this clipping for a reason,” she said. Reluctantly, I gave in to my mother’s request better yet demand and decided to report on Chicago’s first Black mayor, Mayor Harold Washington.

Finally, report day is here and by this time I am elated because I put in a lot of hard work, and eager to share it with my peers; meanwhile, awaiting to hear their reports as well. “Sabrina, you are next,” Ms. Jackson says enthusiastically as she is so proud of her students doing well on their reports. I walked up to the front of the classroom both anxious and excited. I pulled out my report, turned to the class, and said, “Hi my name is Sabrina Jones, and I am reporting on Mayor Harold Washington, the first Black mayor of Chicago…..” Silence fell in the room and my peers seemed to be very interested in what I had to say about Harold Washington. I looked up and Ms. Jackson was in the back of the room by the windows smiling at me and nodding her head in
agreement with the information that I reported on concerning Chicago’s first Black mayor. As I concluded my report, everyone clapped their hands in excitement because they were happy to gain information about someone that they did not know or learn much about in school. Both a relief and accomplishment I felt on this day, I am glad I listened to my mother and dared to be different.

Mrs. Jefferson was so proud of me after class she spoke to me, smiled, and said, “You exceeded my expectations.” I smiled at her because I was happy to have won her approval because we rarely saw Mrs. Jefferson smile. She was always very strict and preaching to us about something we needed to do, ponder on, or improve on in order to make us better people in society. “Sabrina you were the only one that reported on Mayor Harold Washington. I am glad because there are other significant African Americans other than the ones that are taught every Black History month. Dr. Martin L. King Jr., Rosa Parks, and Mary McCloud Bethune, are important but there are also others who contributed to the success and helped paved the way for Black people.” On that day, I knew Mrs. Jefferson cared because she had high expectations of her students and wanted us to strive as young scholars, as Black people, and as adults in society. Because of her positive energy and high expectations of me, I did not want to let her down I wanted to excel for her because she wanted me do excel not only in school, but also in life period.

On the other hand, my fifth grade experience (i.e. a critical year for all students, retention decisions, and intense parent teacher conferences…etc.), was very critical; it could have made me or damaged me as a student of color. It was not until now that I realized why fifth grade was so difficult for me. I also understand why I lost some peers along the way in my academic journey, which eventually resulted in our lives being changed forever. Mrs. Kyte, an elderly
Caucasian woman, and my fifth grade teacher said to me the last day of school, “You barely made it by the skin of your teeth.” I will never forget it.

Worksheets, worksheets all I remember is worksheets. I have never seen as much black and white in my life. All I remember is worksheets for class and worksheets for homework….and she had better have her worksheets done and completed as we entered the classroom the next day because it would be hell to pay if we did not. She was short in statute, but her disciplinary actions were as tall as Jolly Green Giants. I often times wondered about Mrs. Kyte’s motive in becoming a teacher. Did she choose the teaching profession as an opportunity to help all students or discipline and keep them busy until the school year was over? As of today, I yet feel she had her picks and chooses, but as a whole, something within me tells me she did not see much potential in students of color.

Water down curriculum and the recommendations of students of color intensively pursuing blue collar jobs have also been an issue in urban education. School counselors, particularly in urban schools, have encouraged Black students to derail from white-collar jobs and post-secondary schooling (i.e. college), and suggest that they consider blue-collar occupations (Banks & Grambs, 1972; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992). Moreover, negative stereotypes and discouragement have also played a part of Black children feeling inferior to other children (Banks & Grambs, 1972; Howard, 2006). Unfortunately, due to the negative perceptions, racial attitudes, and stereotypes given to students of color by White educators, studies show in a 1968 national survey, that African Americans often accept stereotypes given to them by dominant society (Banks & Grambs, 1972).

I remember the last day of school in the fifth grade, many of my peers were sad that they had to repeat the fifth grade next year. What an embarrassment to both the parents and students
alike. What a negative mark that left on their lives, as I have seen these same students eventually
dropping out by the time they reached high school or participated in detrimental activities that
left them pregnant, incarcerated, or dead. How could this happen, when fifth grade was as I
remember it, was all about state exams, worksheets, and strict discipline. How could this be?
Why was not this teacher’s pedagogy and curriculum put to question? Maybe these students
were just bored and/or intimidated which led to their misbehavior and incomplete assignments.
Because of Mrs. Kyte’s attitude, cultural disconnectedness, irrelevant pedagogy, and
overwhelming strict discipline many of these students of color suffered both academically and in
their personal lives.

In order to change the racial attitudes of children and adults, multiple strategies should be
considered. First, we must realize that racial attitudes change over time (Banks & Grambs, 1972;
Howard, 2006). Secondly, it is important to understand that teaching materials and approaches
can affect students’ racial attitudes and beliefs of themselves (Banks & Grambs, 1972; Howard,
2006; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Thus, curriculum plays a major part on how
students see themselves, how they see each other, and what does or does not affect their racial
beliefs both positively or negatively (Banks & Grambs, 1972; Jordan-Irvin, 2003; Kunjufu,
2002).

Mr. Costa, my Italian male tenth grade Economics teacher, was the first teacher that I can
remember to demonstrate culturally relevant pedagogy in my academic career. Mr. Costa would
begin his class asking about everyone’s day and somehow question what our likes were in
clothing, shoes, games…et cetera. I always wondered why he would hold this type of
conversation with us in the beginning of class. My initial thoughts were that maybe he was
trying to pass the time seeing that he knew that most of us (his students) were bored by the
subject matter. However, I see today that Mr. Costa had a plan, a plan that benefited both him and us in the end. Every time Mr. Costa wanted to teach us a particular skill or strategy in Economics he would use what we liked to help us connect our learning to our culture and everyday lives. At that time, most of us were into the various different versions of Michael Jordan gym shoes, Starter Jackets, and Sega Genesis game systems. I always found it interesting how Mr. Costa invested time to build a positive professional relationship with all of his students. He was genuinely interested in his students of color, their culture, their interest, and their perspective on life. He would often times make comparisons of what we thought (our prior knowledge) to that of a subject matter of dominant society to help us understand why Economics or any topic we discussed was relevant to our everyday lives. He always kept our interest when he tied things together in a relevant manner. At the time, I thought Mr. Costa was trying to win cool points with us. However, I later discovered that he was actually giving us a culturally relevant and multicultural outlook on life… now I can respect him for it. As a result, of his time, cultural sensitivity, and culturally relevant pedagogy, we all did well in his class.

Research and studies have proven the positive effects that multicultural curriculum have on students of color academic achievement, and racial beliefs. Curriculum of this type is vital in schools that are heavily concentrated with culturally diverse students, as it is one means to help them succeed academically. One reason multicultural curriculum is essential is because it helps students of color see themselves in a positive light (Banks, 1993; Banks & Grambs, 1972; , 1993; Banks & Tucker, n. d.; Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Milner, 2010; Nieto, 2010; Schafffer, 2012). Studies show that children exposed to a multicultural curriculum rather than a
monocultural curriculum increase their positive racial feelings towards culturally diverse children (Banks & Grambs, 1972).

Finally, workshops, committees, and other professional development opportunities concerning multicultural education and culturally relevant pedagogy are necessary to help change racial attitudes of educators that teach children of color (Baker, 2012; Banks & Grambs, 1972; Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Pollack, 2012; Schaffer, 2012). Effective strategies are needed to change the racial beliefs of adults, children, and educators in order for all children to receive a valuable holistic education, and succeed academically (Banks & Grambs, 1972; Darling-Hammond et al., 1992).

Hence, teacher education programs should consider incorporating the above recommendations to better prepare teachers for urban schools. Redesigning teacher education programs that include a multicultural approach will help in the progression of changing racial attitudes of both students and teachers (Banks & Grambs, 1972; Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Milner, 2010; Nieto, 2010; Pollack, 2012; Schaffer, 2012). Banks proposes the following recommendation: Colleges, and especially colleges of education, must implement effective programs to change the racial attitudes of their [preservice teachers] if we are to make any significant progress in enhancing the black child’s self-concept in the near future (Banks & Grambs, 1972, p. 26).

Overall, in order to make necessary changes in colleges, colleges of education, teacher education programs, and the educational system as a whole, it is essential that we transform the perceptions and biases of teacher educators (Banks & Grambs, 1972; Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Pollack,
Educators across the board must understand and fully embrace cultural differences, as well as, cultural competency in order to help students of color improve academically. Banks states,

If teachers are to help black and other *culturally different* children to think more highly of themselves, they must understand that there are many ways of living and being, and that whether a cultural trait is functional or dysfunctional is determined by the social setting and situation. (Banks & Grambs, 1972, p. 28)

For so long, cultural theorists have misled educators (teacher educators included) to think that if a student’s culture is not like theirs, than that student is culturally deprived, when indeed students of color have heavily invested rich and diverse cultural roots (Banks & Grambs, 1972; Howard, 2006; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Pollack, 2012).

In all, the over-arching question that concerns most is: what is the root cause of racism; particularly White racism, which effects and influences the perceptions of others especially those who are labeled as marginalized people and culturally different (Howard, 2006). Whatever is the root cause of racism should be unveiled because the source of it is a major reason for societal ills, and the basis for African American children low self-concept (self-identity) (Banks & Grambs, 1972). The Black self-concept (self-identity) and the effects of it; as well as, the influences of racism have been explained as factors that lower African American student’s self-esteem, and proven through research to also negatively affect their academic success in schools.

One thing that is crucial here is how we see ourselves as individuals, and the factors that play into one’s self-discovery. Banks describes this process of self-discovery as a social process. Self is a social process:
To the extent that the individual is a member of this community, its attitudes are his, its values are his, and its norms are his. His image of himself is structured in these terms. Each self, then, though having its unique characteristics of personality, is also an individual reflection of the social process. (Banks & Grambs, 1972, p. 56)

In addition, the metaphor looking glass adopted by Cooley is also another way to think about one’s self-discovery. For instance, Cooley’s suggestion of self as a looking glass is described as a three-principle outlook on one’s self-identity (Banks & Grambs, 1972). The three principles that Cooley describes are: “the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgment of that appearance; and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification” (Banks & Grambs, 1972, p. 56). Based on Cooley’s metaphor, youth of color assume the attitudes, values, and beliefs of the other (White racism and society). By doing so, this causes Black youth to see themselves through the looking glass, as White America sees them, which is inferior because of their race (Banks & Grambs, 1972). As a result, they gain a negative self-concept (identity) due to institutionalized racism, and other negative indirect factors from their own family and community beliefs, while continuing to perpetuate images of inferiority of themselves (Banks & Grambs, 1972).

Overall, the looking glass metaphor has and continues to destroy and defeat African American self-identity (Banks & Grambs, 1972). Many studies have taken place to examine youth of color’s negative self-identity, its effects on their functionality in society, and academic achievements, successes, and failures. The various conclusions from these studies are generally the same, and will be discussed more in detail later in this paper. In summary, these conclusions are that teacher expectations of students, adult expectations of children, self-fulfilling prophecies and Black youth struggle in order to make it in society (Banks & Grambs, 1972).
Thus, new frameworks in pedagogy are needed in order to engage students of color in a way that is relevant to their everyday lives. In addition, a redesigned curriculum should also help students gain positive attitudes and self-identity. Therefore, establishing policies that will ensure that their learning experience will exemplify connectedness and navigation in their daily present and future lives is crucial. Many policies have been reformed, but one nationally known sanction that has attempted to improve the academic experience and narrow the achievement gap for students of color, particularly in marginalized low-income environments, is the No Child Left Behind act.

**Academic Achievement Gap**

Achievement gap is a phrase that continuously becomes the source of all things academic, especially when it comes to explaining why some children succeed, and why others do not obtain academic success. It also symbolizes an umbrella that encompasses other relevant gaps (i.e. cultural gap, socio-economic gap, opportunity gap…etc.), which plays an intricate role on how the achievement gap is both created and widen especially in marginalized groups and communities. The achievement gap is a critical factor for the blame game phenomenon that has been in the discourse of public education for decades (Nieto, 2013). It is also a crisis and an issue that continues to shadow and effect marginalized groups, for having an equal opportunity in education (Nieto, 2013; Noguera, 2013; Phillips, 2006). In addition, it can be assumed that the achievement gap also exists because of hegemony and other educational hegemonic practices. Furthermore, issues around identity and identity perception present biases, especially cultural biases that are created when students of various ethnic backgrounds are challenged to meet the required standard that is automatically used to predict the rest of their academic success and/or failure.
I remember the fall of my junior year of high school, it was hot that day, and abruptly my math teacher announced, “Sign up for the ACT prep class, it will be held on Tuesday and Thursday evenings afterschool and on some Saturdays.” She went on to explain the how essential it was to take this course to help us prepare for college, and how we needed to obtain a certain score in order to be considered for admission. “I feel sorry for this generation because this is the beginning of the testing culture,” she said apologetically. Therefore, I gave in and for the next several weeks took the ACT course and practice exam afterwards. I anticipated on receiving my scores thinking I would do okay since I spent the past several weeks preparing for it. Finally, the scores came back, but I received below average scores on my exam. I felt really defeated and frustrated that I spent all this time preparing for the exam to come to discover that I did not score what was standard nor do I completely understand the material on the exam. I felt it was unfair and biased. However, I decided to retake the practice exam again at the next schedule date because this was something that I needed in order to go to college. Since, I was first generation to go to college in my immediate family; I wanted to do everything that I needed to be admitted to a college. I wanted to make my family proud but myself proud also.

One reason the achievement gap exists according to Leiding (2006) is:

When learning situations do not reflect the culture of the students, gaps exist between learning and performance. These gaps are greatest for students from ethnic cultures and communities that are not part of the mainstream culture and can militate against effective teaching and learning. (Leiding, 2006, p. 261)

Another reason, why gaps exist in student achievement is that most educators do not teach academic survival skills (Leiding, 2006). In addition, teachers’ attitudes and expectations of their students influence their approach to teaching in the classroom (Leiding, 2006). Therefore,
students respond to their teacher’s attitude and behavior, be it positive (believing their students can succeed) or negatively (believing that their students are destined to fail) (Leiding, 2006).

It was here again, practice exam number two, before the real exam later in the school year. I felt a little more confident this time in taking the exam. My teachers drilled into us the importance of the exam for entrance into a college or university. I was eager and just knew I would at least receive the standard score since I adequately prepared for the exam in various different ways. I took the exam again and waited for the results. The results came and I only scored one point higher than my last score. “Are you kidding me?” I said to myself. I felt like I wasted valuable time and that I was not smart enough to go to college. A few months later, it was time for the real ACT exam. I took two practice exams and a prep course; I decided this time around to go cold turkey that is how frustrated I became with this whole testing process. I took it again, later received the results, and scored three points higher than my original score. Although, I scored three points higher than my original score I still did not make the standard score. As I was feeling disgusted at this point I thought I would seek out a little encouragement or motivation from one of the teachers who administered the exam. I asked, “What can be done, do I have any other options, are colleges only looking at ACT scores or do they look at everything?” The response was “I suggest you apply to junior colleges because it will be hard to be admitted into a college or university with that score, you need to at least make standard to be considered.” After that response, I was torn about applying to college at this point. I felt that since I did not perform well on this required standardized test that I was not college material. The response that I received did not sit well with me, and I knew in my spirit that colleges and universities had to have had a more authentic approach and evaluation for accepting students. I decided to apply to some colleges and universities anyway just to see the outcome, but the
military was my focal point...so I thought. Overall, the key point in this discourse is that “There is no “one size fits all” test of intelligence or academic achievement” (Leiding, 2006, p. 255). If this is the case or a known fact then why is there only one approach to assessing all students, and why does the achievement gap continue to widen? It is imperative that we properly prepare preservice teachers for culturally diverse students in efforts to close the achievement gaps, and bring out the intellectually capabilities of all students.

How Does the Achievement Gap Widen? Who is Affected?

Standardized tests or high-stake testing is also another factor that causes achievement gaps to widen. “Why so many exams?” is a question that most educators, administrators, and students are asking in the field of education. Ollman (2012), Why So Many Exams? A Marxist Response, explains how exams actually teach us more than they test us because the system of education is already set up to work for some group of students versus others. For example, Ollman (2012) states:

exams have less to do with testing us for what we are supposed to know than teaching us what the other aspects of instruction cannot get at (or get at as well). To understand what that is we must examine what the capitalist class, who control the main levers of power in our society, require from a system of education. (p. 4)

In addition, Tamir (2011) explains this idea of gap preserves and how they are created to divide and protect the well-off educationally and economically. Tamir (2011) defines gap preserves as:

Processes…that allow social and educational improvements to occur yet preserve educational gaps in order to protect the advantage of the better off…this is one of the major achievements of public education, yet by raising the educational bar we have
reached neither equality nor equal opportunity. In each stage of progress, new kinds of educational advantage are redistributed in ways that preserve socioeconomic gaps. Such advantages—including the kind of schooling one enjoys, the level of teaching, the richness of the curriculum, and the reputation of educational institute—all serve in one way or another to draw a distinction between different kinds of educated individuals.

(Tamir, 2011, p. 404)

One group of students that is largely affected by the achievement gap are students of color. Scholarly research has discovered that the academic achievement gap continues to widen because of the impact of standardize tests on minority students, specifically, African American and Latinos who are greatly affected by this dilemma. Minority students are reported to have lower performance on standardized tests then their white counterparts. Factors that play into low performance on these tests are: fear, stress, and bias (Goodman & West-Olatunji, 2010; Ollman, 2012; Phillips, 2006). The fear that minority students face in taking these exams is due to the impact these tests have on their academic career. Furthermore, this fear does not only exist in students but in educators; as well, because their professional careers are determined by the results of their students’ academic performance. Moreover, the fear that is created holds everyone accountable and responsible for students learning, including the student.

After my sudden change of heart of joining the military, and after dealing with the rejection letters that I received from various different colleges, I noticed mail that kept coming in from a certain university. I wondered why this was happening since the lady (who was also a minority) by the name of Ms. Watkins who was also the director of a support program for minority students for this university, told me that I could not be admitted because I did not complete their matriculation program. I explained to her that I did not receive any information in
the mail concerning the program, my family and I just recently moved, and we were in a financial hardship at the time of enrollment. I pleaded with this woman and she totally dismissed me as if I was a liar and did not want to attend college. Her reaction to my plea and explanation crushed my spirit because I did not know at the time why she should react in such a way towards me, especially since she was a personal of color like me. I thought she would be more encouraging and helpful since I was doing my best to pursue a college degree. I will never forget this experience because it has taught and given me the drive I have today. Looking back, I assume now with all the policies that are currently underway that started at the time I was finishing up high school entering into college it must have been a lot of pressure on her to make sure students matriculate into her program, do well, and graduate from this university. I also assume that her job may have been on the line if they did not matriculate a certain amount of minority students and help them to successfully graduate. To say the least, I disregarded what she said to me and timidly followed all the necessary requirements that the university gave me to follow in order to be considered a student. I remember my last phase of the process because I encouraged myself to continue the phases and processes of becoming a new student. I thought that once I tried to register for classes and obtain my student I.D. that they will not find my name in the system. Ms. Watkins voiced haunted me as I debated if I should leave the campus or stick around to see if I could possibly be in the system. Anxiously, I decided to stay and complete the final process. Moments went by, and I was next in line the receptionist asked my name and general information. I reluctantly gave her my information. Suddenly she told me to wait to have my student I.D. picture taken and the next phase was to speak with an advisor to setup my first semester of classes. I stood still for a few seconds and the receptionist asked me was I okay, and I asked her “Is my name really in the system?” “Yes,” she replied smiling at me as if
she knew I was very excited to be a student at this university. All I wanted to do was scream to the top of my lungs; but I knew how inappropriate that would be so I screamed in my head “Thank you Jesus!!!” From that day to this one, I learned not to allow someone’s “NO” or people’s rejection of me to be my final answer in something that I want to achieve in my personal goals. Imagine, what if I had listened to Ms. Watkins and not pursued becoming a student at this university…I would probably be living with the regret of it all.

Ms. Watkins, received word that I was accepted into the university and she was floored. She had a very negative attitude towards me as if I intentionally did her wrong. At the end of my first semester, she pulled me to the side (in which I was not looking forward to based on her negative behavior all semester long), and apologized for her actions. She admitted to me, “Sabrina you did better than those who completed the summer program and I am sincerely sorry for the way I treated you.” What a moment of relief, I felt as I soaked in her words. I believe she learned through my experience that external factors could hinder educational opportunities for students. However, challenging external factors does not mean that students are intellectually incapable of becoming successful academically. I can honestly say that I forgave her, and that this was a lesson for both her and I.

Taubman (2009) explains the fear that standardize testing creates in the educational environment:

Tests constitute one way the educational reforms shock the educational system.
Extracting data from students, teachers and schools, [force] our noses to the bottom line. Keeping us under constant surveillance, they make us vulnerable to centers of control beyond our reach, and, providing the illusion of objective accountability and meritocracy, they reduce education to right answers and information. (Taubman, 2009, p. 53)
After reading the passage above, one may ponder on this thought: does the implementation and emphasis on testing a way to perpetuate a system of learning that dominates one group of people over others. In addition, does testing make our educational system hegemonic? Yes.

Traumatic stress is another factor that causes fear and low performance on standardized test among minority students (Goodman & West-Olatunji, 2010). The cause of traumatic stress is due to harmful influences of hegemony on minority student’s mental and physical health (Goodman & West-Olatunji, 2010). According to Goodman and West-Olatunji (2010) traumatic stress is oftentimes overlooked as behavioral problems. Researchers have found five common symptoms of traumatic stress, which are: re-experiencing, avoidance, arousal, internalizing behaviors, and externalizing behaviors (Goodman & West-Olatunji, 2010). Identifying this type of stress is vital for improving educational outcomes for African American and Latino students who are at greater risk of experiencing this trauma (Goodman & West-Olatunji, 2010). In sum, using the traumatic stress theory to reconceptualize student behaviors can significantly reduce misunderstood symptoms that most times contribute to the overrepresented amount of students in special education programs, and also explain the achievement gaps for African American and Latino students (Goodman & West-Olatunji, 2010).

Bias that occurs on standardized tests is another reason students of color are fearful and have low performance on these exams. Phillips (2006) identifies several biases that occur on tests and influence low performances on these exams. They are: language proficiency, a student’s culture and environment, and their cultural attitude towards testing in schools. Language proficiency plays a major role and in some cases the most important contributing factor of a student’s performance (Phillips, 2006). For this reason, many students are performing poorly on standardized test because they are not proficient in the English language (Phillips,
Secondly, a student’s culture and environment influences his or her test performance because test scores may reflect a student’s cultural background instead of his or her ability, and because of this, it is important to take into account the whole child when looking at test scores (Phillips, 2006).

Finally, one’s own cultural attitude which includes, but is not limited to, compelling school differences, prior testing experience, motivation, support system, racial discrimination, and family background can also affect test scores (Gifford, 1989; Phillips, 2006). Test scores are highly depended upon, as they report students’ results, their understanding of the material on the test, and predicting students’ academic future. For example, Koretz explains one way scholars, researchers, teachers, and the like interpret and understand tests. Koretz states:

Debate about American education has been dominated by scores on standardized tests for more than a quarter century. Test scores have been used to tell us that the achievement of the nation’s students has declined; that it is or is not improving again, depending on whom you listen to; that the gap between minority and majority students is or isn’t narrowing; and that our students do or don’t do well enough compared with students in other countries. (Koretz, 2008, p. 74)

Although Koretz (2008) expresses a wide-ranged view of how test scores are used as ways to understand and interpret student achievement, it is also important to have a wide-range of knowledge and understanding of what these test scores tell us about student achievement and academic failure. The most important questions to consider are: Are test scores reliable? Are test scores helpful to teachers? and Do test scores reflect significant differences among people? ("What's Wrong With Standardized Tests?", 2012).
In addition, test scores are also used to predict a student’s academic future. For example, Koretz (2008) states:

Admission officers use test scores to help them decide which applicants are most likely to succeed in college. Teachers use test scores to help diagnose strengths and weaknesses in students’ learning. Seemingly everyone—educators, parents, newspaper reporters, realtors—uses test scores to judge the educational performance of schools, states, and even countries. No Child Left Behind requires that test scores be used to determine which schools warrant sanctions. (Koretz, 2008, p. 215)

The reality is, is that high-stake testing is only one factor that influences student achievement but there are other various factors that influence student achievement, which are school structures, organizations, leadership, climate values, mandated policies, and practices (Leiding, 2006). Scholar Jaqueline Irvine (2010) notes that instead of focusing on the achievement gap that we should focus more so on the other gaps such as:

the teacher quality gap; the teacher training gap; the challenging curriculum gap; the school funding gap; the digital divide gap; the wealth and income gap; the employment opportunity gap; the affordable housing gap; the healthcare gap; the nutrition gap; the school integration gap; and the quality childcare gap. (Nieto, 2013, p. 8)

Until these gaps are addressed student achievement will remain substandard (Nieto, 2013). In addition, Darling-Hammond (2010) suggests that we focus more on what she calls the opportunity gap. Darling-Hammond (2010) defines the “opportunity gap” as “the accumulated differences in access to key educational resources—expert teachers, personalized attention, high-quality curriculum opportunities, good educational materials, and plentiful information resources—that support learning at home and at school” (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 28).
Finally, Nieto and Bode (2012) proposes that the expectation gap should be considered; as well, as it is “the expectation that students will perform based on others’ perceptions of their backgrounds rather than on their true ability” (Nieto, 2013, p. 12). In addition, the expectation gap of teachers often times impact how they are perceived to be, be it “effective, competent, and caring” (Nieto, 2013, p. 17), just to name a few. Moreover, the expectation gap is also similar to what Milner (2010) calls the identity-perception gap. Milner (2010) defines identity-perception gap between students and teachers in which teachers face two integral questions: who I think I am and who students think I am. Milner (2010) explains how this gap causes teachers to ask themselves the following questions out of anxiety that obstructs learning for both students and teachers:

• “Should I accept the validity of my students’ perceptions of me, or should I reject it?”
• “If I choose to reject their perception of me, on what grounds do I base that rejection?”
• “If I choose to acknowledge my students’ perception of me, how do I make sense of the gap between their perception and my perception?”
• “What might this gap suggest about me and my teaching?” (Milner, 2010, p. 17)

The identity-perception gap and the questions that are posed above will be discussed more fully in a later section.

In all, Darling-Hammond (2010) advises that in order to reduce achievement gap, students of color from low-income areas need more highly qualified teachers (Nieto, 2013). Administrators recruiting and employing more highly qualified teachers, and other members of the academy addressing various different gaps might be a start in challenging the academic achievement gap phenomenon; however, in order to fully tackle those issues and others, stakeholders and policy makers must be influenced to do so, for the right reasons.
No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

The federal mandate (NCLB) …the primary benefit is that schools are now forced to pay attention to those students who are not achieving and to disaggregate their achievement data by race, as well as other dimensions of difference. (Howard, 2006, p. 1)

According to the U.S. Department of Education website, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, section 101, named Title I-Improving the Academic Achievements of the Disadvantage, states that the purpose for this sanction is to increase the academic achievement of marginalized low-income students so that they can obtain a high quality education; as well as, proficiency on high-stake examinations. During George W. Bush’s presidency, he proposed an agenda to help close the achievement gap. The goal of NCLB is to improve the academic achievement of students of color from marginalized and poverty-stricken areas.

The meaning of NCLB is different for everyone that is involved in some way with this sanction. Nieto (2010) identifies three vital areas that the NCLB has affected either positively or negatively and they are: (1) Testing companies. There were million dollar profits for testing companies (Nieto, 2010); (2) Students spent long hours in intensive test preparation. Test-centered curriculum is lacking that of the arts and social science that is equally important for students and in some cases cut into their physical education time for extra help on test preparation strategies (Nieto, 2010); and (3) Teachers are under intensive overwhelming accountability measures: “For teachers, NCLB has meant extraordinary surveillance and an unmatched restriction of their autonomy. The climate for teaching has become increasingly hostile and, as a result, many excellent teachers have left, or are thinking of leaving, the profession” (Nieto, 2010, p. 18).

As a result, Nieto (2010) argues that NCLB has worsened the educational environments for students that it was expected to assist and improve academically. In addition, it has also
resulted in disengaged and unmotivated students. Extreme test preparation has caused competition between some students as, “…it is common for 20 to 60 days a year to be spent in test-preparation activities” (Nieto, 2010, p. 19). However, intense test-prep is or can be legal or illegal in some cases (Nieto, 2010). Furthermore, the dropping of students is also a result of NCLB (Nieto, 2010). In order to increase test scores, some “Administrators drop students by suspending [them], moving them to another school, or [making] them ineligible to take the test” (Nieto, 2010, pp. 18-19). 

In addition, Nieto (2010) provides three reasons why NCLB does not work, adopted from an article: “Why High Stakes Accountability Sounds Good But Doesn’t Work—And Why We Keep on Doing It Anyway” by Mintrop and Sunderman (2009). Three reasons why NCLB does not work according to Mintrop and Sunderman (2009) are:

(1) student achievement has not improved and there has not been any positive effects on schools or students; (2) inaccurately identifying schools that need the most help; (3) sanction has failed to persuade and or convince teachers on its importance and why its meaningful. (Nieto, p. 20, 2010) 

On the other hand, a Common Core (2009) Study-found that other countries do not spend as much time as the U.S. does on test-preparation, as they feel that curriculum should be balanced and include the arts, geography, foreign languages…etc. (Nieto, 2010). As a result, they do better academically and are more advanced than the U.S. (Nieto, 2010). Unfortunately, students who suffer the most from the NCLB are Latinos and African American students (Howard, 2006; Nieto, 2010; Nieto, 2013; Noguera, 2013). One reason why students of color suffer most from this federal mandate is that they are disengaged with test preparation curriculum. Regrettably, the effects of NCLB has constricted curriculum to focus more on areas
that are going to be tested leaving little room for creativity and student engagement (Nieto, 2010).

**Effects of NCLB.** The effects of NCLB have been alarming. According to research, its impact on educational learning environments continues to raise concerns that negatively and/or ineffectively influence pedagogical practices. The impact of NCLB has questioned the relationship between the achievement gap and NCLB’s purpose and goal. Howard (2006) believes that because of the effects of NCLB and the determination of parents and educators of color “…we are now paying more attention to the race-based academic achievement gap in our nation’s schools” (Howard, 2006, p. 2). In contrast, Howard (2006) states, “Some teachers, politicians, and educational leaders, wishing to avoid or minimize issues of race, would prefer to attribute the achievement gap to socioeconomic differences alone” (p. 2). In addition, Howard argues “…the NCLB legislation places little or no emphasis on increasing the cultural competence of teachers to work effectively with children from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds” (Howard, 2006, p. 1; National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force, 2004). Overall, Howard claims:

…if we as a nation fail to raise the cultural competence of our teachers to work effectively with diverse students, then the entire reform effort becomes merely a hollow exercise in futility. The politics of accountability have certainty intensified, but deep engagement and financial investment in authentic issues of pedagogical transformation are still missing. (Howard, 2006, p. 2)

Diversity is not an option because it will continue to confront and challenge us, as it increasingly and strongly presents itself in public school systems, especially urban schools, now and in the near future (Howard, 2006).
The ultimate goal of NCLB is to narrow the achievement gap and increase the academic performance of marginalized students. It is proven throughout scholarly research that it has not, and still has not positively affected student achievement. Even though, NCLB was designed to help eliminate and address the academic achievement gap that exists among students of color, it is argued throughout scholarly research to be unsuccessful (Howard, 2006; Noguera, 2013). Noguera identifies two important goals in NCLB that he considers significant: “students should be educated at higher academic standards and those responsible for educating them should be held accountable” (Noguera, 2013, p. 1). Hard work and teacher accountability exists far beyond slogans, raising test scores, and increased accountability in public education (Noguera, 2013). Noguera (2013) argues because of the demand of commitment and work needed to close the achievement gap, NCLB has failed and continues to fail to meet the basic needs of students. In addition, Noguera (2013) argues that because of increased dropout rates in big cities like Chicago, New York, Boston, and Los Angeles the mayors in these cities have demanded control of this issue in public schools, but have not presented a detailed explanation of what they should be accountable for, if these issues continue. A broadening of NCLB’s approach, scope, and purpose is needed in order to raise standards and student achievement of culturally diverse students in struggling schools (Noguera, 2013). Noguera (2013) suggests the following:

(1) responding to the non-academic needs of poor [students]”; (2) “hold state governments accountable for maintaining high standards in schools”; (3) “hold high ranking public officials accountable for addressing the needs of low performance schools”; (4) “make schools more responsive to the parents and families they serve through the [representation] of systems of mutual accountability”; (5) “involve teachers in mentoring and evaluating their peers. (Noguera, 2013, pp. 2-3)
Although, NCLB was put in place to help narrow the achievement gap, it has flaws in obtaining this goal (Nieto, 2010; Nieto S., 2013; Noguera, 2013). It could be beneficial to improve the practice and creditability of teachers, in order to address some of the fallacies or limitations of the federal mandate (Baker, 2012; Banks & Grambs, 1972; Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Nieto, 2010; Nieto, 2013; Pollack, 2012; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992; Schaffer, 2012; Thernstrom & Thernston, 2003).

In sum, federal policies affect both teaching and learning (Nieto, 2013). Nieto (2013) reports that the culture of testing has changed the validity of teaching and learning for both teachers and students, especially for schools that lack resources in underprivileged neighborhoods. Under-resourced schools have by far been the most affected by the testing culture and federal mandates (Nieto, 2013). Since the passing of NCLB, both students and teachers have been in a web of concern around educational policy in which they are falling victim (Nieto, 2013). What was once considered a respectable occupation is now criticized by many in the public eye (Nieto, 2013). The blame game continues and teachers as well as students of color suffer the most (Nieto, 2013). While, there are some teachers who really do not care about their students’ academic performance, they are also a good percentage of them that do care about their students, work diligently to make sure their students succeed, and are very knowledgeable of the flaws in educational policy; as well as, use positive strategies that can help all students learn (Nieto, 2013).

Darling-Hammond et al. (1992) offer seven propositions that will change the framework of teacher education, and if taken seriously, produce excellence in teacher education. In congruence with the purpose, goals, and flaws of NCLB and its efforts to hold teachers more
accountable for students’ academic achievement, there are several propositions that directly reflect the purpose of NCLB. Although there are seven propositions, the following propositions should be taken into account, and looked at more closely when reflecting the work of NCLB, and redesigning teacher education curriculum in the near future.

First, proposition one suggests that teacher education programs should become more intensive (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992). Proposition one, as it relates to NCLB, recommends the need for improvement in teacher education that will benefit both students and teachers. The review of literature suggests that teachers are unprepared to teach students of color, especially those in marginalized urban areas. Therefore, incorporating into the teacher education curriculum a component that addresses this issue, could possibly help increase student achievement, as well as, better prepare teachers for students of color (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992). Secondly, Proposition five suggests that more accountability will be given to teachers that demonstrate effective teacher pedagogy (professionalism) and their ability to produce effective educational results (increased student academic achievement) (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992). Proposition five, as it relates to NCLB today, has given teachers more accountability; however, there are still gaps in student achievement especially as it relates to students of color versus their White counterparts. In addition, the accountability measures of teachers, has caused authentic teaching to dissipate, and created a testing culture that disengages and discourages students, especially students of color (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Nieto, 2010; Pollack, 2012). Finally, Proposition six and seven combined discuss how teacher salaries, working conditions, and teacher clientele will determine who will teach and the type of students they will teach (less fortunate students/underprivileged students) (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992). Proposition six
and seven combined, as they relate to NCLB, demonstrate the need for more attention to be given to students of color in marginalized low-income learning environments. However, studies and various research shows that the effect of NCLB has either hindered or failed to improve the academic achievement of all students. Meanwhile, it has also increased the accountability and pressure for stakeholders, administrators, and educators by implementing a testing culture that approves or denies schools’ funding, jobs, and instructional resources based on student academic performance.

A more recent initiative that schools are adopting now is the Race to the Top Program. According to the Race to the Top Executive Summary, The Race to the Top Program (RTTT) initiated in 2009 through the Obama administration, which President Obama signed a law called the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), is thought to lay the foundation of educational reform and supports initiatives that work to improve the educational attainment of all students. ARRA affords the Race to the Top fund, a very competitive grant that rewards States approximately $ 4.35 billion that have demonstrated effective educational reform, success in raising student achievement, closing academic achievement gaps, and increasing high school graduation rates, and ensure college readiness and career success (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

Although the RTTT has similar concerns as the NCLB, it also raises concerns as it questions the effectiveness of turnaround schools, and the focus of concentrating on increasing student achievement and merit-based school initiatives for educators, and administrators based on student performance and student growth. For instance, the Great Teachers and Leaders section of the RTTT executive summary explains extensively the criteria that it takes to ensure that schools have and are engulfed with teachers and administrators that are considered in their
terms effective educators and school leaders. This section is important when considering the implementation of a cultural approach to teacher education programs because it relates more to the improvement of teacher education programs, addressing the need for support for both teacher and principals, and providing teachers of all students especially those attending urban schools the access of qualified highly effective teachers. The Reform Plan Criteria of the Great Teachers and Leaders section of the RTTT executive summary suggests that it will develop and provide educators and educational leaders with professional development, coaching, and instructional support that is relevant. In addition, it states that compensation will be given based on merit and performance along with additional responsibilities to be considered highly effective. Are we losing focus of what is important by compensating schools based on merit and student performance?

The reform plan also expresses how it will remove ineffective teachers and principals both (tenured and untenured) after given numerous opportunities to improve based on rigorous standards and procedures. If teachers and administrators are not properly trained, is it fair to remove them because they fail to show improvement based on standards? Next, the reform plan also promises to develop a plan that guarantees the fairness of distribution of highly effective educators and administrators in urban schools that have high poverty and are highly populated with culturally diverse students. However, the real concern is what is defined as highly effective, and will it engage students from urban environments to learn and embrace these pedagogically practices as an authentic means to help them academically or improve student achievement as a whole. Lastly, the reform plan also mentions improving both teacher and principal preparation programs. The bases of improvement of these preparation programs, according to the plan, are to connect student achievement with student growth. The idea is to accredit teacher and
principal preparation programs based on students’ performances (i.e. student achievement in relation to student growth), (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Student performance is the key RTTT uses to determine who and what teachers and administrators are highly effective. Even though, student performance should always be a primary factor of determining teachers and administrator’s effectiveness, it should not be the only factor to determine what is or is not effective for students. While, redesigning or improving teacher preparation programs other elements should be included as well such as: teachers’ attitudes, perceptions, and cultural awareness/sensitivity/ignorance to others outside of their own cultural identity.

Whereas, the plan for reform in this section talks a good game, will it be enough to change teacher educators’ perspectives on how to teach preservice teachers, and how they should engage in conversation about their own bias, beliefs, concerns, and its possible impact on their future task at hand? How will schools implement these reforms and what are the REAL goals and purposes… compensation and merit or improved learning environments and increased student achievement? Educational policies now seem to emulate education as a moneymaking business more so than education as a way to create productive citizens of the world.

Overall, if we embrace the seven propositions offered by Darling-Hammond et al. (1992) as they relate to NCLB and RTTT,

…we can evolve this teaching enterprise into a profession. The importance of professionalization is not to aggrandize teachers, but to create a teaching force that will meet the needs of the student population, while also preparing America to face the next millennium. (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992, p. 51)

Although, the seven propositions are clearly not the only way to improve teacher education, it could be a start in critically addressing the gaps, policies, and practices of both teaching and
learning. A question to ponder is: What is more important, learning a formal curriculum to help students pass high-stakes tests or breaking down the barriers of the identity-perception gap, in order to understand students’ and teachers’ perspectives so that REAL learning can begin? One method that is proven through research to help meet the educational needs of students; particularly students of color, is multicultural education and culturally relevant pedagogy.

**Practice**

Focusing on teachers and prospective teachers…is even more urgent today than it was in [the past]. (Howard, 2006, p. xvii)

For years I saw the structures of schools and society, rather than the influence of teachers, as the primary reason for student failure. (Nieto S., 2010, p. 30)

Colleges and universities must develop post-baccalaureate programs of study aimed at improving the teaching practice of experienced teachers. School systems must rethink conventional in-service and staff-development opportunities. Teachers must demand challenging learning opportunities from both of these settings as well as require that their colleagues, new and experienced, participate and invest in their own continued learning. (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992, p. 41)

**The Cultural Eye**

Higher education institutions are realizing that although they seek to prepare students for a globalized world that faculty themselves need to be prepared and equip to both meet and address this challenge (Mayo & Lark, 2009). In other words, the reality is, is that educators must fully embrace cultural differences, and become culturally competent in order to help students of color improve academically. Scholars mention throughout various texts this idea and ability to see education with a cultural eye. Jordan-Irvine (2003) describes the cultural eye in ways that pertain to African American teachers; however, the concept of the idea can be applied to all educators especially those interested in teaching students of color. For instance, Jordan-Irvine (2003) explains how the cultural eye is:

- associated with culturally specific ways in which African American teachers see themselves…using the metaphor of sight or vision, that researchers and African
American teachers both view their world and their work from the perspective of their cultural eye… researchers should learn to use their “third eye” to (a) understand the perspectives of African American teachers and how their views of themselves and their practice influence African American students’ achievement, (b) envision new ways of closing the gap between Black and White students’ achievement, and (c) see that the problem of the achievement gap reflects a much larger and intractable problem of race and racism in America. (Jordan-Irvine, 2003, pp. 28-29)

The purpose of the cultural eye is to ensure that the influence of culture is an integral part of both the teaching and learning process, (Jordan-Irvine, 2003). Preservice teachers can benefit from viewing education with a cultural eye because it creates a solid foundation for both students and teachers (Banks, 1993; Banks & Tucker, 2013; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2001).

Educators, who understand and develop a set of cultural characteristics, promote effective teaching experiences especially for students of color (Banks & Tucker, 2013). In addition, educators who possess these cultural characteristics can help students learn, perceive, and embrace educational ideologies and moral belief systems of others (Banks, 1993; Banks & Tucker, 2013; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2001). One way to challenge ideologies and moral belief systems of teachers, especially those who teach students of color, is to redesign teacher education programs and create professional development opportunities for preservice and in-service teachers that includes a multicultural/culturally relevant approach (Banks, 1993; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Mayo & Lark, 2009). Many scholars believe that the reshaping of teacher education programs would train preservice teachers to challenge their own perspectives, while exposing
them to new experiences, realities, and lived experiences of students of color. However, in order to restructure schools it must start with teacher education (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992). In addition, Darling-Hammond et al. (1992) suggest that in the process of reforming teacher education it is critical to meet the basic needs of students. Moreover, it is important to also recognize and acknowledge key strategies that are successful in teaching youth of color (Ladson-Billings, 1994). In addition, document or reflect on preservice teachers’ journeys, experiences, and challenges in culturally diverse classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 2001). By doing the previously mentioned, it will also help identify issues, topics, and themes that are needed for further research. In sum, it is important to note the initial influence of teachers on students begin with teachers’ perceptions, expectations, and racial attitudes (Banks & Grambs, 1972; Banks & Tucker, 2013; Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Goodman & West-Olatunji, 2010; Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Leiding, 2006; Milner, 2010; Nieto, 2010; Nieto, 2013; Pollack, 2012; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992; Schaffer, 2012; Thernstorm & Thernston, 2003).

I remember eighth grade vividly, and what I remember the most about it was my English teacher who nurtured my love for the subject English Language Arts. Ms. Love, an older Caucasian woman, nurtured my interest for English, she encouraged me to pursue and work at becoming a strong reader and writer. She never turned me away when I had questions and/or concerns; she worked with me until I fully understood the skill or concept that I needed to grasp for each lesson or assignment. Occasionally she would tell me “Sabrina, you are really good at this subject…keep up the good work.” Ms. Love taught me the importance of showing students that teachers care and their obligation to nurture the gifts and talents that they see in students. Despite Ms. Love’s race, she showed me there are good teachers in the world and race does not
matter when demonstrating good teaching skills. Its effective strategies, teaching with care, and nurture that students need the most in order for them to do well academically. I always knew it was something about Ms. Love that made her a phenomenal teacher in my eyes, now I understand that it was her positive attitude and perception of the students she taught who were mostly youth of color. For an older Caucasian woman, she surprised me by her attitude and perception of students of color. Because of her impact, I majored in English in college for both my undergraduate and graduate degrees. As she is laid to rest, I would like to acknowledge her and say, “Here is to you Ms. Love, thank you for your help in shaping my academic journey.” In recognizing the significance of teachers’ attitudes, perceptions, and cultural awareness towards students, it is also vital to identify other factors that create gaps (i.e academic achievement gaps, cultural gaps...etc.) between students and teachers, that also hinders learning environments.

**Identity-Perception Gap**

As teachers negotiate classroom relationships with youth across cultural, gender, linguistic, racial, sexual, and socioeconomic differences...identities get exposed, deconstructed, and disrupted in the classroom as a matter of routine (Milner, 2010, p. 15).

Often times teachers question their identity and how they are perceived by students. The notion of identity is usually discussed in terms of teens and adolescents finding themselves or going through an identity crises. However, the reality is, is that teachers also struggle with identity issues as well (Milner, 2010). Critical questions that are proposed to teachers are:

> [W]hat does a teacher do when the identity she understands herself to possess is not affirmed in her relationships with students? What happens to those relationships when there is a gap between who teachers think they are and how others perceive them? How should they make sense of this “identity-perception gap? (Milner, 2010, p. 16)
The questions above are critical concerning the identity-perception gap, and all of them are important when developing a culturally diverse classroom. As such, it is important to thoroughly examine and consider the identity-perception gap, and how it affects teachers’ reactions to it, challenges their self-esteem as individuals, professionals, and teachers of urban students (Milner, 2010).

Teachers struggle with the balance and notion of developing positive relationships with students (teacher of people), and being a teacher of subject matter (teacher of content), which creates vulnerability between both students and teachers in the learning environment (Milner, 2010). The gap between “who I think I am” and “who students think I am” (Milner, 2010, p. 17), causes anxiety with teachers, which creates tension in the learning environment (Milner, 2010). As a result, power struggles may occur when teachers feel what they have put in is not respected or acknowledged by students in their classrooms (Milner, 2010).

Throughout the power struggle between students and teachers, various obstacles arise, and often times create resistance between students of color and white educators. Students of color develop resistance towards White educators when they have a certain perception of that particular teacher (Milner, 2010). In other words, the resistance towards the teacher is based on the perceived identity that a teacher displays.

It was my sophomore year of college, and I decided to take an African American course to learn more about the history of my cultural make up in society. I was elated about the course and anticipated my first day of class. Finally, it was here, my first day of class I rushed to it greeted my fellow peers and waited patiently for the professor to walk through the door. Moments later before class begun, a Caucasian male walked in and headed towards the front of the lecture hall. As he walked towards the room, I said to myself, “I know he is not the teacher
for this course. What does he know about African American history?” When he reached the
front of the room, he sat his bag down and said, “Good afternoon, my name is Dr. Whiteside and
I am the professor for this course.” I was totally blown away, shocked, and a little disappointed
because I was not expecting somebody that was not a person of color to teach me about my own
history. After the initial shock, I decided to give him a chance, but he better come through
because if not I would be disappointed in him and at this university for having him teach this
course. After several classes, I took a liking to Dr. Whiteside and it further gave me the unction
to ask him why he taught the course. Apprehensively, I made an appointment to see him. On the
day of the appointment, I prayed on my way their trying to figure out a way to ask this man why
he was interested in teaching African American history especially without being a person of
color. I arrived to Dr. Whiteside office, and I began to tell him how I really enjoyed his course
and learning about my history as an African American. Eagerly, I asked him, “Dr. Whiteside
what made you want to teach African American history, especially since you are not a person of
color?” I apologize quickly, and unknowingly, in case if I were offensive with my question.
Shockingly, he was not offended by the question but happy that I got up enough nerve to ask
him. He smiled at me and said, “Sabrina, why would I not be excited to teach African American
history and literature? African Americans contributed a lot to the history of this country and
have the best and most interesting literature out there. Not all white people are bad, you have
those of us who support the work and history of African Americans and that is why I chose to
teach this course subject.” At this moment, I felt proud that I asked Dr. Whiteside about his
interest about teaching African American history and literature. His response gave me more
respect for him and helped me to realize that some people are interested in the history of my
people. It further helped me not to prejudge a person (even a professor) by the color of their skin
or react negatively because they teach particular courses. His positive attitude and response gave me a different insight on Whites, education, my history, and the world. Dr. Whiteside helped me to understand the significance of my culture and exposed me to my very first cultural experiences. I can say without a doubt that Dr. Whiteside was one influential person that influenced my decision to pursue African American Studies as a second major. He definitely opened my eyes to culture (what it means to be cultured), cultural awareness (how to become informed, open, or respectful to others’ cultural difference), and cultural sensitivity (how to be sensitive to cultural difference).

Despite how students perceive their teachers, once the identity-perception gap is revealed, it affects effective teacher practices, classroom management, and student achievement. Milner describes the impact of teachers’ awareness of the identity-perception gap and why the impacts of it are strong:

Once the identity-perception gap is exposed, relational dynamics, emotional reactions, and identity politics may displace pedagogy in the mind of the teacher. Without opportunities to unpack the meaning generated in those exchanges, teachers’ confusion and vulnerability may influence forms of decision making that foreclose relational connections with students that could lead to deeper understanding of their needs. For this reason, the identity-perception gap reveals not on the fragility of teachers’ identities but the necessity to provide support for those facing stark differences between their self-understanding and how they are perceived by their students. (Milner, 2010, p. 25)

For this reason, the gap that exists in the identity-perception gap “...leads to confusion, insecurity, and an inability to act decisively” (Milner, 2010, p. 28). In all, how can teachers fully address this issue if they are unprepared to do so?
As a result, the attitude that students’ perceptions do not matter is used as a way to critique the identity-perception gap. Viewing the identity-perception gap in this manner supports other teachers, who feel uncomfortable with this concept, and it is used as a way to examine reactions of other teachers’ differences to this notion (Milner, 2010). However, reactions to the differences in the identity-perception gap can vary. The reality is, is that a dialogue is needed for teachers’ to practice and negotiate the meaning of the identity-perception gap (Milner, 2010). If a discourse is created among teachers about identity-perception gap, it could possibly veer away from some of the so-called negative factors of it, and possibly be examined in a positive matter.

The identity-perception gap can be viewed positively, if it is thought to be an opportunity of growth. While, embracing the identity-perception gap as an opportunity of growth, it is also important to raise questions that will reveal or test teachers’ vulnerabilities, pedagogy, and opinions of students, as well as themselves. In addition, understanding the identity-perception gap in a positive way will allow room for diversity to be embraced in the classroom (Milner, 2010). For example, Milner states:

the identity-perception gap offers opportunities for deep engagement with which teachers are as the educators of their specific youth. Viewing the gap as a resource puts teachers and students in relationship with each other’s intersubjective experiences so that they may validate the authenticity of each, giving both parties the agency they need to learn. This may eventually allow for a deeper appreciation of diversity to flourish. (Milner, 2010, p. 33)

Unfortunately, it is difficult to embrace diversity when perceptions of other people are negative, and teachers (especially those from the dominant culture), are unlikely to work towards equity for all students when they feel some of them are a threat to society (Milner, 2010). Ultimately,
the goal should be working towards diversity and equity for all students, which not only depends on our ability as teachers to see them as people, but to also relate to them as if their perceptions are real (Howard, 2006; Milner, 2010). In order to do the above, educators must be prepared to do so and have high expectations of their students despite their racial or cultural backgrounds.

**Teacher Expectations**

Teacher expectations influence student achievement both positively and negatively. Moreover, undervaluing student potential is a huge problem regardless of race (Ferguson, 2003). It is important that we equip teachers to set higher expectations for students, especially those who are from marginalized groups (Ferguson, 2003). If we do not prepare teachers to set higher goals for students it is a both a social injustice and waste of potential for human beings (Ferguson, 2003). Rosenthal and Jacobson (1992) believe that teacher expectations affect the way students perform academically in the classroom. As a result, students may develop and fulfill a self-prophecy based on the expectations and/or perceptions that teachers may have towards them (Ferguson, 2003; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992). The belief is that if teachers have high expectations of students, students will perform on a higher level academically (Ferguson, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992). In contrast, if teachers’ expectations are low or nonexistent, students perform lower academically (Ferguson, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992). Consequently, bias plays an integral part on the influence of teacher expectations (Ferguson, 2003). Ferguson (2003) notes how various types of bias such as: (1) unconditionally race neutral, (2) conditionally race neutral, and (3) unobserved potential all affect how teachers perceive students academically. The first type of bias is described as unconditionally race neutral, which causes educators to become unbiased towards black and white students and expect on average the same from each group (Ferguson, 2003). Secondly, the
conditionally race neutral bias is described as educators observing and expecting students to have the same academic performance (i.e. same grades and test) based on their prior academic results (Ferguson, 2003). Finally, the third type of bias racial neutral conditioned on potential (unobserved potential), is described as educators having the same expectation of black and white students based on potential that is initially unobservable (Ferguson, 2003). It is important to consider how high expectations of students are essential to the preparation of preservice teachers, and for the expectation of high academic attainment of culturally diverse students. In addition, it is essential to provide both positive and negative effects of high and low expectations of teachers plus other factors such as cultural bias that can negatively affect educators’ expectations and perceptions of youth of color. It is necessary to identify how high expectations of students are culturally impactful.

The implementation of high expectation of students demonstrated in culturally relevant ways is by educators first acknowledging their own biases, reflect and identifying ways (i.e. personally investment in learning how to see culture through personal reflection, professional development…etc.), while striving to accept the fact that all students can learn (Ferguson, 2003; Howard, 2006; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2001). In addition, educators need to separate their students’ academic potential from their academic performance. For example, educators should not underestimate students of color potential because of their academic performance (Ferguson, 2003). Educators should not water down curriculum but engage students by making relevant connections to their learning and allow room for student voice to be created, developed/nurtured, and matured (Baker, 2012; Chou, 2007; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994). The use of culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogy, and a strong emphasis of student-centeredness, student engagement, and student motivation are also examples of high
expectations being implementing in culturally diverse ways (Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Nieto, 2010). The suggestions above all have strategies and techniques that incorporate factors of demonstrating high expectations of students and increasing student achievement among culturally diverse students. However, it is important that we confront, deal with, acknowledge, and recognize that teacher expectation and perception of students initially happens and develops in teacher education programs.

Teacher preparation is key to understanding the importance of educators’ execution of high expectations to students of culturally diverse backgrounds (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Ferguson, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Pollack, 2012; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992). In other words, we must prepare to eliminate issues that create the cycle of them occurring or re/occurring, which causes students to fail academically. Thus, one’s expectancy determines one’s performance. Therefore, positive expectations produce positive performance (Ferguson, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992). Positive expectations generate encouragement and motivation, which decreases both anxiety and insecurities in students (Ferguson, 2003; Goodman & West-Olatunji, 2010; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992).

Hence, teachers’ expectations are formulated the first day of school, and students are judged by their backgrounds and their personal baggage they bring with them into the classroom (Banks & Grambs, 1972; Ferguson, 2003; Howard, 2006; Kunjufu, 2002; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992). Often, teachers of students of color, especially those in low-income areas, have low expectations of students (Howard, 2006; Kunjufu, 2002; Pollack, 2012; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992; Schaffer, 2012). However, the questions that should be asked out of concern are: Why is
that possible? How is that possible? and What will be done to eliminate the problem of school failure of urban children?

As mention in an earlier section, the No Child Left Behind Act, which is a variation of the Elementary and Second Education Act of 1965, was set in place to improve the academic efforts of children in marginalized areas (Howard, 2006; Nieto, 2010; Nieto, 2013; Noguera, 2013; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992). In addition, the Race to the Top initiative is currently in place to help schools, help students improve academically. However, the reasons for school failure that are noted by various scholars are socioeconomic, cultural, and linguistic factors. Early training of teachers and the understanding of cultural difference should be the primary focus of academic achievement for students of color (Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992). Studies show that teachers’ attitudes are a contributing factor that causes the lack of success for students of color. In addition, White students and students of color approach to learning is vastly different. White middle-class students are competitive and individualistic, and students of color are more nurturing in their learning (Ferguson, 2003; Howard, 2006; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992). However, Ferguson (2003) discuss how there has been a decline in belief that African American students are intellectually inferior to their White counterparts over the years. In addition, the underestimation of potential of students of color is a huge problem on how these students are perceived by teachers, which effects their expectations of them. Ferguson (2003) notes:

Underestimation of potential is undoubtedly a major problem, irrespective of race. It is a major waste of human potential and a social injustice that we do not give teachers the incentives and supports they need to set, believe in, and skillfully pursue higher goals for all students, but especially for African Americans and other stigmatized minorities.
Because we underestimate potential, the payoff to searching more aggressively for ways of helping children would surely be higher than most people imagine. (Ferguson, 2003, p. 468)

Even though, there are programs to help low-income students increase their academic performance, the reality is, is that in order to fully expect change we must address the core factors (internally and externally) that prevent students from succeeding academically.

Teachers’ expectations and perceptions of disadvantaged students develop as early as kindergarten (Ferguson, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992). As mentioned before, some variables that contribute to a students’ low performance in school are teachers’ low expectations of students, test scores, standardized testing, racism, frequent removal from class due to misbehavior just to name a few (Ferguson, 2003; Goodman & West-Olatunji, 2010; Howard, 2006; Kunjufu, 2002; Leiding, 2006; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992; Thernstorm & Thernston, 2003). In addition, comparing related issues and concerns of urban education today to various studies conducted on pertinent issues concerning students of color in urban schools, it is safe to say that some of the findings in the Rosenthal and Jacobson (1992) and Ferguson (2003) are relevant, similar, and acknowledges a type of awareness and understanding to the crisis in urban education.

For this purpose, it is believed that teachers are in need of more preparation and training in regards to teaching students, who are culturally diverse and categorized as disadvantaged (Baker, 2012; Banks & Grambs, 1972; Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Leiding, 2006; Milner, 2010; Nieto, 2010; Pollack, 2012; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992; Schaffer, 2012. Even though, further research is warranted on how teacher expectations influences and/or effects student performance, questions
that stand out the most in this study are “who is capable of being educated?” (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992, p. 181), and what is worth knowing? (a question that has been asked by scholars throughout the history of education). Yet the idea that marginalized children are understood to be unlearned or have lower learning capabilities than other children of privilege, still are an issue in education today. Additionally, teachers’ low expectations of these children prevails and effects their learning experiences to the point where it eventually causes them to be kicked out, pushed out or drop-out of school (Baker, 2012; Kunjufu, 2002). It is evident that positive teacher expectations influence the intellectual growth of culturally diverse students from low-income areas. However, other factors should be examined along with high teacher expectations. One factor in particular is effective teacher practices.

**Effective Teacher Practices: Cotton and Kunjufu**

Scholars believe that in order to increase the graduation rates of African American students, effective teaching practices should be identified and implemented (Banks, 1993; Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2001). Cotton (1991) presents the following effective teacher practices that research has found to be successful in urban schools:

1. high expectations [from teachers],
2. safe, orderly, well-disciplined environments,
3. teaching adapted to different student needs,
4. provisions of incentives, reinforcement, and rewards,
5. regular and frequent monitoring of student learning progress and provision of feedback,
6. staff development programs focused on school improvement,
7. use of school resources in support of priority goals,
8. parent involvement,
9. coordination among staff of different programs serving the same students.  

(Cotton, 1991 pp. 5-6)
The less effective practices she mentions are the following: “(1) tracking, (2) retention in grade without adequate support, and (3) excessive use of pullouts, (4) excessive assignments to special education classes” (Cotton, 1991, pp. 9-11). In sum, Cotton (1991) explains how there are similarities and differences in research pertaining to urban minority students and schools that display effective teacher practices.

In addition, Kunjufu (2002) identifies what he considers effective teacher practices for students of color. He shares strategies and techniques from schools that he feels demonstrated models of success and from master teachers (coaches) that demonstrated effective teacher practices. Some of the effective teacher practices and models of success that Kunjufu (2002) pinpoints are: students need educators who will force, inspire, and motivate them to learn; as well as, use a relevant curriculum that will engage them and help them to think critically. Students also need educators to teach multicultural values, and be multicultural in every aspect of their daily life (Kunjufu, 2002). In order to demonstrate effective teacher practices one must set high expectations of their students, engage all students equally in their learning process, find ways to develop their own craft, and build healthy relationships with students, their families, and surrounding communities (Kunjufu, 2002).

There are model schools that demonstrate effective techniques and strategies. Kunjufu notes that schools that has principals acting as instructional leaders, observing and mentoring teachers, tend to do better academically. Secondly, an implementation of a mentoring program for new teachers being mentored and observed by master teachers in order to gain new skills and/or improve their own craft (Kunjufu, 2002). Third, untracking schools and students based on ability, and revamping retention programs is another suggestion for schools to be models of success (Kunjufu, 2002). Model schools also have smaller classes and most of their time is spent
on “task” be it having longer school days or longer school years (i.e. Kipp Academy) (Kunjufu, 2002). Finally, some single-sex schools are known to have fewer disciplinary problems and students are more focused academically (Kunjufu, 2002). The strategies and techniques that are mentioned above are only a few suggestions that Kunjufu recommends as effective teacher practices and models of academic success for both schools and students of color (Kunjufu, 2002).

However, in order to implement these effective practices, teachers need training on how to be more critical and culturally aware of the students they teach (Banks, 1993; Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Goodman & West-Olatunji, 2010; Jordan-Irvine, 2003). One way to help teachers think critically and become more culturally aware is to redesign teacher education curriculum. The redesign of teacher education curriculum should address achievement gaps among students, disconnectedness with learning, and the continued academic failures of urban minority youth. However, in order to address these reoccurring issues, teacher educators themselves must be culturally competent and acknowledge the ‘miseducation’ of preservice and novice teachers who teach students of color.

**Miseducation of Preservice Teachers**

No longer can institutions use rhetoric in their mission regarding diversity; they must begin to strategically address the issues to enhance the ability of faculty to utilize multicultural course transformation to prepare multicultural literate students who will more than any other generation live and work in the global society. (Mayo & Lark, 2009, p. 9)

Teacher educators and educators across the board must understand and fully embrace cultural differences, as well as, cultural competency in order to help students of color improve academically. However, in order for preservice teachers to be taught the importance of cultural competency and its positive impact on student achievement, teacher educators must first embrace this idea and assume responsibility of being culturally competent themselves (Chou, 2007; Karp
The history of education has displayed on multiple occasions the strong presence of White teacher educators in teacher preparation programs. In addition, past and current discourses of urban education, emphasizes the increase and concern of a growth representation of Caucasian teachers in urban classrooms. For this reason, it is important to take the issue of cultural competency serious among both teacher educators and teachers that are coming into today’s culturally diverse classroom (Chou, 2007; Karp & Harris, 2011; Mayo & Lark, 2009). Also, the best way to prepare preservice teachers for urban schools is to focus their field experience in urban classrooms (Karp & Harris, 2011; Vinnik, n.d.). Classroom experience is another factor that should be strongly considered during the hiring process of teachers (Karp & Harris, 2011). During this process various methods and screenings should be used to determine if a teacher is culturally competent, has a strong endurance, determine their feelings towards social justice, and their ability to work in a high needs environment (Karp & Harris, 2011). However, in order for teachers to be fully prepared higher education institutions along with the colleges of educations must ‘buy-in’ into this multicultural approach to both education and curriculum (Chou, 2007; Mayo & Lark, 2009).

Mayo and Lark (2009) discuss how to persuade higher education institutions and their faculty to reform their courses and embrace a multicultural curriculum. The belief is that:

Cultural responsive teaching and learning with its emphasis on greater teacher awareness of the cultural dynamics in the content, interactions, and pedagogy enhances teachers’ ability to design culturally enriched and sensitive teaching/learning experiences. Multicultural curriculum best practices have the potential to increase the retention, at all levels, for students of color while also leading to positive results for mainstream students—and re-invigorating faculty. (Mayo & Lark, 2009, p. 2)
However, faculty must be prepared to address cultural diversity through professional development (one key component of multicultural curriculum among teachers) and other avenues such as teacher education (Mayo & Lark, 2009). In order for the cultural competency and multicultural education to be fully embraced by teacher educators Mayo and Lark (2009) identify key elements that must be established: (1) Institutional Support, which makes all institutional leaders accountable; (2) Compensation, encourages faculty to participate and dedicate a week a two to the implementation of multiculturalism for a specific course, and also gives them a substantial financial stipend; (3) Emphasis on Benefits, recruitment efforts made by emphasizing the benefits of participation such as: financial stipends, networking, increased/improved student responses, research and consultant opportunities, and other incentives; (4) Consultant Opportunities, participants are given the opportunity to serve as leaders of multicultural education at their colleges, departments, and institutions; (5) Well-Planned Relevant Instruction, which includes diverse learning and multicultural teaching styles, culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally sensitive assessments (Mayo & Lark, 2009). In addition, the primary goal is to show the benefits of implementing multicultural education into traditional curriculum (Chou, 2007; Karp & Harris, 2011; Mayo & Lark, 2009). The responses of students and faculty of institutions that do consider the implementation of a multicultural perspective into their course work are the following: students are happy about being exposed to works of those in different ethnic groups, and professors creating a space that is both safe and comfortable to discuss societal issues (Mayo & Lark, 2009). As an undergraduate student, I can attest to feeling this way personally, although I majored in both English and African American studies I was exposed to a ray of works by those who were of African, Latino/Latina, and Asian ethnic backgrounds. In addition, faculty who implemented a multicultural view to their
coursework expressed the appreciation of increased student engagement, positive student evaluations, positive talks of tenure and promotion, and having a general respect for all students (Mayo & Lark, 2009). Unfortunately, there are only a few universities that tactically prepare students for a culturally diverse society using tenets of multicultural education as an aid to revamp their coursework (Mayo & Lark, 2009). In order for teacher educators to thoroughly prepare preservice teachers for a multicultural society, teacher educators themselves must first “buy-in” into the idea with the support of their institutions, not assume that students will pick up knowledge and skills along the way, have a desire to participate, and be rewarded for their efforts (Chou, 2007; Mayo & Lark, 2009). If teacher educators do not change from both their traditional ideology and curriculum, they will continue to miseducate preservice teachers. Preservice teachers will in turn continue to miseducate their perspective students, by reciprocating the power and oppression of ‘white privilege’, which will further widen the achievement gaps for culturally diverse students. Moreover, there are additional factors that lead to the miseducation of preservice teachers. Pollack (2012) argues issue(s) that he feels is one part of the miseducation of beginning and preservice teachers. The lack of critical reflection and deficit narratives of preservice and beginning teachers play a significant part on how students of color are perceived, taught, and judged academically (Pollack, 2012). If this problem continues to go ignored, unexamined, unaddressed, or unresolved it will continue to widen the achievement gap between students of color and their white counterparts; while, creating low expectations for students of color (Pollack, 2012). For instance, Pollack explains how inequality is recycled among students of color because of deficit narratives (teacher talk), and the lack of critical reflection from teachers. He describes in his research what he considers the four dominant
narrative themes that work together to create inequality and low expectations of students of color in teacher discourse (Pollack, 2012). The four dominant narrative themes are:

- Reinforce educators’ deficit thinking about, and differential behavior toward, students of color;
- Contribute to a school culture characterized by low expectations for students of color;
- Contribute to an abdication of responsibility and a diminished sense of agency among teachers;
- Contribute to the workplace socialization of beginning teachers and newcomers. (Pollack, 2012, p. 93)

Overall, he argues that there is a need to help beginning and preservice teachers discover and expose unrecognized views about students of color (Pollack, 2012). In addition, Pollack suggests that they turn informal teacher talk into opportunities that engage teachers to critically listen and reflect on the deficit narratives they hear (Pollack, 2012). If preservice and beginning teachers had an opportunity to critically listen and reflect on teacher discourse they will be able to discover and challenge these narratives, see how these discourses recycle cultural assumptions and racial inequality among students of color, increase their expectations of these students, and possibly eliminate the miseducation of novice teachers (Pollack, 2012). Deficit narratives are powerful tactics used to miseducate preservice and beginning teachers (Pollack, 2012). Various strategies and methods are suggested, but one thing is clear, there is a need to reeducate, miseducated preservice and novice educators who are as research states, increasingly White and female that is being represented in urban schools.

**We Cannot Teach What We Do Not Know**

For the foreseeable future, the vast majority of teachers will be White while the student population will grow increasingly diverse. The need for teacher preparation is obvious, particularly given the fact that most practicing and prospective White teachers are themselves the products of predominantly White neighborhoods and predominately White colleges of teacher education. (Howard, 2006, p. 4; Nieto, 2010)
An African American scholar by the name of James A. Banks writes an introduction to *We can’t teach what we don’t know: White teachers, multiracial schools*, by Gary Howard, a White male scholar, concerning the necessary inclusion of cultural diversity and multicultural education in the preparation of White educators for urban schools. Banks describes the book’s purpose as:

to provide preservice teachers, educators, practicing educators, graduate students, scholars, and policymakers with [resources] that summarizes and analyzes important research theory, and practice related to the education of ethnic, racial, cultural, and language groupings in the United States and the education of mainstream students about diversity. (Howard, 2006, p. x)

Multicultural education is defined as “a field of study designed to increase educational equity for all students that incorporates, for this purpose, content, concepts, principles, theories, and paradigms from history, the social and behavioral sciences, and particularly from ethnic studies and women’s studies” (Howard, 2006, p. xii). Sonia Nieto describes the importance of including White educators in the discourse of multicultural education (Howard, 2006). She states,

Involving Whites in multicultural education therefore needs to resolve two seemingly contradictory aims: to confront in a brutally honest way White oppression, and to promote the development of a healthy identity that is at the same time anti-racist and multicultural. (Howard, 2006, p. xvi)

Howard (2006) explains how American public education faces three statistical realities: (1) our teacher force is mostly White, (2) our student population is highly diverse and growing in children of color, and (3) children of color are precisely the students most at risk of being caught on the negative end of the achievement gap. (Howard, 2006, p. 4)
While attempting to address all three realities in public education, Howard (2006) discusses the multicultural perspective from a White educator’s point of view, and the process it takes in the understanding of multicultural education and culturally diverse students (Howard, 2006). The process that Howard describes is the need for White educators to understand their past and present dominance, confront the ways in which they are shaped by myths of superiority, and begin to critically think about human diversity and all that it entails (Howard, 2006).

Overall, Howard believes that personal transformation is missing from the discourse of the preparation of White teachers (Howard, 2006). Howard spells out how “Too often we expect White teachers to be what they have not learned to be, namely, culturally competent professionals” (Howard, 2006, p. 6). An extensive examination of the role of White educators in understanding, and the deconstruction of White dominance is essential in the discourse of multicultural education (Howard, We can't teach what we don't know: White teachers, multiracial schools, 2006). Howard advocates, “…the personal transformation of White educators and the social transformation of the arrangements of White dominance. [Are] critical factor(s) in any authentic movement toward the elimination of the achievement gap” (Howard, 2006, p. 7). Although the factors mention above are important in order to work towards eliminating the achievement gap, it is not the only factor into which the achievement gap is eliminated, but it is only one-step that should be considered and applied.

As mentioned before, it is important to understand the role that White dominance plays in education, especially in the discourse of education. In order to understand the role of White dominance we must first determine what Whiteness is, and how it is interwoven in society especially among cultural contexts. In regards to the politics of difference, it is believed that Whiteness should be reexamined in order for personal and social transformations to take place,
and teaching in racial diverse contexts and curriculum (Howard, 2006). Howard (2006) submits the role of concerned White educators is not to be politically correct, but to become more conscious of their role as White educators in both education and in society (Howard, 2006). Overall, Howard (2006) serves as a tool to help White educators recognize the need for redeveloping their White identity in order to help all students.

Howard claims, “Our current diversity jargon makes much of the need for White folks to become allies for people of color in the battle for equity and social justice” (Howard, 2006, pp. 21-22). A more intensive look at White identity and racism that goes beyond the fact that other groups suffered because of Whites/White America (Howard, 2006). Instead, reeducate White America about multicultural education and diversity by overcoming, healing, and being aware of ‘realities’ (hegemonic factors) that begot and perpetuate these negative racial influences (Howard, 2006).

Therefore, teacher educators must adequately prepare preservice students for the obstacles of issues relating to racial dominance and cultural diversity (Howard, 2006). Often White educators feel inadequate of their roles in multicultural education, and ask, “What can I do as a White teacher?” (Howard, 2006, p. 73). Howard (2006) offers four contributions, which are honesty, empathy, advocacy, and action. Also, self-reflection is important to cultural awareness, and it is important for White educators to become knowledgeable of their position, status, and level of awareness of their White identity and how it affects other cultures in society (Howard, 2006). For this reason, Howard (2006) urges people of color and those who are oppressed by White social dominance to strongly dislike hegemonic practices such as racism, dominance, and ignorance…not White people (Howard, 2006).
The theme Howard (2006) attempts to address throughout this text is a question, which aligns with my research is, “How do we prepare [a] predominately White teacher population to work effectively with racially and culturally diverse students?” (Howard, 2006, p. 117). One way to prepare White educators is to stress the fact that it is important to develop strong positive professional relationships with students of color (Howard, 2006). Another question asked by one of my White colleagues follows this same thinking and that is, how do we talk to students of color? As a White educator, Howard believes that an authentic professional relationship between students and teachers is one that communicates clearly to students through works, actions, and attitudes the following:

I see you. I acknowledge your presence in the classroom. I know your name and I can pronounce it correctly. I respect your life experiences and your intelligence. I believe in you and I will hold both you and myself accountable to honor your capacity to learn. I enjoy being in this work with you. (Howard, 2006, p. 130)

Approaching the teaching of culturally diverse students in this manner will start the process of transforming the minds of students, and begin the social healing process that has been missing from public education, society, and history of the United States. Although it is not the only way or approach that is recommended, but is a start of a movement, a movement that will provide equality and justice and the right for all children to succeed academically. In essence, it is crucial to improve teacher education programs in order to prepare properly trained multicultural teachers for urban schools.

**Re-Design of Teacher Education**

The indictment is not against the teacher. It is against the kind of education they receive. (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 5)
Darling-Hammond et al. (1992) present three arguments in regards to the proposal of redesigning teacher education as a way to help teachers to develop more learner-centered schools. They state that the redesign of teacher preparation programs should focus on meeting the needs of the students (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992). They state that teacher education programs need to “…prepare teachers to evaluate student understandings, conceptions, learning styles and intelligences, strengths, and needs, and then to construct learning opportunities that are responsive to the learner while true to the subjects under study” (Darling-Hammond et al., p. 10, 1992). Secondly, teacher education programs “…will need to evaluate different pedagogical approaches and assessment options so that they can choose those that are appropriate for various learning goals under varying conditions” (p. 10). Finally, teacher education programs need to “…prepare teachers to understand cultural and social contexts within which students approach learning so that they can build upon the students cognitive foundations, rather than undermining them” (p. 10).

In addition, teachers should have certain foundations in order to facilitate and impart learning to students (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992). Nine foundational methods are mentioned; however, the most relevant one is:

Knowledge about culture and learning will help teachers to understand the role of culture in perception, language acquisition, and learning so that they can forge connections between classroom work and students’ lives. This knowledge will also provide teachers with tools by which truly multicultural curricula and culture-fair testing can be developed. (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992, p. 20)

A multicultural approach is needed in order to create and develop effective learner-center classrooms. In addition, teachers need to learn the importance of culture, the utilization and
importance of implementing a cultural approach in classrooms, and seeing education culturally in order to prepare preservice teachers for a growing number of diverse classrooms in present and future education (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2001). For this reason, Darling-Hammond et al. (1992) recommend that more experienced teachers, teach in urban schools and preservice teachers should be certified and mentored by experienced teachers in order to teach effectively in urban environments.

Moreover, Gary A. Griffin argues that a school-level approach in redesigning, rethinking, and re-enacting is needed in teacher education (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992). Griffin’s arguments strongly supports Darling-Hammond’s perspective as he believes that there needs to be “…a greater, deeper, and more serious knowledge source from which teachers can draw to meet the needs of increasingly diverse students” (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992, p. 29). Griffin elaborates on how the conditions of schools are forcing everyone to think more on the question, what is a teacher? (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992). The roles of teachers are stretched beyond their traditional meaning into a more conceptualized categorization; meanwhile, various names are given to label these duties and our understanding of what teachers do in these learning environments (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992).

Overall, teacher education must change as schools change and the role of teachers must be reexamined (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992). Darling-Hammond et al. (1992) suggests that if teacher educators have the perception and will, they can participate in the restructuring of teacher education programs. However, the real question is, how will they take on this challenge? The redesign of teacher education programs is vital to improve the teacher quality for culturally diverse students. One method that has been discussed throughout this discourse is incorporating a multicultural aspect to both curriculum and pedagogy.
Multicultural Education

Multicultural education consists of three things: an idea or concept, an educational reform movement, and a process (Banks, 1993). Banks defines multicultural education as:

Multicultural education is an idea, an education reform movement and a process whose major goal is to change the structure of educational institutions so that male and female students, exceptional students, and students who are members of diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups will have an equal chance to achieve academically in school. (Banks, 1993, p. 1)

It is imperative that we intellectualize schools as social systems in order to implement a multicultural educational approach successfully (Banks, 1993). The school’s culture, power relationships, curriculum and resource materials, along with teachers’ attitudes and belief systems of the staff must be changed in order to promote educational equality for all students in diverse groups (Banks, 1993). Therefore, in order for schools to be transformed educators must be knowledgeable and aware of the influences of diverse students’ and how these influences affect their behavior (Banks, 1993). Overall, the major goal of multicultural education is to improve academic achievement (Banks, 1993).

The history of multicultural education grew out of the civil rights movement during the 1960s. As a result, the school reform movement at that time, related to ethnic and cultural diversity. Hence, multicultural education emerged from various programs, courses and practices that institutions contrived in response to the aspirations and demands from people of color (Banks, 1993). Multicultural education was not considered, at the time, an actual practice of a program or course, but the term was used to describe a variety of programs and strategies that related to the equality of minorities, women, marginalized groups, and people with disabilities
Banks, 1993). Today, the field of multicultural education has expanded even more and now includes social justice education and antiracist education just to name a few. The incorporation of social justice education within multicultural education gives a critical focus on urban learning environments and the equity of all students (British Columbia Teachers Federation (BCTF), 2010; Hytten & Bettez, 2011; Quezada & Romo, 2004). It also prepares students with the necessary tools and strategies to face, handle, and challenge obstacles peacefully as persons of color, who confront injustices daily. Social justice education is an important component of multicultural education because a social justice perspective usually responds to the following four filters: (1) access, which enables or impedes participation of a particular group; (2) agency, means that individuals know their rights and are able to think critically in order to develop it even more; (3) advocacy, requires that individuals understand the problem and have inquired the skills to influence others so that change can take place; (4) solidarity action; community building and networking with other groups with the efforts of the betterment of the collective whole (British Columbia Teachers Federation (BCTF), 2010). However, the challenges that educators have with social justice education is the actual commitment to and the struggle with the practice of it (Hytten & Bettez, 2011). One way to help with this problem is to continue the work of building bridges to create more spaces and opportunities where a discourse is created among educators who share similar and coinciding objectives (Hytten & Bettez, 2011). Overall, the social justice education piece of multicultural education adds to the building of knowledge and understanding of what social justice is, and opens the door for opportunities to engage across array of differences in desires, commitments, and plans (Hytten & Bettez, 2011).

On the other hand, the integration of antiracist education within multicultural education gives an acute emphasis on the way that power is misused and structured through racism
(Jackson, 2010). It depicts the misuse of power through institutional hierarchy and societal practices (i.e. hegemony), which continues to produce racial oppression in society (Jackson, 2010; Lee, 2002). It also attempts to investigate and change how things in school and society are being prevented from becoming valued because of differences (Lee, 2002). In all, antiracist education helps us to shift from a monocultural viewpoint and creates a space for other ethnic cultural perspectives that should be included in the discourse (Lee, 2002). Antiracist education includes, but is not limited to, the following three stages: (1) surface, changing the cultural expression of the school; (2) transitional, creates units of study; (3) structural, implementing elements of newly created units into existing ones (Lee, 2002). However, the challenges of the antiracist perspective in multicultural education are that it has a pattern of typically being underfunded so that it can fail (Lee, 2002). Overall, the antiracist education perspective looks to empower and change the lives of people (Jackson, 2010; Lee, 2002).

Therefore, it is important for teacher education programs to consider the components of multicultural education in order to expand the thinking of both teacher educators and students. However, the implementation of multicultural education in teacher preparation should be both a process and a reform movement (Quezada & Romo, 2004). It should include elements of social justice education, and antiracist education along with many others so that teacher education programs can move from models of isolation to models of inclusiveness (Quezada & Romo, 2004).

**Challenges in Multicultural Education**

Multicultural education has also faced many challenges in both theory and practice as it questioned how to increase equity for all targeted victimized groups without limiting others (Banks, 1993). Another challenge is how to help diverse students navigate and mediate their
home, community, and school cultures (Banks, 1993). It is important for students to obtain the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed in each cultural setting because it enables them to function and communicate effectively across different communities (Banks, 1993). The ability to be able to communicate effectively among different cultural groups is important because it allows one to navigate in society without regarding or disregarding one’s own cultural make-up.

**Five Dimensions of Multicultural Education**

Before exploring the meaning and five dimensions of multicultural education, it is important to define culture. Culture is defined in a multiple ways, however, Banks defines it as “the shared beliefs, symbols, and interpretations with in a human group” (Banks, 1993, p. 8). In addition, Banks explains that the essence of culture is not tangible cultural artifacts, but how group members comprehend, practice, and identify themselves (Banks, 1993). Hence, an understanding of the types of culture is important as well. Core culture (dominant culture in society) and subcultures (subdivisions of cultures that exist within each other or that deviates from the main culture) both exist in the United States (Banks, 1993). We all in some form or fashion participate or navigate between various cultures that exist in this nation. Therefore, conceptualizing multicultural education to content only could be problematic for several reasons (Banks, 1993). One reason it is problematic is because teachers can dismiss the approach due to their disconnectedness to their subject area (Banks, 1993). As a result, this resistance towards the multicultural approach may cause other resistance with teachers especially in the math and science fields (Banks, 1993). For this reason, multicultural education must be defined and understood in a way that teachers can connect the approach to their content areas (Banks, 1993). Banks examines multicultural education in five dimensions to aid teachers’ instruction; meanwhile, depicting how this approach connects to both school content and everyday life
(Banks, 1993). The five dimensions that Banks (1993) proposes are: (1) content integration, (2) the knowledge construction process, (3) an equity pedagogy, (4) an empowering school culture, and (5) the school as a social system (Banks, 1993, pp. 20-22). The first dimension, content integration, pertains to teachers using examples from various cultures to illustrate key points, theories, and generalizations in their subject matter (Banks, 1993). The second dimension, the knowledge construction process, relates to teachers helping students comprehend and identify implicit cultural assumptions and biases in a discipline, and how they are influenced and constructed through knowledge. The third dimension, equity pedagogy, exists when teachers modify their teaching practices in ways that will facilitate academic achievement and growth of students from diverse backgrounds (Banks, 1993). The fourth dimension, an empowering school culture, is when a school’s culture promotes equity in race, gender, and socio-economic status (Banks, 1993). Finally, the fifth dimension, the school as a social system, is a way to think about how a school’s structures are interrelated (Banks, 1993). In knowing the interrelation of the schools’ framework we can initiate change by developing strategies that reforms the schools’ environment, while, implementing a multicultural education approach (Banks, 1993).

In essence, multicultural education is an on-going process because of its challenge to fight for equity in education and its attempt to eliminate all forms of discrimination among mankind (Banks, 1993). The major goal of multicultural education is to help students attain knowledge, attitudes, and skills that will allow them to navigate in their own subcultures, the dominant culture in the United States, and other cultures that they may encounter in the world (Banks, 1993). Incorporating a multicultural approach in the redesign of teacher education and pedagogy would broaden the thinking of both preservice teachers and students. It will help them recognize, identify, and acknowledge similarities that are different between their cultural
background and others. The process of ‘discovery’ could help the teaching and learning experience to be an engaging one, allowing very teachable moments; as well as, a space for both discussion and reflection.

**Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

Along with incorporating, a multicultural perspective into the teaching and learning experience is a teaching method that helps students to connect their learning to their own cultural background. Culturally relevant pedagogy, also known as culturally relevant teaching and culturally responsive teaching is defined as:

- a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These cultural referents are not merely vehicles for bridging or explaining the dominant culture; they are aspects of the curriculum in their own right. (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 18)

The primary goal of culturally relevant pedagogy is to help students of color develop a relevant cultural identity, embrace academic excellence, and still feel connected to their own culture (Ladson-Billings, 1994). In addition, the notion of cultural relevance includes factors that relate to both the student and school culture (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Overall, culturally relevant pedagogy uses student culture as a means to maintain it, and help rise above negative effects of the dominant culture (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Ladson-Billings discuss the importance of cultural relevancy in learning environments. Educators that utilize this teaching method see themselves and teaching as a calling, and as an art (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2001). They also believe that all students can succeed, and the primary goal of culturally relevant teachers (as it should be for all teachers for that matter), is for all classrooms to have order, structure, and student engagement (Ladson-Billings,
In addition, culturally relevant teachers help students make connections using culture as a driving force, and dig knowledge out of students by using commonalties that students bring that must be explored (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Ladson-Billings (1994) expresses the following point, “One of the commonalties among this diverse group of teachers is an overriding belief that students come to school with knowledge and that knowledge must be explored and utilized in order for students to become achievers” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 52). Therefore, culturally relevant pedagogy transforms shifting responsibility to sharing responsibility (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Hence, teachers expectations of students are what teachers see them as. For example, if teachers see students as scholars then they are perceived as scholars; on the other hand, if teachers see students as problem starters then they are perceived as problem starters (Ladson-Billings, 1994). It is important for teachers’ practices to align with high expectations of students so that students see and think highly of themselves.

Listed below are some indicators of teachers who practice culturally relevant pedagogy:

i. [The] way they see themselves and others

ii. They see teaching as an art rather than technical skill.

iii. They see themselves as a community and believe teaching is giving back to the community

iv. Help students make connections

v. How they structure social interactions

vi. Relationships with students are healthy, flexible, and exists beyond classrooms

vii. Believe in connectedness with their students and students’ having connectedness with each other

viii. Encourage learning together as a community
ix. They believe in recycled knowledge shared by both students and teachers

x. “Rather than expecting students to demonstrate prior knowledge and skills they help students develop that knowledge by building bridges and scaffolding for learning” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 25).

The indicators of teachers who practice culturally relevant pedagogy are also characteristics that indicate what is to be a ‘good teacher’ (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2001). In addition, parents feel that good teachers have a dual mission in which they are responsible for their children academic success and also provide them with an education that would not disown who they are as individuals, culturally, or in society/community (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2001).

Jordan-Irvine (2003) along with other scholars suggests the need for the redesign of teacher education programs that mandate the need and the use of cultural awareness, diversity, and relevance in their pedagogy, and in the incorporation of these same ideas in school curriculum. A cultural approach is called upon for its use in teacher preparation programs because it can assist with the dispelling of the miseducation and misperceptions of urban youth, and prepare preservice teachers to teach in culturally diverse schools (Baker, 2012; Banks & Tucker, 2013; Howard, 2006; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Nieto, 2010; Schaffer, 2012). It also challenges teacher educators to stretch beyond traditional, current, hegemonic, racist, and philosophical belief systems to a more diverse, relevant, and multicultural approach to both teaching and learning for teachers and students (Baker, 2012; Banks & Tucker, 2013; Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Howard, 2006; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Nieto, 2010; Schaffer, 2012). Preservice teachers often feel unprepared to teach in urban schools (Schaffer, 2012). Thus, the incorporation of cultural
approaches and opportunities is necessary in teacher education programs to prepare preservice teachers for urban environments (Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Schaffer, 2012). However, the preparation of teachers should go beyond the connection of linking theory with practice, but have teachers take an inward look at themselves (their own identity) (Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Schaffer, 2012). In addition, reflect on their own isms or ills in society that may prevent them from connecting with students, and negatively influencing their perceptions of culturally diverse students (Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Schaffer, 2012).

Conclusion

In the United States we have not yet achieved the full measure of equity, unity, justice, and opportunity that were envisioned by our Revolutionary thinkers and inscribed in our foundational principles. This is the unfinished work that inspired Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address. The unfinished work for transforming educators in that of helping America become what America says it is. (Howard, 2006, p. 144)

In talking to James Banks at the NAME (National Association of Multicultural Education) conference held in Oakland, CA on November 7, 2013, we discussed his book *The Black Concept*. I told him initially that I was reading an earlier work of his, *The Black Concept*, and that I used his notion of identity to structure my thinking on how to improve teacher education to better prepare preservice teachers for students of color in urban schools. He was impressed and said, “Yes, that is an older piece of mine, and the funny thing is, the same arguments that are raised in that book are still relevant today.” We agreed to his statement, nodded, and smiled while continuing with our small talk. The point is, is that it is disheartening to see the same issues from the past still haunt us today. Are we just talking and having informal fancy intellectual conversations to hear others ideas without seeing the need and the real work it calls for? Do we really care about our urban youth? Do we really believe there are effective
solutions to minimize the academic achievement gap that exists beyond numbers, IQ scores, and racing to the top (for nothing)? What is at the top and why are we racing for it, if we have not come to turns with what’s worth knowing and determine if all children are capable of learning and experiencing a fair chance for equity in education.

Education, in the United States, has faced many historical challenges. Sadly enough, it continues to face problems especially with students of color today. Unfortunately, urban education has taken a large portion of these backlashes, as they continue to confront and tackle the unsettling complications of high school dropout rates, widening achievement gaps, ‘irrelevant Eurocentric curriculum’, and unprepared teachers in urban schools.

Scholars, as well as others, suggest that we must adequately prepare preservice and novice teachers, who as research continue to show, are increasingly White and female, the importance of cultural relevance and multicultural education. This type of approach is necessary for culturally diverse students because it helps them connect learning to their daily lives, increase student motivation and engagement, and minimize the dropout rates in urban schools (Baker, 2012; Banks & Grambs, 1972; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Nieto, 2013; Pollack, 2012; Schaffer, 2012).

However, in order for teachers to effectively reach urban youth, they must have high expectations of students and dig deeper than the surface level foundational thinking of linking theory with practice, and recognize that identity of both teacher and students play a significant role in the overall teaching and learning process. Identity, question students of color to take into account of their cultural make-up, how they are seen in society (how others see them), and most importantly how they see themselves in the world. In addition, the notion of identity challenges preservice teachers (especially those in dominant culture) who work with culturally diverse
students to face the identity-perception gap that exists among students and teachers, reflect on their own identity make up, and challenge those misperceptions they have about others who live outside of their own. Howard says it best, “The future calls each of us to become partners in the dance of diversity, a dance in which everyone shares the lead” (Howard, 2006, p. 13). As we all take the lead in improving teacher education programs, and prepare preservice teachers to fight for equity in education for all children, the hope is, is that it will cause the revolutionary combatant in all of us to become multicultural advocates of change. According to Howard (2006), Abraham Lincoln reminds us:

   With malice toward none; the charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation’s wounds…and to do all which we may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations. (p. 137)
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Problem Statement

Research shows that preservice teachers are unprepared to teach students of color (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Nieto, 2010; Pollack, 2012). As a result, students of color are not excelling academically as much as their white counterparts, due to anticipated internal factors (such as learning disability...etc.), external factors (such as socio-economic status, low-income, parental involvement, etc.) in what Ladson-Billing (2001) describes as pseudo-psychological explanations. For this reason, students of color are disengaged and dropping-out of school in large numbers. The purpose of this study is to present strategies and recommendations that would better prepare preservice teachers for students of color. One strategy that is the central focus in this study is the redesign of teacher education programs with a more cultural perspective that will also increase the cultural competency of preservice teachers.

Purpose of the Study

This study has a dual purpose; first, it closely examines traditional teacher education programs, introduces a redesign of teacher education with the inclusion of a multicultural perspective, and its preparation, or the lack thereof to help prepare preservice educators for culturally diverse students in urban schools. Secondly, it presents strategies and recommendations that would better prepare preservice teachers for students of color. The hope is that the implementation of a more multicultural approach, focus, and perspective in teacher education would better prepare preservice teachers for students of color. Furthermore, increase cultural competency in teacher preparation programs, and help narrow the achievement gap among all students at large.
Significance

The study is unique because it presents strategies and recommendations that would better prepare preservice teachers for students of color in urban learning environments. It offers personal narratives from the researcher, teacher educators from sites that prepare urban educators, and preservice teachers who attend these teacher education programs, on how this work is needed and the benefits of a redesign of traditionalized teacher education programs. The overall goal is to see if a redesign of teacher education programs that includes a multicultural approach will benefit preservice educators, and help prepare them for urban schools and/or learning environments.

It is important that preservice teachers become more culturally competent, and we must offer other methods for preservice teachers to effectively teach students of color (Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Nieto, 2013). For this purpose, students who are disengaged and unmotivated should be a major concern to all educators and administrators that work in the field of education. If students are disengaged and unmotivated to learn, there is a greater chance of increased misbehavior and school dropouts especially among urban youth. If there is no one prepared to teach, and if what is being taught is of disinterest to students, are we really doing them a disservice?

Scholars have presented issues that occur in education; however, it seems to be more problems than solutions to these issues. Although the redesign of teacher education with a multicultural perspective is not the final answer to the increasing academic success of students of color in urban schools, it at least begins the conversation, and possibly helps create a road map with the narrowing of the achievement gap among all students.
Situatedness

I am an African American woman who has experienced, achieved, and accomplished many things in the field of education. I grew up in a small town in the south suburbs of Chicago where I experienced it takes a village to raise a child approach. Everyone knew each other and took on the responsibility of seeing after each other. In regards to my academic career, experience, and background, I attended a predominately white elementary school where both the students and staff were predominately white, and where I experienced my first victimization of racism. Although I was ignorant of what racism was at that time, I soon understood the definition as I was challenged behaviorally; I always found myself in detention—lunch or regular detention. I was also challenged socially; in the third grade, I befriended a white female student and considered her my best friend. I had to end my friendship with her because of the cultural differences between us, as our parents both explained to us. Moreover, I was challenged academically; in fifth grade, my teacher tried to retain me. She did not succeed with her attempt; however, other students were left behind. I triumphed over all these challenges and prejudices against me, but it was an interesting journey.

Honestly, I believe my earlier experiences in this academic journey, is where my eyes began to open to the reality of my disconnectedness with school. My reality was that white educators did not like me; they were mean and strict, and only felt obligated to show what “good” African Americans (i.e. Martin L. King, Rosa Parks, and Mary McCloud Bethune) did for this country during Black History month.

In addition, the middle school that I attended was in the same neighborhood in which I lived. I was able to walk to school every day, and I felt more connected with the students because we all lived in the same neighborhood. All of us either played in the band together or on
the same sports team. The teachers really cared about us and our growth both academically and individually. I believe this was mainly because most of the staff here were minorities; worked at this particular school or for the school district for a number of years; gained rapport with parents in the community, and the population of students was predominately youth of color although a small percentage of white students attended the school as well.

However, I do remember a few white teachers that were condescending and acted as if they did not want to work there. One instance that I remember in particular was with a white female teacher consistently saying to us that this was a bad neighborhood and would compare it to some other predominately white academically successful schools. I would always question in my mind, “If things are that bad and you are that unhappy, why are you here?” I was tired of hearing her say these things about my hometown because I felt victimized and belittled by her biases. In her class, I felt that because I was an African American student I was immoral, poor, and should not expect to achieve much out of life because of my race. It was to the point that I disliked coming to her class because my high level of engagement and motivation from my other classes would be dismissed with her negative attitude toward students of color. I could not connect with her, which led to my disengagement in her class. I hoped that all white educators were not alike or had negative attitudes towards culturally diverse students.

On the other hand, I had another teacher who taught English Language Arts that helped me and motivated me to master my English writing skills. Later in my academic career, I majored in English in both my undergraduate and graduate studies, and one reason was because of her impact and influence. I wish she were here with us today because I know she would be proud of me and my accomplishments in her area of concentration. My experience with her, led
me to believe that there were some white teachers who cared about me as an individual, regardless of my race, and that “race” was not a dividing factor.

Furthermore, I really enjoyed my high school years. Although the high school I attended was predominately African American, the faculty and staff was very diverse, and everyone’s interest was in their students’ present and future academic success. It was during my high school years, I was first exposed to a culturally relevant curriculum. My Economics teacher, who was a white Italian male, would always make his pedagogy relevant to our lives. He would talk about consumer products that were popular for our age group at that time (i.e. Jordan sneakers and Sega Genesis video game), and by doing that, we were more engaged and motivated to learn because we could connect to the context of these lessons. I knew at that moment, I learned best when the curriculum was relevant to my life.

Even though I had an enjoyable high school career, I would say that my college years were by far the best. Everything seemed to come together for me during my undergraduate college years. I learned a lot about culture and diversity because the undergraduate college that I attended was extremely diverse in terms of both faculty and students. I recall enrolling in my very first African American Literature studies course. My professor’s passion for this subject matter encouraged me to major in African American Studies as a second major, but it also opened my eyes to my own history/culture, other people’s passion and appreciation for my race’s contribution to American history, and helped me become culturally aware and sensitive. I remember being apprehensive one day after class in asking my professor, who was a White male, why he chose to teach African American Literature courses. His answer was so profound and sounded like music to my ears when he said: “The reason why I chose to teach African American Literature is because these authors contributed much to American History, and I find this genre
of literature the most interesting and engaging to read and study.” I, as an African American student in his class, was very surprised and honored by his response, passion, appreciation, and respect that he had for my culture. At that moment, I, too, wanted the same passion, appreciation and respect that he had for my own culture. I was determined to take the responsibility and ownership of my own ethnic group, and to not only display passion, but to empower my own community.

Another experience that had a powerful impact on my life both educationally and personally was my study abroad trip to Ghana, West Africa. I spent five weeks in Ghana along with other students who traveled with and from Temple University. During my stay, I became culturally enriched and learned a lot about my ancestral history as I lived among the natives and learned from the native communities and through their educational systems. I also visited many historical sites such as slave castles, historical monuments, islands, beaches, and other historical sites. This experience helped me to embrace my own history and appreciate the foundation that my ancestors laid for me and other African Americans to become educated, established, and take on the responsibility of giving back to a community of people that are less fortunate. It was at this moment that my cultural awareness, the importance of cultural competency, and need for cultural sensitivity was heightened, and the significance of this experience led me to believe that cultural relevance, cultural awareness, and cultural sensitivity is a vital part of one’s educational experience. Thus, in reflecting on my own personal experiences as a female student of color, I found that one way to keep students engaged in their learning is to make it culturally relevant. For this reason, my own academic journey has shaped my work, research interest, educational philosophy, and helped me in the development of my research questions.
Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used for this study is critical race theory (CRT) (see Appendix A). CRT focuses on the critical examination of race, society, and culture as it relates to power, law, and other hierarchical or hegemonic institutionalized practices (Delgado & Stefancic, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Critical Race Theory, 2014). In addition, it is often times used as a microscopic approach in most scholarly discourses of how the notion of race plays a significant role in our everyday lives (Delgado & Stefancic, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Critical Race Theory, 2014). CRT’s approach provides details on how race, racial identity, and culture/cultural difference are looked at, perceived, and embraced in a critical way (closely examined by way of theory, application, and practice to data that are presented) and how that plays a substantial part in our cultural makeup as a hegemonic and mainstream society in the United States of America (Delgado & Stefancic, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Mutua, 2006; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Suveges, 2010).

One of the key figures of CRT is Derrick Bell (Maldonado & Maldonado, 2012). Derrick Bell was an activist and scholar who filtrated his anger through studying law, writing various books and articles to motivate marginalized groups (i.e. people of color) to embrace their struggles with personal conviction, identifying or naming their struggles and challenges, and to become motivated by and through resistance (Maldonado & Maldonado, 2012). While CRT began in the 1970s through Derrick Bell’s work, it did not organize until 1989 (Maldonado & Maldonado, 2012). Historically, CRT is known to be a call to action. It focuses on the reproduction of racism and White supremacy overtime, the role that law plays in this entire process, and the social justice engagement in relieving racial oppression, as well as, achieving racial emancipation (Maldonado & Maldonado, 2012). Today, CRT has both expanded into and
evolved to be a countless number of academic disciplines, which includes both law and education (Delgado & Stefancic, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Maldonado & Maldonado, 2012; Suveges, 2010). In essence, CRT challenges and unpacks what it means to achieve the American dream or overall journey to obtaining success (Maldonado & Maldonado, 2012). One way that is thought to achieve success is through educational attainment (Maldonado & Maldonado, 2012).

Educational attainment among people of color is analyzed in varied ways especially in educational research. However, the utilization of CRT in educational research begets consciousness of racism, challenges dominant social, historical, and liberal ideologies, encourages social justice, and gives people of color a voice (Suveges, 2010; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Solórzano & Yasso, 2001). For this reason, CRT will always have a relevant theoretical lens when examining educational systems in society (Suveges, 2010). For the purposes of this study, CRT is used as an approach to discover how race and culture are critically examined through the lenses of academic institutionalized arenas of culturally diverse urban youth, urban learning environments, and teacher education programs that prepare preservice educators to teach students of color.

Although CRT is noted to develop under various different integral historical movements: civil rights, critical studies, continental social political philosophy, and radical feminism, this study focuses more on the civil rights movement era as a central focal point, and as a holistic approach to define critical external and internal factors that pertain to the result of students’ of color academic success or failure (Delgado & Stefancic, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Maldonado & Maldonado, 2012; Mutua, 2006; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The civil rights movement in particular is significant in relation to this study because it expresses the vital impact
and influence of identity. In addition, it explains how the notion of identity is an integral part of one’s own cultural makeup and how one’s perception of others is often times tainted in dominant society. The civil rights movement challenges many injustices surrounding identity, race, and culture in society that is different from what is considered the norm or standard way of living and being. It also, unpacks people of color realities, narratives, and struggles that occurred based on these social injustices because of cultural difference, skin color, educational attainment or the lack thereof, and socio-economic status. For this reason, people of color, in particular, faced issues related to racism, discrimination, racial prejudice, and other hegemonic influences, which has caused them to suffer then and even now because of ignorance. The civil rights movement speaks to my work as it explains both historically and presently how this notion of identity continues to haunt people of color today, and is the glue to the various crises (i.e. identity crisis) and other racial injustices that people of color continue to face. Identity is examined in the scopes of the effects of identity crisis and the impact on racial identity and one’s progress in life in a society that is dominated through one monoculture perspective as being the standard for all society and the entire world. Overall, the civil rights movement gives a critical holistic approach to my study as it gently puts all the pieces together in a way that helps us understand why identity is an important factor to analyze in this study. It also enlightens us on how we look at identity as being the common ground as to how people of color specifically can succeed (if they choose to assimilate to a certain identity) or fail (due to identity crisis and choosing not to assimilate) in society (Maldonado & Maldonado, 2012; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). A broad perspective and the critical examination of the civil rights movement clarify both historically and presently the notion of identity, its continual enlarging effect, stagnation, and progress (i.e. academic, individual, and societal) of people of color today.
Thus, the critical race theory conceptual framework approach to this study addresses the revolving rhetorical question of: what is race and how race is defined. For instance, critical race theory argues that race is an underling and determining factor in the way the U.S. is constructed, and how the law is created and developed, which is through a racial social order (Delgado & Stefancic, 2006; Greenhalgh & Taylor, 1997; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Mutua, 2006). The foundational tenets and methodological approaches to critical race theory according to Delgado and Stefancic (2006) are: racism is ordinary, race matters, social construction, differential racialism, and voice of color. The first tenet, racism is ordinary, relates to how the “…ordinariness means that racism is difficult to cure or address” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2006, p. 3). In the review of literature there are moments of difficulty in how race is discussed in explaining the achievement gap especially among students of color, and also finding solutions on how to minimize it as it relates to race. In addition, the second tenet, race matters pertains to how hegemonic notions of race impact the racial and cultural make up in society both internally and externally (Delgado & Stefancic, 2006). The third tenet, social construction, how the idea of “race and races are products of social thought and relations” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2006, p. 3). Unfortunately, the thought is that how we look at race, and how we define race by using ideologies and philosophies of others, affects in some way our own interaction with others. The fourth tenet, differential racialization, how dominant society racializes different minority groups, at different times, as a response to the shifting needs (Delgado & Stefancic, 2006). The final tenet, voice of color, is significant and is needed in the discourse of critical race theory because: their different histories and experiences with oppression, Black, Indian Asian, and Latino/a writers and thinkers may be able to communicate to their white counterparts matters that the whites are unlikely to know. Minority status, in other words, brings
with it a presumed competence to speak about race and racism. (Delgado & Stefancic, 2006, p. 4)

Overall, the tenets and methodological approaches of critical race theory are related and in some way reflected in this study. The explanation of each tenet gives a clarification of the understanding and application to the theory itself and the critical examination of how it will be used in gathering and analyzing the collecting of data, and how it aligns as a whole in this study. The critical race theory framework in education is a “set of basic insights, perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform [structural] and cultural aspects of education that maintain subordinate and dominant racial positions in and out of the classroom” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 25).

It is crucial that the discourse of the redesign of teacher education with a multicultural approach is explored so that the preparation of cultural competent preservice teachers is increased, and will help with the hopes of improving the academic success of students of color. For this reason, the following research questions(s) and methods will be used in this study.

**Research Questions**

1. **Central research question**: How would the redesign of teacher education programs that include the utilization of cultural lenses, culturally relevant pedagogy strategies, and multicultural educational frameworks, better prepare preservice teachers to teach students of color?

2. **The thematic critical sub-question**: Are teachers unprepared to teach culturally diverse students?

*Note: In terms of redesign, it is important to note that for this research study, redesign means the inclusion of more multicultural frameworks and diversity experiences for both teacher-
educators and preservice teachers in traditionalized teacher education programs. Literature states that most traditional teacher education programs lack academic rigor and experiences around the education/curriculum of urban students of color. It is important that the inclusion of cultural lenses is added to all teacher education programs especially those programs that aim in their mission is to prepare urban educators. In all, urban educators should be both prepared and culturally competent in order to effectively engage, teach, and motivate urban students of color.

Methods

The nature of this study will be the use of critical race theory (CRT) methods with a qualitative focus. CRT is used as both a theoretical framework and methods for this study. CRT method will also be used because it contains approaches that are relatable to narratives, observations, and semi-structured interviews that are all used in this qualitative inquiry. It also pulls from a range of liberal arts studies and law literature (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). In sum, CRT methods used in this study will expose the lived experiences of people of color and others through interviews that gather narratives, stories, and counter-stories of teacher educators and those who are currently being prepared to teach students of color in urban learning environments (Bell, 2003; Chapman, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Suveges, 2010). Since the study is a combination of various elements of critical, narrative, qualitative approaches, and of a critical race theory conceptual framework, the utilization of critical race theory methods best fits with this study.

Qualitative methods will be used to examine and search for deeper truths and personal meanings. (Greenhalgh & Taylor, 1997). Such methods look at the authentic settings and environments of people, which help us to understand the meanings that we discover concerning
things/situations/people that impact them in one way or another (Greenhalgh & Taylor, 1997). It also explains in detail human behavior, in a holistic perspective (Greenhalgh & Taylor, 1997).

Narratives are used in this study, in part, because my research is guided by my own personal journey that led to my educational philosophy. The narrative approach is defined as a process of gathering and studying information of the lived experiences of people through the telling of stories (Writing@CSU/The Writing Studio, 2014). The telling of stories can be seen in the following methods: field notes, interviews, journals, letters, autobiographies, and verbal stories spoken (Mutua, 2006; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Writing@CSU/The Writing Studio, 2014). Personal narrative is also a tool used in the critical race theory methodology as it tells the story of an individual who has become a victim of various different forms of racism or other “isms” for that matter (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The use of narrative in this study as a CRT methodology is important because it exposes the impact of cultural assimilation that exists in education, which also defines the academic success and/or failure of youth of color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The thought is that students of color should assimilate to white middle-class culture (dominant culture) in order to become successful inside and outside of school (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). As a result, the idea of cultural assimilation plays a significant role in teacher education curriculum, and is matriculated into urban schools with heavily populated culturally diverse students (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The thought is that a successful student of color is a culturally assimilated student of color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). As a result, CRT encourages the use of counter-narratives as a way to tell the stories of survival, and liberation among oppressed marginalized groups (Maldonado & Maldonado, 2012; Solorzano & Yosso, 2000). Counter narratives also gives voice to people of color, as they both express and navigate through their own inner struggle with racial identity/identity crisis, and survival in society that is
led by the dominant culture (Maldonado & Maldonado, 2012; Suveges, 2010). Therefore, my educational philosophy has urged me to explore the redesign of teacher education as the basis of helping preservice teachers to become better prepared for culturally diverse students in urban classrooms. The narrative of others, particularly teacher educators and preservice teachers who attend programs that prepare them to be urban educators, will also help support the significance of my study.

**Location**

I did this study in an urban city located in the Midwest. Identified academic sites for the study were two universities whose mission in their college of education is to prepare preservice teachers to become urban educators. One university is a state/public higher education institution and the other one can be categorized as both a private and religious learning institution. Each university has a teacher education program geared towards developing and preparing urban educators. Because of their missions’ statements, they were chosen for this study because they both align best with my research in looking at the preparation of preservice educators for culturally diverse students in urban schools.

**Data Collection**

This study required me to look at the course work students have to take from years one through four to see and critically examine what their exposure is like to multicultural frameworks in urban settings. Examining these courses in particular, gave me the necessary data needed to enhance the study, as well as, discuss its significance more intensively in a later chapter. In addition, I reviewed syllabi from both teacher educators and preservice teachers. In examining syllabi developed by teacher educators, I looked to see if their reading materials, class activities, and assignments were aligned with multicultural notions of the university/college. In examining
syllabi created by preservice teachers, I looked to see if they were using those notions in their beginning practice. If by chance they were, I questioned their reasoning and/or purpose. Were they doing it because they learned it from a teacher educator, or was it something, they decided to do on their own?

**Observations**

I observed two teacher education courses in this study. I closely examined the structure of the course, teacher educator’s attitude toward the implementation of multicultural frameworks in the preparation of preservice teachers for urban learning environments, student’s engagement/participation in the course (i.e. responses, feedback, testimonials…etc.). I analyzed student’s perspective of the benefits and concerns of implementing a cultural approach to their teacher preparation learning experience. By doing so, I was able to evaluate how and if multicultural frameworks compliment their outlook on becoming an urban educator.

Each course that I observed focused on multicultural education or cultural diversity in the preparation of urban educators. I closely examined the demonstration and the implementation of multicultural or cultural diverse methods used to help prepare urban educators or preservice teachers for culturally diverse students in urban schools. My major area of concern was if the course carried the mission of the college, which is to prepare urban educators, and are these preservice teachers actually being prepared to teach the population that they are set out to teach (students of color in urban schools).

**Interview Questions**

The interviews for this study were audio recorded. It was best to audio record the interview for a variety of reasons. One essential reason is that it helped with the process of reflection and analysis, after which the interviews were transcribed. Writing intensive detailed
notes throughout the interview could possibly disturb the flow between the interviewer and interviewee (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006, p. 1). Audio recording interviews can capture the entire interview process, as well as, the development and rapport between the interviewer and interviewee especially for unstructured interviews (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006, p.1).

However, I used semi-structured interviews versus non-structured interviews because I believe this study could benefit more from an authentic viewpoint in asking questions, probing, generating questions throughout the discussion that could clarify previous question and hopefully the answering of questions from the interviewee would be clear and coherent. The benefits of using semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to be prepared and competent during the process, and allow the participants the freedom to be expressive in their beliefs and opinions (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Overall, semi-structure interviews can provide reliable qualitative data (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

The purpose for using semi-structured interview questions was to provide clear, trustworthy, and equivalent data to the study and provide new ways of seeing and understanding the research topic; as well as, relevancy to why the research data were necessary to enhance and benefit the research study (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Since, I interviewed participants in the courses that I observed; it better assisted me with the probing process of questioning as I developed both relevant and meaningful semi-structured questions. Also, by asking semi-structured interview questions I was able to both follow and develop a guide that contained a list of questions that I felt needed to be covered in the study, and in a particular order that helped the flow of the conversation.

Semi-structured interview questions were developed for both teacher educators and preservice teachers. A few of the questions were the same for both teacher educators and
preservice teachers because they were broad enough and relatable enough to both entities. It was assumed that they might both have slightly different perspectives of what was being asked in each particular question. However, all perspectives were warranted from both the teacher educators and preservice teachers because it added value to the study as a whole. The interview questions for both teacher educators and preservice teachers are in Appendix B.

Participants

Participants in this study were both teacher educators and preservice teachers (students in the education program) who either work at or attend the two identified post-secondary academic institutions that prepare preservice students for urban education. Three randomly selected teacher educators in total were included in this study. The three teacher educators that were included were from the privately/religious academic institution.

A total of four preservice teachers (one who is a newly novice teacher and who recently graduated from the teacher education program) were randomly selected for interviews. The three preservice educators that were included in this study were from the privately religious academic institution. The plan was to interview preservice educators (from both public and private universities) who were currently in the student-teaching phase of their program. I believe targeting this population, specifically, would enrich the study even more because they are at the point of utilizing skills and methodologies from their course work to apply to the students that they are currently teaching in their field placement. Participants of this study received a $20 gift card after their full participation in the study.

Ethical Issues

Integrity of responses/selection of participants. Since the participants in this study were randomly selected, the selection of teacher educators and preservice teachers for the study
and the integrity of the answers/responses to each interview question played a crucial role in the findings and results of this research study.

**Full Participation**

The volume of sufficient information depended solely on the participation of participants. The possibility of persons declining to take part in this study could threaten the significance of the study.

**Results**

The results of this study will provide insightful ideas on the importance of the redesign of teacher education with the inclusion of a multicultural perspective. I anticipated results that would inform the redesign of teacher education programs with a more rigorous cultural perspective in order to better prepare preservice teachers for culturally diverse students in urban schools. I expected that the data that were collected from observations, interviews, and semi-structured questions would be organic raw data and that the participants would answer with honesty and consideration.

**Limitations**

One limitation in this study was that the research was conducted in one major urban Midwestern city, within two vastly different higher education institutions, and the responses provided might not be representative for all preservice teachers and teacher educators in this city, or across the world for that matter.

Another limitation was that preservice teachers and teacher educators who participated in this study might feel a sense of apprehension of being completely honest about their teacher education program as a whole, and how it does or does not prepare them to be urban educators. The cautiousness of participants in regards to admitting that a redesign of their teacher education
program would be helpful, and enable them and others to become culturally competent urban educators is also a limitation. Therefore, further research is needed on how to influence teacher educators to become more culturally competent, in order to embrace the redesign of teacher education programs, which includes an intense cultural perspective in order to better prepare preservice teachers for culturally diverse students.

In addition, the participation size for this study created a limitation as well. The participant size for this study was a small group, which is mainly used in qualitative research studies (Anderson, 2006). With a smaller group, I would have a finite view of area of central focus for this study. On the other hand, if there were a large group of participants, which is mainly used in quantitative research studies; it would give a broader perspective to the research study (Anderson, 2006).

One reason this study has a small participant size is due to the aim and focal point of the study. The two sites identified were the only sites located directly in this urban Midwestern city that have teacher education programs with the focus of preparing urban educators. In addition, a number of individuals (preservice educators) attend and train to become teachers at both sites, which brought relativity to this study, as well as, significance. Furthermore, the city in itself is an urban city, the teacher education programs at these sites are located in this urban city, and state specifically in their mission statement that they prepare urban educators. All these are major factors that make them critical, unique, and significant to this particular research study.

Qualitative method was best used in this study because it gave an authentic outlook, voice, and lived experience through personal narrative of how these participants experience or did not experience being prepared for urban learning environments in their teacher education programs. The use of qualitative methods versus quantitative methods best fits this study.
qualitative analysis gives a more subjective, in-depth description, and exploration of the assumed
dynamic reality using soft data (i.e. teacher education programs should be redesigned and
include cultural lenses) (Anderson, 2006). On the other hand, quantitative method gives a more
objective outlook with statistical numbers using hard data (Anderson, 2006). However, if this
study had a large participant size and included more sites it would probably benefit from a mix
method inquiry. The mix method analysis would help one approach inform the other, as well as,
confirm and/or increase the validity of this study (Anderson, 2006).
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

This chapter presents commentary from participants in my research study—concerning the redesign of teacher education programs to include a more multicultural lens and/or framework, which will in turn better prepare preservice teachers for culturally diverse youth and urban learning environments. In all, I used an inductive approach to investigate the necessity and appropriateness of redesigning teacher education programs to include a multicultural framework; as well as, evaluate the preparedness or unpreparedness of preservice educators entering into urban learning environments. Pseudonyms are used in interest of confidentiality. In addition, in discussing the data and analysis, I am presenting the themes that emerged from these interviews, and my analysis of those themes in relation to my research questions. The interview transcripts are presented in Appendix C. The research questions that I was looking to answer throughout this study and during the interview process are the following:

Central research question: How would the redesign of teacher education programs that include the utilization of cultural lenses, culturally relevant pedagogy strategies, and multicultural educational frameworks, better prepare preservice teachers to teach students of color?

The thematic critical sub-question: Are teachers unprepared to teach culturally diverse students?

I will then compare the shared and unique themes from each participant in the concluding chapter. In all, I asked the same interview questions for each participant, in hopes for looking for both similar and/or varied answers to the research questions presented in the study, and in a desire to remain consistent.
The complete CRT model is labeled under five tenets. For this reason, the same five tenets will be used and recognized throughout each participant’s interview. Next, each response will be scrutinized on how and/or why that indicated tenet identifies and/or relates to each participant’s feedback. According to Solórzano and Yosso (2000) the five tenets that conceptualizes the CRT model are:

1. the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination,
2. the challenge to dominant ideology,
3. the commitment to social justice,
4. the centrality of experiential knowledge,
5. the transdisciplinary perspective. (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, p. 63) (see Appendix A).

Collective Emerging Themes (Preservice Educators)

The indictment is not against the teachers. It is against the education they receive.

(Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 5)

In interviewing the preservice educator participants, a few collective themes were shared across the board. Themes were: understanding what it means to be an urban educator; understanding what cultural competence is and how it should be a way of being especially for those who teach culturally diverse urban youth; suggestions on how their teacher education program can improve by implementing a redesign to their current teacher education curriculum. Overall, participants believed that how they are taught directly influences their professional attitude and pedagogical approaches towards urban learning environments. Each participant intensively explained his or her perspectives to the interview questions.
Collective Analysis (Preservice Educators)

A fundamental step in this challenging of structures is to think about new ways for all education stakeholders—particularly those who are not from the communities in which they teach—to engage with urban youth of color. (Edmin, 2016, p. 7)

After examining the preservice educators’ interviews in more depth, a collective analysis emerged that expressed the following concerns. One, the curriculum that is being taught across the board in (teacher education programs and in K-12) is more Eurocentric and traditional and does not demonstrate the needs of culturally diverse urban youth. Second, the curriculum is dated and need to include more information concerning today’s classroom; as well as, introduce more critical perspectives. Third, more multicultural education courses need to be implemented; as well as, more faculty of color should be hired in order to present or expose a more sociocultural aspect to both teaching and learning. Generally, participants believe that improvements can be made to better prepare them to teach culturally diverse students and understand that that improvement only can be made when the powers that be embrace, recognize, and work towards those necessary changes. Each participant responses are examined more thoroughly below.

Ms. Covington’s Interview

Continued effort in teaching more effectively inevitably results in more effective teaching. However, this all depends on what the teacher considers to be effective. The teacher must ask what the desired result of the teaching is. You cannot be effective if you have not defined for yourself what effective means. (Edmin, 2016, p. 207)

I had the pleasure and opportunity of interviewing Ms. Covington, a white female, first year, novice K-5 elementary music teacher at a suburban elementary school and a recent graduate of the examined academic site. She has many personal and life experiences that have influenced her love for music and passion for teaching. Ms. Covington strongly believes in the power of music to help children discover just how much they are capable of.
Emerging Themes – Ms. Covington

Themes that emerged in Ms. Covington’s interview that were relevant to my research study were the notion of understanding what it means to be an urban educator. She emphasized the geographic and categorization of people (i.e. one who teaches in a city to a diverse group of students) and a perception of what is thought, defined, and associated as being urban educator characteristics. In addition, Ms. Covington spoke of both defining and understanding the impact and influence of culture in the lives of urban youth, what it means to be culturally competent in order to effectively teach youth of color, and the significance of practicing or implementing culturally relevant teaching as a way to promote student engagement and academic success.

Ms. Covington echoed the above notion of both learning and implementing effective teacher practices in the classroom of urban learning environments. She understood that in being prepared to teach culturally diverse students one must understand and/or be sensitive (i.e. culturally sensitive) to the population of students that you are working with. She also expressed the idea that one should also understand that culturally responsive teaching is a daily practice, not just a term to be generally understood, but a strategy/method that should be implemented in one’s pedagogy particularly those who are teaching in urban learning environments and with urban youth. For instance, she expressed how her experience in her teacher educator program helped her to come to this conclusion she states, “…I was able to understand more of what it meant, not just [defining] it, but [also] what it meant as it related to my teaching practices” (Ms. Covington, personal communication, October 15, 2015). Ms. Covington also recognized that culturally competency/sensitivity is a mindset that you teach with. She acknowledges the fact that her program has trained her in a way that helped her to be culturally aware and not just know the culture of her students. She states “…my program did [a really nice job] of making sure that
we worked hard, [were] culturally aware, and not just [know] the culture of my students….It is more like of a mindset you have to teach with” (Ms. Covington, personal communication, October 15, 2015).

Overall, Ms. Covington realized that being culturally competent, culturally aware, and culturally sensitive are or should be ways of being for teachers, especially those who teach culturally diverse students. She emphasizes this perspective by the way she defined what culturally competency means to her she states:

*I think that cultural competency; I guess it’s just being aware that culture affects how we learn…. So, if you’re just teaching to that standard curriculum and not relating it to the students’ lives then that’s not being culturally competent...culture is a huge part of...their school and home and it needs to be connected.* (Ms. Covington, personal communication, October 15, 2015)

In all, Ms. Covington shared the importance of what these terms mean as they relate to the understanding of culture not only by definition, but as a daily continual practice.

Ms. Covington also spoke to the ideas of Kunjufu (2002) who argued that black students need educators who will force, inspire, and motivate them to learn; as well as use culturally relevant curriculum that will engage them and help them to think critically. In further echoing Kunjufu’s perspective, Ms. Covington stated that in order to demonstrate effective teacher practices one must set high expectations of their students, engage all students equally in their learning process, find ways to develop their own craft, and build healthy relationships with students, their families, and surrounding communities (Kunjufu, 2002). Ms. Covington revealed her urgency of becoming an effective teacher and promoting academic success for students, she states:
I need to make sure I am being culturally responsive and competent.... I know I am just at the beginning of my journey as a teacher, and as someone and [as] a teacher who is culturally competent. So, I just want to get better. (Ms. Covington, personal communication, October 15, 2015)

Surprisingly, as a white female, novice educator, she immediately discerned the necessary deconstruction of White dominance that is essential in all curriculum development (e.g. teacher education), the discourse of multicultural education, and in teaching culturally diverse youth (Howard, 2006). She mentioned that teacher education programs could be redesigned to include a more multicultural focus or cultural perspective. Ms. Covington stated:

Yeah, I think that it definitely could have more of a multicultural perspective....I think that it could be expanded out a little to include more of the ed. classes, and those could be classes to prepare you for urban teaching. (Ms. Covington, personal communication, October 15, 2015)

As previously mentioned, Ms. Covington argued that culture affects the way we/students learn. Ms. Covington says, “Culture affects how we learn. So, if I’m teaching a curriculum I need to be aware that: A) all students don’t learn the same, but their culture actually affects the way that they learn” (Ms. Covington, personal communication, October 15, 2015). This idea of culture affecting the way we learn is important to recognize because it will help educators to acknowledge that all students learn differently, and their cultural/ethnic background influences the ways in which they learn. Ms. Covington also expressed to a certain degree that traditional curriculum is biased in the ways it tries to standardize learning to a one-size fits all mentality, when indeed research studies and literature have proven that this type of curriculum and instruction is geared towards Caucasian students. For instance, Leiding (2006) argues, “There is
no one size fits all test of intelligence or academic achievement” (Leiding, 2006, p. 255). Thus, stakeholders that implement mandatory procedures such as standardize testing, et cetera continue to widen the academic achievement gap that largely affects students of color. In addition, minority students are reported to have lower performance on these standardized tests than their white counterparts. Factors that also play into low performance on these tests are: fear, stress, and bias (Goodman & West-Olatunji, 2010; Ollman, 2012; Phillips, 2006). The fear that minority students face in taking these exams is due to the impact these tests have on their academic career. Moreover, the fear that is created holds everyone accountable and responsible for students learning, including the student. For this reason, traditional curriculum and pedagogy is considered irrelevant to students of color and the practice of this teaching instruction is not utilizing culturally responsive teaching skills and/or methods/techniques. Therefore, it is critical that we properly prepare preservice teachers for culturally diverse students in efforts to close the achievement gaps, and bring out the intellectually capabilities of all students.

Overall, Ms. Covington believed that in order for one to be effective in his/her teacher practice particularly when teaching urban youth teachers need training on how to be more critical and culturally aware of the students that he/she teaches (Banks, 1993; Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Goodman & West-Olatunji, 2010; Jordan-Irvine, 2003). One way to help teachers think critically and become more culturally aware is to redesign teacher education curriculum.

Analysis A: Through the Lens of CRT

From her interview, Ms. Covington expressed a strong passion for teaching, working with culturally diverse students, and the continual practice of cultural relevant teaching; as well as a desire to become more culturally competent. Her thoughts about her training from her teacher education program and the professors that she encountered helped her think about
teaching in urban environments, working with students of color, and what to possibly be prepared for. Covington states, “...[the teacher preparation program at this university] has affected my teaching,...tremendously because I just graduated so every idea that I [am] trying out right now I pretty much learned at [this institution]” (Ms. Covington, personal communication, October 15, 2015). She also expressed the desire to see her teacher education program be more expanded or redesigned, and include a more interwoven multicultural focus or thread in the education coursework. She believed that she was lucky to have the opportunity to be exposed to professors who challenged her thinking and were able to introduce a more multicultural framework in her course load/work. Covington says, “I think that I got lucky with the professors that I had, but I know that is probably not the case for everyone. So, having more opportunities to have classes with those professors, I think would be really important” (Ms. Covington, personal communication, October 15, 2015). Ms. Covington gave major credibility to her practice especially now in its early stages to the lessons learned in her teacher-training program. One lesson that she has learned that is relatable to the research question(s) and thematic throughout her interview is that:

the standard curriculum that I feel like is being pushed right now, teaches mostly to Eurocentric white students. And in the cultural other, many different things like how they organize their thoughts, or their study spaces, of their reactions all things different things that we don’t even or well that I didn’t think about before affects how they learn. (Ms. Covington, personal communication, October 15, 2015)

The impact and influence of culture was crucial in Ms. Covington’s perspective and experience in teaching culturally diverse students. We see this throughout her interview as she mentions the
lessons learned in her teacher-training program; as well as, her experience as a novice music education teacher.

Secondly, she acknowledged that teacher education programs overall should be redesigned to include a more multicultural approach. In addition, she provides suggestions on how to improve her specified program. She states:

*I took one class that was on *“Multiculturalism”* and I happen to have a really great professor…. It shouldn’t just be one class…. It should be throughout the entire four years…. I think that it could be expanded out a little to include more of the ed classes, and those could be classes to prepare you for urban teaching.* (Ms. Covington, personal communication, October 15, 2015)

One teaching method that can help in incorporating a more multicultural focus is culturally relevant pedagogy. Culturally relevant pedagogy, which also known as culturally responsive teaching and culturally relevant teaching is defined as:

*a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These cultural referents are not merely vehicles for bridging or explaining the dominant culture; they are aspects of the curriculum in their own right.* (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 18)

The main goal of culturally relevant pedagogy is to help students of color develop a cultural identity, embrace academic excellence, and still feel connected to their own culture (Ladson-Billings, 1994). In addition, the notion of ‘cultural relevance’ includes factors that relate to both the student and school culture (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Generally, culturally relevant pedagogy uses student culture as a means to maintain it, and help rise above negative effects of the dominant culture (Ladson-Billings, 1994).
Although Ms. Covington feels that she may have lucked out by having certain professors in her program that introduced her to culturally responsive teaching, she expressed that her program could benefit from having a more multicultural perspective threaded throughout their education courses/coursework/load; as well as, an extended field placement experience. She admits, “I think that they could rearrange things” (Ms. Covington, personal communication, October 15, 2015). She goes on to explain how the field placement experience could be extended but arranged in a way that does not overwhelm students:

Yeah, it would be nice to have it extended…I like to acknowledge that there is so much to get packed into four years. [In] the music ed program we have our three classes and then we student teach our fall quarter going into winter break, and then we take classes again. So, we just finish it in four years... And its jam packed, and so when I say things like yeah we should have the field work extended and have like of a more multiculturalism thread throughout then something has to go because it is jammed packed. (Ms. Covington, personal communication, October 15, 2015).

In essence, Ms. Covington believes that above-mentioned suggestions and recommendations could improve teacher education programs:

I think it could be beneficial because then you can...for example, try out...curriculum that I wrote for the middle schoolers. But I only taught the students for six weeks, and this curriculum was like for a whole year. That’s fine I don’t have to teach it for the whole year. But I wasn’t able to do as much as I would have liked...there’s so much trust building that has to happen if you are gonna ask the students to write their own raps or like talk about those tricky topics. So, [things] like trust building takes almost like two
months and I only had six weeks...you know? (Ms. Covington, personal communication, October 15, 2015)

In analyzing Ms. Covington’s interview through the lens of CRT, it depicts a combination of tenet numbers one: the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination and two: the challenge to dominant ideology (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, p. 63). The themes in her interview reflect a combination of CRT tenets one and two because she allows herself to embrace the notion of the importance of being culturally aware, culturally competent, and the practice of becoming culturally relevant in her teaching to engage and motivate students to learn. She also provides opportunities for her students to express themselves and utilize their voice in rap songs and other creative ways through music. She understands that being both culturally aware and culturally competent is a mindset that is both essential and effective when teaching in urban learning environments. In addition, as a white female she does understand as the same time, dominant society’s strong presence or influence in structuring norms in various institutions, such as education/academics. Ms. Covington admits that curriculum in traditional education is Eurocentric and needs a more multicultural approach. However, she understands that the effectiveness of the powers that be to implement a multicultural approach in both teacher education programs perspective and in one’s pedagogy. Ms. Covington reiterates in her interview that one must have a mindset that is culturally aware, culturally competent, and culturally sensitive in order to implement and embrace culturally relevant teaching practices, for effectiveness to be demonstrated through student academic success. The role that Ms. Covington plays in the interview as a recent graduate and a novice teacher speaks to her knowledge and understanding of her reality, philosophy of education and teaching culturally diverse students.
Overall, Ms. Covington’s interview embodies, demonstrates, and expresses practical ways of how a multicultural framework could benefit the redesign of teacher education programs. However, she does not directly or indirectly discuss if indeed preservice teachers are prepared to teach urban youth. Ms. Covington’s feedback is uniquely placed and essential to this research study because of her position as a recent graduate of this academic site (teacher education program) and her experience as a first-year teacher, teaching urban youth. Although she did not fully answer the question or concern for the unpreparedness of preservice educators in urban learning environments, she does indeed elaborate on the positive effects and influence of culturally responsive teaching and being culturally competent. She also acknowledged the significance of implementing this practice in ways that promote academic success; as well as, being an effective urban educator of culturally diverse youth. In sum, Ms. Covington believed that one should be or trained to be culturally aware, culturally competent, culturally responsive, and culturally sensitive. Her perspective was that of a student/recent graduate of a teacher education program and novice teacher working with culturally diverse students.

Ladson-Billings argues the importance of cultural relevancy in learning environments. Educators that apply this teaching method in both their curriculum and classroom see themselves and teaching as a calling, and as an art (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2001). They also trust that all students can succeed, and the key goal of culturally relevant teachers (as it should be for all teachers for that matter), is for all classrooms to have order, structure, and student engagement (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

In all, we see that Ms. Convington, other current students, preservice students mentioned later; as well as, her own current status as a former student of the teacher education program, and now novice teacher, speaks to ways that they consider socially unjustifiable or inequitable
practices and polices implemented that they have experienced in their own academic journey. In addition, what they have learned in the program or have developed a way of thinking or their own educational philosophy. Each participant gives some account of his or her own significant and/or unique experiences to how he or she believed what helped him or her to become aware and learning experiences that unmask in some way teachings that seek to expose and eliminate racial oppression. Ms. Convington believes that in order to do the above, urban educators must have a passion for teaching implement culturally relevant pedagogy, and have a desire to be more culturally competent.

**Mr. David’s Interview**

Teachers who hold within themselves perceptions of the inadequacy of students will never be able to teach them to be something greater than what they are. You cannot teach someone you do not believe in.

(Edmin, 2016, p. 207)

Mr. David is an undergraduate white male preservice teacher/student of the examined academic site. He found his passion for teaching several years ago while working on sustainable education projects in Uganda. Since then, he has focused his career on educating linguistically and culturally diverse students in urban areas. Mr. David believes that “the power of education lies in affirming and nurturing individual people to pursue their passions and explore their responsibility to shape society.” Mr. David will be graduating from the examined teacher education program this June 2016.

**Emerging Themes – Mr. David**

The emerging themes that occur in Mr. David’s interview that related to my research study were the notion of understanding the common perspectives of what it means to be an urban educator. He gave emphasis to the demographical settings as being that of a city and a city as being identified as an urban area. Thus, he claimed that an urban educator is one who is
prepared and experienced to meet the challenges in urban areas he states, “...the urban educator, you could just say is just the person who teaches in the city, but I think that the true urban educator is a person who can teach in the city” (Mr. David, personal communication, November 11, 2015). Meanwhile, Mr. David later referenced the location of his teacher education program, which is also the examined academic site, as an urban center all in itself.

In addition, Mr. David spoke to great length of what it means to be prepared to teach in urban learning environments from his perspective, and own personal experience in being trained to be an urban educator. He describes that an urban educator is one that is “…prepared and [experienced] with working with the specific challenges that come along with teaching in an urban area.” (Mr. David, personal communication, November 11, 2015). Mr. David expresses his preparation thus far in his program:

I think it’s just strictly by luck that [this university] has prepared me to be the person I am, and a whole bunch of personal initiative....Stuff that I’m doing myself, to better myself....( Mr. David, personal communication, November 11, 2015)

He went on to mention how his training had or in some cases had not prepared him to become an urban educator. He passionately shared a disturbing story of where one of his professors (a teacher educator and older White male) who was in his opinion in the category of second wave baby boomers; as well as, one who was at the end of his professional career and holding on with tenure, made a derogatory remark about some students of color. Mr. David said that the group of students was referred to as:

not quite gangbangers..."But”... He was telling an anecdote about when he was a middle school teacher and he’s talking about how they paired up their eighth-grade boys with kindergarten [students] for this reading program. It was really cute. It was
students who would work with one another and a mentor, but he said that the students were chosen, eighth-graders, who were not quite the gangbanger type, but you know, almost there... Or something like that and my jaw dropped. That a professional who is preparing me to be an educator would say that in that sphere. (Mr. David, personal communication, November 11, 2015)

Mr. David appeared to be appalled by his professor’s comments and professional attitude when describing what seems to be students of color in urban learning environments. In addition, it can be assumed that Mr. David took the description of the boys to be offensive, as his own jaws dropped while hearing stereotypical language being spouted out of his professor’s (who is also a teacher educator) mouth about urban youth of color. Although Mr. David is not a person of color, he chose to teach in an urban learning environment; for this reason, his professor’s narrative of the boys of color, caused him to feel some level of discomfort because he heard such verbiage from someone who was to prepare him to teach this population of students.

A teacher’s expectation influences student achievement both positively and negatively. Moreover, undervaluing student potential is a huge problem regardless of race (Ferguson, 2003). It is important that we equip teachers to set higher expectations for students, especially those who are from marginalized groups (Ferguson, 2003).

In addition, Mr. David also mentioned how some of his classes had not prepared him at all. For instance, he said, “the class I’m going to right now... it has prepared me none. The class that I just came from today, has prepared me none ... you know it’s just like for lack of better term just crappy quality sometimes” (Mr. David, personal communication, November 11, 2015). Mr. David strongly expressed this idea that preservice teachers often feel unprepared to teach in urban schools (Schaffer, 2012), unlike Ms. Covington and Ms. Isabella. It is important that
The preparation of teachers should go beyond the connection of linking theory with practice, but also have teachers take an inward look at themselves (at their own identity) (Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Schaffer, 2012). In addition, preservice teachers should reflect on their own ‘isms’ or ills of society that may prevent them from connecting with students, and negatively influencing their perceptions of culturally diverse students (Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Schaffer, 2012).

Mr. David gave both acknowledgement and recognition to certain professors who did actually in his opinion prepared him to teach culturally diverse students, he said:

*So I’ve been in the teacher education program for about three years now, and I have had maybe five professors who have prepared me to teach culturally diverse students.

...[Out] of the five professors who have impacted me, four or five professors impacted me at the college level. All of them are African American and they are the first African American teachers I have had in my education career. (Mr. David, personal communication, November 11, 2015)*

Mr. David acknowledged and recognized a few African American professors impacting him academically, and who have also prepared him to teach culturally diverse students is impressive. Mr. David’s positive experience with these faculty of color allowed him to embrace and listen to perspectives (which some may also consider as counter-narratives) and the voices of the marginalized experiences, being exposed to this opportunity, helped to prepare him to be culturally aware and competent concerning students of color and urban learning environments. On the other hand, Mr. David’s experience especially as a White male is unique in this case because typically in academic spaces, specifically people of color, are looked down upon or
considered inferior to some degree and for this reason “…whites are capable of such utterances because cognitive habit, history, and culture [have made them] unable to hear the range of relevant voices and grapple with what reasonably might be said in the voice of discrimination’s victims” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, p. 61). In addition, it is also argued that, “dominant groups often attempt to legitimate their position via ideological means or a set of beliefs that explains or justifies some actual or potential social arrangement” (Solórzano & Yosso, p. 61). In Mr. David’s case, he recognized and appreciated the experiences and knowledge of his professors of color that impacted his collegiate career and also had a large influence on his preparation on teaching diverse students in urban learning environments. Unlike other cases, where students of color in collegiate spaces:

agreed that merely “looking like” a person of color can be a cause for White professors, students, and college staff persons to draw negative assumptions about minorities and lower the expectations of them. They further recognized that being stereotyped carries a very real consequence beyond feeling bad about oneself. (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, p. 67)

In all, it is interesting to make the comparison or draw conclusions concerning students’ experiences with a professor’s teaching style or attitude towards them depending on the race(s) of both the student and professor. Despite race concerning one or the other determines to some degree or in certain cases a positive or negative experience for the student, which not only happens in higher education, but education across the board and can affect their academic success as a whole (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000).

Overall, comprehending and examining higher education’s racial climate is a significant characteristic/element in scrutinizing/studying/examining students of color, African Americans
in particular, academic performance, success, and pursuing graduate school (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000).

For this reason, Mr. David also linked preparation to being or becoming culturally competent. For instance, when asked what does cultural competency mean to him, one of the things he mentioned was that “...to be culturally competent, you just have to have the preparation. [I] think anyone can do it, but you need training” (Mr. David, personal communication, November 11, 2015). For this reason, he defines the term as:

[C]ultural competency ... is empathy and learning how to recognize and practice your empathy...[S]ome people would say it’s just...learning about a culture in order for you to be competent enough to work and live within that culture and speak that same language ...(Mr. David, personal communication, November 11, 2015)

Mr. David expressed that he actually felt torn between being culturally competent and not feeling culturally competent he states, “I do and I don’t. I do feel like I have the right attitude and the energy and commitment to do so. I don’t think I’ll ever get there...because it’s a process” (Mr. David, personal communication, November 11, 2015). For this reason, Mr. David acknowledged that teacher education programs could benefit from changes/redesigns/improvements. He mentioned how teacher education programs need fundamental change, instructional change, professional or personal change, and institutional change, and one way he is instituting change is redesigning what he does as an urban educator. He stated:

[We] need to fundamentally change what’s happening. I mean I guess I would say that’s what I’m trying to do with my own teaching as an elementary school teacher. I want to change the way that I work with students to be different from the teachers who have possibly negatively impacted them. Because I want to first of all, make my teaching
innovative also show students that it can happen, it could work. But that's a personal thing that I'm doing. But we need institutional change! (Mr. David, personal communication, November 11, 2015)

Thus, the incorporation of cultural approaches and opportunities is necessary in teacher education programs to prepare preservice teachers for urban environments (Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Schaffer, 2012). Teacher preparation is key to understanding the importance of educators’ execution of high expectations to students of culturally diverse backgrounds (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Ferguson, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Pollack, 2012; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992; Villegas & Lucas, 2002)

Therefore, Mr. David offers ways in which teacher programs can improve and better prepare preservice teachers to become effective urban educators. He suggests that teacher education programs use more critical perspectives and lenses. One way he believes this can happen is by introducing more critical perspectives and lenses in every class. Mr. David believes that instructors that do not provide critical perspectives or insight may be due to their own training. Mr. David says:

introduce more critical perspectives and lenses into every single class. Because I’ve had the ones that presented multiple perspectives and shown real-life examples from people of all different kinds, like all different kinds of people just adding layer, upon layer, upon layer of understanding from another person would help if it was done at every level. I think that a lot of teachers especially teacher educators who are just doing what they been doing since 1975, [and] there is no critical perspective there. There are no critical lenses on why we do what we do. (Mr. David, personal communication, November 11, 2015)
Another suggestion Mr. David makes is that teacher education programs should provide direct/structural work. He believes that direct/structural work could be offered through varied field experiences, keeping teacher education programs current, and have current professionals from various areas of the education field to come and speak to preservice educators about issues that are occurring in the field or in their own profession. He states, “Another thing is direct and structured work in all different kinds of communities…. have teacher preparation programs make students go to different sorts of schools and help them do that” (Mr. David, personal communication, November 11, 2015). Mr. David also expressed the need for students to have a holistic view in their student teaching experience so that certain stigmas and misunderstandings about urban learning environments will not take place or at least be minimized to some degree. He trusts that the stereotyping of urban schools not being safe is far stretched, and the stigmas and misunderstandings of urban learning environments blocks communication with others; as well as, prevents experience and exposure to the reality of urban education. He believes:

there’s a lot of stigma about urban schools that say you don’t want to go there; it’s not safe. You don’t come from that neighborhood…that’s bullshit. You need to have some understanding of your surroundings, but other than that all your stigma and misunderstandings is just going to get in the way of you communicating with people and experiencing the world. (Mr. David, personal communication, November 11, 2015)

Although Mr. David personally feels as though he should not be required to have more experience because he has so much to do already, he feels that the field experience in and of itself should be expanded, but with structural support. He stated:

if the program is changed around to adapt to that and made more field experience part of the goal… yeah, definitely with structural support. Because a lot of professors would just
send you out in the field, and the only thing is you turn in a time log and evaluation, and reflection paper. And you know a lesson plan that you may or may not teach.... I would love more like that and of me teaching and getting experience and feedback. (Mr. David, personal communication, November 11, 2015)

Overall, Mr. David expressed throughout his interview that both teacher education programs and teacher educators must prepare preservice teachers to help eliminate issues (i.e. cultural biasness, perpetuation of racism, racial stereotypes, and traditional Eurocentric curriculum) that create the cycle of them occurring or re/occurring, which ultimately causes students in urban environments especially to fail academically. In addition, we must provide preservice educators with professional development and networking opportunities to help develop and evolve them as effective professional educators in the field. For this reason, workshops, committees, and other professional development opportunities concerning multicultural education and culturally relevant pedagogy are necessary to help change racial attitudes of educators that teach children of color (Baker, 2012; Banks & Grambs, 1972; Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Pollack, 2012; Schaffer, 2012). Effective strategies are needed to change the racial beliefs of adults, children, and educators in order for all children to receive a valuable holistic education, and succeed academically (Banks & Grambs, 1972; Darling-Hammond et al., 1992). Overall, the belief is that if teachers have high expectations of students, students will perform on a higher level academically (Ferguson, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992).

Analysis B: Through the Lens of CRT

While interviewing Mr. David, I felt that he expressed a level of frustration related to his experience in his teacher education program and a strong desire to redesign his own future
pedagogy. He articulated both the positive and negative influences that he was able to experience with the teacher educators he had in his program. Although he mentions a few highlights and a few African American professors that influenced his overall experience, he generally felt unprepared to teach urban youth. Mr. David claims, “…I am just so frustrated and disappointed with my education in certain ways” (Mr. David, personal communication, November 11, 2015). The frustration and disappointment that he feels is later given in details as he conveys how that a lot of what he learned, he had to initiate the process of networking and building professional relationships with other professionals in the education field. He states, “You know I haven’t really been put [into] contact with those kinds of resources through my education…..” (Mr. David, personal communication, November 11, 2015). In addition, later in the interview Mr. David said, “And I think that like just my personal experience with the most part has given me those tools, but my teacher education program has not done so” (Mr. David, personal communication, November 11, 2015).

For this reason, it is believed that teachers are in need of more preparation and training in regards to teaching students, who are culturally diverse and categorized as disadvantaged (Baker, 2012; Banks & Grambs, 1972; Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Leiding, 2006; Milner, 2010; Nieto, 2010; Pollack, 2012; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992; Schaffer, 2012).

Essentially, it is important that we confront, deal with, acknowledge, and recognize that teacher expectations and perceptions of students initially happen and develop in teacher education programs (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Pollack, 2012; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992). Thus, Mr.
David reflected on his university’s framework of becoming a culturally diverse *urban educator* and acknowledges that his peers, as well as, himself do not know what it means, he admits:

> you know [this university] has this... framework that’s like 10 words,... it’s like no one knows what it means. And no one addresses it, but they put it on all of the syllabi. (Mr. David, personal communication, November 11, 2015)

For this reason, teacher education programs should be redesigned in a way to address issues of cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity so that negative perceptions of school-aged urban youth would be minimized, and more of a cultural understanding, acknowledgment, and appreciation would be embraced. Therefore, teacher educators must adequately prepare preservice students for the obstacles of issues relating to racial dominance and cultural diversity (Howard, 2006). In addition, Mr. David acknowledged that it is important that preservice educators actually be taught in urban learning environments and not encouraged to strictly focus on privileged schools, especially if they are training to be urban educators. Mr. David says:

> And another thing is a lot of [this institution] is physically located within an urban center and has the ability to put its teacher candidates in urban classrooms to gain experience with these things. However, I’ve noticed that a lot of teachers will recommend that you visit very upper-class magnet... That are you know physically in an urban center but that’s not the urban classroom in my opinion... But you know, teachers, professors, are kind of shuffling their students into these privilege[d] classrooms... they love to student teach us in “the prize schools”, and they love to get students hired at these like great schools and it’s like I have been actively not going to those schools in order for me to learn more about people. (Mr. David, personal communication, November 11, 2015)
In essence, it is crucial to improve teacher education programs in order to prepare and properly train multicultural urban teachers for urban youth. The redesign of teacher preparation programs should focus on meeting the needs of the students (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992). Darling-Hammond et al. (1992) elaborate on the crucial and severe need of redesign of teacher education programs:

Colleges and universities must develop post-baccalaureate programs of study aimed at improving the teaching practice of [both preservice and] experienced teachers. School systems must rethink conventional in-service and staff-development opportunities. Teachers must demand challenging learning opportunities from both of these settings as well as require that their colleagues, new and experienced, participate and invest in their own continued learning. (p. 41)

While incorporating, the strategies mentioned above that Mr. David mentioned throughout the course of his interview would help create safe learning environments, help promote academic success, and reciprocate positive-professional teacher attitude towards urban youth that are low-income and even poor young students of color. Mr. David also suggested other methods and/or approaches to improve teacher education programs he stated:

*I would say sort of [have] seminar work from people who are working currently in the field: ... teachers, guidance counselors, administrators that are in these schools with students of color. [Learning] from them and understanding the things that [are issues today] because it’s hard to say that it’s hard to keep the teacher education program current. [One] of the ways to do so is to introduce people who are teaching right now ....I think what it comes down to is getting lots of different experience and learning from lots of different people* (Mr. David, personal communication, November 11, 2015)
Mr. David adequately answered my research questions by providing his stance from a senior graduating from his program embarking on his new chapter and professional career in education. He provided what is considered to be his own critical perspective concerning his experience in his teacher education program. For example, he provided narratives; mentioned influential professors that helped shaped his educational philosophy, personal insights, and shares personal initiative of what he did to make his experience and preparation/training to become a teacher better for him. He indeed expressed a level of frustration with how current teacher educators and programs are training their preservice educators. Although he experienced both the good and challenging sides of becoming a prepared urban educator he consistently reports how his own self-sufficiency helped him navigate his program and gave him the ambition to be an effective urban educator. Overall, we see especially in Mr. David’s case that “The indictment is not against the teachers. It is against the kind of education they receive” (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p.82), and most importantly “Focusing on teachers and prospective teachers…is even more urgent today than it was in [the past]” (Howard, 2006, p. xvii).

Mr. David’s interview reflects themes of interconnectedness between CRT tenets number one, the centrality of race and racism, tenet number two, the challenge to dominant ideology, and tenet number three, commitment to social justice (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, p. 63.) First, Mr. David’s interview reflected themes of CRT tenet number one, the centrality of race and racism (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, p. 63), by giving accounts of counter storytelling that were told to him through his own experiences that he sought after during his time in the teacher education program. In addition, embracing and recognizing some faculty of color as being influential to his academic career, and how their experiences (which could in some way be expressed through counter-storytelling) shaped his thinking and educational philosophy of what it means to be an
urban educator. Secondly, Mr. David’s interview themes reflects CRT tenet number two, the challenge to dominant ideology (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, p. 63.), by acknowledging that racism and or negative racial attitudes yet exist, especially from teacher educators who teach at colleges/universities that help prepare urban educators. He tells his own story about how a white male teacher educator in his teacher education program stereotyped some boys of color while trying to make a point, and giving an example of how well and/or effective a reading strategy was that they were using in a reading program (Mr. David, personal communication, November 11, 2015). Mr. David describes how appalled he was with the teacher educator’s description of the boys/youth of color as he described them as “…not quite the gangbanger type but you know, almost there” (Mr. David, personal communication, November 11, 2015). This statement from his professor caused Mr. David’s mouth to drop because he did not suspect or expect a professional teacher/educator would categorize or stereotype male students of color to that degree (Mr. David, personal communication, November 11, 2015). This instance and Mr. David’s concern depicts in some ways CRT tenet number two, the challenge to dominant ideology ((Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, p. 63)) because it demonstrates how dominant society’s standards, ways of thinking, and stereotyping of others controls as well as reinforces certain types of racism (i.e. structure and institutional) in society (Hiraldo, 2010). In addition, it also demonstrates how if post-secondary education ignores the existence of institutional and systematic racism, multicultural/diversity initiatives and actions become obsolete and ineffective (Hiraldo, 2010). In other words, higher education especially in this case teacher educators should practice what is being preached in their mission and vision statements concerning diversity and the recognition/acknowledgement of preparing urban educators and preparing to teach diverse learners. Lastly, Mr. David’s interview depicts CRT tenet number three, commitment to social
justice ((Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, p. 63)) by expressing his frustration with his education in the teacher education program and the state of urban educator as we know it today. Mr. David explained in his interview how he has met and worked with a lot of teacher educators that are baby boomers and at the end of their career. However, he feels as though they are holding on to tenure, which he feels maybe a hindrance to why the teacher education program is stagnated, demonstrating an older model of teaching and less culturally responsive, if any (Mr. David, personal communication, November 11, 2015). In addition, he thinks that some of the white teacher educators in his program are racists because of how they describe and objectify other groups especially people of color. He tells a story, mentioned earlier, how is White teacher educator described boys of color as “not quite the gangbanger type but almost there (Mr. David, personal communication, November 11, 2015). In these moments, we see that CRT tenet number three, commitment of social justice (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, p. 63) is depicted through Mr. David’s interview and necessary for the examined program because to some degree based on Mr. David’s responses, the program reflects some embedded racism that is in American society (Hiraldo, 2010). In addition, the perpetuation of hegemonic practices or white dominance essentially benefit white individuals only. For this reason, Hiraldo (2010) argues that it is necessary that more people of color to earn advanced degrees; particularly doctorate degrees and pursue faculty positions. Allow them to teach and become part of the driving force and owners of the curriculum, which would provide them with the freedom to design and become owners of their curriculum based on their understanding, philosophy of knowledge and perspective/stance/moral belief system (Hiraldo, 2010). The systems or powers that be that have a huge influence on how the institutions are ran; therefore it is important to consider what is being reinforced (Hiraldo, 2010).
In all, Mr. David’s interview speaks to the CRT tenets one, two, and three. He shared his experience of learning and being impacted by a few faculty of color that helped shape his education philosophy, through their (counter-narratives), sharing his own personal encounters with teacher educators who have negative perceptions of students of color (the negative racial attitudes of some teacher educators), and expressing his own frustration with his experience in his teacher education program. In addition, he also acknowledged that change is needed on a variety of levels to help better prepare preservice educators to teach in urban environments through a commitment to social justice. In essence, Mr. David’s interview identifies through the lens of CRT some inequitable practices and policies that preservice teachers should be aware of when teaching, and how some of the experiences in his teacher education program sought out to some degree, how to expose and/or eliminate racial oppression. Mr. David plans to utilize what he has learned in the program and also by his own personal efforts to become an effective urban educator.

Ms. Isabella’s Interview

How successful the teacher is in the classroom is directly related to how successful the teacher thinks the students can be. Teachers limit themselves and their students when they put caps on what their students can achieve. (Edmin, 2016, p. 207)

I had the opportunity to interview Ms. Isabella a minority Middle Eastern female student who is currently an enrolled undergraduate senior at the examined academic site. Ms. Isabella informed me that she has persevered through many personal challenges to pursue her career as a teacher. Ms. Isabella has always found that she had an instant connection with children. However, her cultural roots forced her to follow the medical field. Yet, she came across a volunteer opportunity for a program, which allowed her to go to a high school in this city and mentor a freshman student after school. While mentoring, Ms. Isabella realized that the chosen
major in the medical field did not allow her to be hands on with students. She then decided that she wanted to become a teacher. Ms. Isabella wanted to help make a difference in a child's life that would last. She believes and states, “Behind every doctor, engineer, writer, or any other successful career there is a teacher.” Ms. Isabella believes that without teachers, the world would be an empty slate and that is why she chose to become a teacher.

**Emerging Themes – Ms. Isabella**

Themes that emerged in Ms. Isabella’s interview that were relevant to my research study are the notion of understanding the general perceptions of what it means to be an urban educator. She gave emphasis to the significance and the importance of understanding of cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity that educators (especially urban educators) must encourage and/or embrace in knowing that not all students are the same; for this reason, one must consider and acknowledge the presence of diverse cultures in the classroom and in any learning environment. In addition, Ms. Isabella shared her perspective of the program, which was significantly different from Mr. David, but is similar to Ms. Covington in that as she felt her program has overall confidently prepared her for teaching culturally diverse students and urban youth. Ms. Isabella states, “I think you know not being biased, but [this university] is very, very good” (Ms. Isabella, personal communication, February 16, 2016).

Furthermore, she expounded on this viewpoint later as she defined what cultural competency meant to her, and if she felt as if she herself was culturally competent. Ms. Isabella explained in her own words (after I gave her the definition) what cultural competency meant to her, she stated:

*I wouldn’t say that I’m the best in knowing different cultures. [However,] if I’m approached... I would want to get to know, you know, a little bit about [their] culture. So*
that is something that I can connect the student with. Something that I learned through [this program] is connecting or making interpersonal relations or connecting your students’ experiences to your lessons or even to your classroom setting. (Ms. Isabella, personal communication, February 16, 2016)

Moreover, when asked if she felt as though she was culturally competent her reply was:

*I would say that I am sensitive to other cultures....Though that I am not aware of all cultures,...I would love to learn about my students’ cultures....I feel like if you ask me this question ten years from now, I would have a more clearer answer for you. Right now, I’m just learning.* (Ms. Isabella, personal communication, February 16, 2016).

Finally, Ms. Isabella described ways in which the program could improve to have a more multicultural framework. She spoke of ways that her program or teacher education programs in general could be redesigned and/or improved to include a more multicultural framework. She explains:

*[this university] does a great job talking about different cultures and races and how to implement them into our lessons as future teachers. But I feel like this is not something that you just put in you know like “oh don’t forget you [have] to recognize culture.” I think it should be a class by itself.* (Ms. Isabella, personal communication, February 16, 2016)

In addition, she admits:

*I would love a class in multiculturalism.... But if I had to start all over, I would say I wouldn’t mind if I had that [extra course/time], or like a professional development class, I would love to do something like that [as well].* (Ms. Isabella, personal communication, February 16, 2016)
Overall, Ms. Isabella was implying that there is a need for teacher-student connections to be real and authentic. In addition, it is also important that as these authentic professional relationships develop between students and teachers, the connection should be real and not feel overwhelming. Thus, learning how to establish a balance, and keeping a balance when making genuine connections with students is crucial; for instance, she states:

*learn not to pressurize. I guess it could be a downfall if you get too [much] into the culture or you can annoy the child too... So how to know that balance where you are connecting with the student, but you are not letting them know, hey I just spent 5 hours Googling and researching your culture, you know? So where do you keep that balance?*

(Ms. Isabella, personal communication, February 16, 2016)

Although Ms. Isabella desired that the program would have more classes in multiculturalism; as well as, professional development opportunities, she strongly depicted how her teacher education program prepares preservice educators for urban classrooms by providing them with strategies and techniques that they can use in their own classrooms. In all, Ms. Isabella expressed the idea that in order for schools to be transformed, educators must be knowledgeable and aware of the influences of diverse students and how these influences affect their behavior (Banks, 1993). Ultimately, it is important for teacher education programs to consider the components of multicultural education in order to expand the thinking of both teacher educators and students. However, the implementation of multicultural education in teacher preparation should be both a process and a reform movement (Quezada & Romo, 2004).

**Analysis C: Through the Lens of CRT**

In interviewing Ms. Isabella, I sensed that both in her personal life and volunteer experiences she was able to not only decide what she wanted to do as a career (become a
teacher), but also she gained self-discovery in the process. She discovered that the stereotype of cultural assumption, which for her cultural background was to enter the field of medicine, but felt a different calling, for teaching, and she pursued it. For this reason, and others she is passionate about learning and teaching cultural diverse students based on her academic journey as a Middle Eastern female student. Her desire to build professional bonds with students and being cultural sensitive is genuine and imperative to her as she places herself in their shoes, while reflecting on her own experiences as a student of color.

Ms. Isabella feels as though her teacher education program is doing an excellent job in preparing her for urban learning environments. She states, “I feel in every class we always cover cultural thinking, culture recognition, and differentiation in every class [and] even as part of our lesson plans” (Ms. Isabella, personal communication, February 16, 2016). In addition, Ms. Isabella believes that her teacher education program can benefit from an inclusion of more courses pertaining to multiculturalism, and the inclusion of professional development opportunities. She states,

*I think it should be a class by itself. [An] extra class, I know its more work, ...but I think it’s really important. Yeah, you know it’s not something that you can just talk about ...for a little chunk in a three-hour class. I think it should be a little bit more expanded and have its own class....Yeah, we should have a class that’s dedicated to keep in consideration the different type of cultures, races, you’ll come across in your education career.* (Ms. Isabella, personal communication, February 16, 2016)

This idea of incorporating more of a cultural lens to teacher education courses, classrooms or learning environments as a whole speaks to the initial understanding of what multicultural education is, and is set to do. Multicultural education is an idea or concept, an
educational reform movement, and a process to change the structure and systems of education so that all students have an equal opportunity to successfully achieve academically in schools (Banks, 1993). In addition, as Ms. Isabella acknowledges in her statement above, these types of classes (classes that include a multicultural approach/framework) should be expanded and weaved throughout teacher education programs and not just presented in an one, three-hour perquisite or requirement course, touching upon surface level understandings and/or themes about culture and its impact on urban youth and learning environments. Furthermore, Jordan-Irvine (2003) along with other scholars Darling-Hammond et al. (1992), Howard (2006), and Ladson-Billings (2001) suggest the need for the redesign of teacher education programs that mandate the need and the use of cultural awareness, diversity, and relevance in their pedagogy, and in the incorporation of these same ideas in school curriculum. Additionally, some scholars also believe that a cultural tactic should be called upon for its use in teacher preparation programs because it can assist with the dispelling of the miseducation and misperceptions of urban youth, and prepare preservice white teachers to teach in culturally diverse schools (Baker, 2012; Banks & Tucker, 2013; Howard, 2006; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Nieto, 2010; Schaffer, 2012). Overall, the major purpose of multicultural education is to improve achievement for all students despite race, creed, and color (Banks, 1993). A multicultural approach is needed in order to create and develop effective learner-center classrooms. In addition, teachers need to learn the importance of culture, the utilization and importance of implementing a cultural approach in classrooms, and seeing education culturally in order to prepare preservice teachers for a growing number of diverse classrooms in present and future education (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2001). For this reason, incorporating a multicultural approach in the redesign of teacher
education and pedagogy would broaden the thinking of both preservice teachers and students. It would help them recognize, identify, and acknowledge similarities that are different between their cultural background and others. It also challenges teacher educators to stretch beyond traditional, current, hegemonic, racist, and philosophical belief systems to a more diverse, relevant, and multicultural approach to both teaching and learning for teachers and students (Baker, 2012; Banks & Tucker, 2013; Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Howard, 2006; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Nieto, 2010; Schaffer, 2012). In all, Ms. Isabella expressed how the implementations of multicultural lenses are used currently in her program, and how it would better/improve teacher education in the near future. However, she does not address or fully express directly or indirectly if teachers are unprepared to teach culturally diverse students. This unaddressed piece in the study could be due to the fact that she is yet undergoing her process of learning how to be an urban educator and have not yet gained experience as an in-service teacher beyond her volunteer and field (student-teaching) experience unlike Ms. Covington. However, Ms. Isabella was very candid in her thoughts and ideas so far about the inclusion of multicultural frameworks in her teacher education program, and how essential it is for her learning now as a preservice educator to be prepared to go into urban learning environments and teach culturally diverse students. In sum, Ms. Isabella believes that cultural awareness and sensitivity are important to learn and embrace as a future teacher. This is especially important to her because of her own personal experiences in her academic journey that allow her to be empathic to students who are of color and experiencing challenges in school and obtaining academic success. She admits, “I wouldn’t want somebody or another student in my classroom to feel uncomfortable because I have been in their shoes.” (Ms. Isabella, personal communication, February 16, 2016). In her statement above, we can see her compassion and her
urgent desire to be a transparent, culturally aware, culturally sensitive and effective urban educator.

Overall, scholars have recommended academic/educational propositions, insights, and theoretical approaches to help better prepare preservice urban educators for their future reality with working with culturally diverse students in urban learning environments. For instance, Darling-Hammond et al. (1992) suggest that we embrace the seven propositions that they and other academics recommend because they believe “The importance of professionalization is not to aggrandize teachers, but to create a teaching force that will meet the needs of the student population, while also preparing American to face the next millennium” (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992, p. 51). In addition, Milner (2010) proposes the idea that “As teachers negotiate classroom relationships with youth across cultural, gender, linguistic, racial, sexual, and socioeconomic differences … identities get exposed, deconstructed, and disrupted in the classroom as a matter of routine” (Milner, 2010, p. 15). Moreover, Ladson-Billings (2001) perceives that accusation is not against the educators, but towards the instruction that they obtain. Furthermore, Jordan-Irvine (2003) explains how approaching curriculum using a cultural eye as she explains intensively is a new way to “(a) envision new ways of closing the gap between Black and White students’ achievement, and (b) see that the problem of the achievement gap reflects a much larger and intractable problem of race and racism in America” (Jordan-Irvine, 2003, pp. 28-29).

Ultimately, Ms. Isabella’s interview exemplifies CRT tenet one the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination and CRT tenet number five the transdisciplinary perspective (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000). She, a minority herself, gives her own narrative (counter-narrative) of her academic journey. Her narrative sharing serves as a
shadow to her own approach and in the developing of her educational philosophy, and sincere passion for teaching. She shares her story and expresses the struggle and pressure of combatting the urge to follow a career field that is chosen by most, in her cultural background. She discovers through her own life experiences and volunteer opportunities that she has a passion for teaching and helping others. She explains how she in some ways understands the importance of connecting with students in diverse backgrounds because of her own academic journey as a minority student.

Ms. Isabella understands the importance of connecting with students because she had her own experiences, and injustices during her academic career, which helped her to realize the importance of teachers being culturally aware, embracing both racial and cultural differences; as well as, gender identification (Ms. Isabella, personal communication, February 16, 2016). In addition, she believes that it is important for teachers to connect student’s lived experiences to their learning/curriculum. For all these reasons above and more, Ms. Isabella’s interview demonstrates CRT tenet number one as it tells of her personal/marginalized experiences as a student of color and her encounters with other youth of color, which influenced her to change her prospective career choice to one that she is most passionate about...teaching youth of color.

Furthermore, Ms. Isabella’s interview also depicts CRT tenet number five the transdisciplinary perspective as she desires for her teacher education program to have/implement more classes concerning the different type of cultures and races that preservice educators will encounter in their career. She also emphasizes that in learning about diverse groups of students that it is important not to (as she coins the term), pressurize (Ms. Isabella, personal communication, February 16, 2016). In other words, she believes that educators should learn about students, but not to the point that it becomes overwhelming to students or make them feel
uncomfortable. Overall, in reflecting on her experiences with the teacher education program and her own academic journey she emphasizes the necessity of having more multicultural courses and professional development throughout the phases of her teacher training. In doing so, she believes it will expose, break barriers, and give opportunity to discuss issues of race and culture in a way that will help preservice students learn how to break perpetuating cycles and stereotypes (Hiraldo, 2000). Although Ms. Isabella is a student finishing her teacher training, her thought process, educational philosophy, passion, and general cultural relevancy illustrate in some way both CRT tenets numbers one and five. Her feedback also acknowledges and indicates how her program demonstrates teachings that she has learned that seek to expose and eliminate racial oppression, as well as; inequitable practices that preservice educators should be aware of when teaching in urban learning environments. Even though she has some experience with courses that teach from a multicultural standpoint, during her last stages of the program, she believes that her program should incorporate more in-depth standalone multicultural courses that discusses the reality of the urban populations and learning environments of culturally diverse students.

**Mr. Jesus’ Interview**

The way that a teacher teaches can be traced directly back to the way that the teacher has been taught. (Edmin, 2016, p. 206)

Mr. Jesus is a Mexican American male and an undergraduate student at the examined academic site. He is an enrolled senior in his final semester of his teacher program. His major is science education as he is pursuing a career as a science teacher. Mr. Jesus is passionate about education and becoming an urban educator in diverse communities, especially in urban learning environments. He has had a multiple experiences that has shaped his educational philosophy in which he desires to see education especially teacher education programs, improved to better prepare preservice teachers for urban youth. Mr. Jesus’s experiences which include both his
own varied experiences as a student and the knowledge that he has gained in his teacher training have impacted him in a way to become an effective teacher, one that bridges both the curriculum/content and his own experiences together to make learning engaging, and reciprocating for both the student and the teacher. Mr. Jesus speaks of his own truth, the truth of others, and his own future desires for the betterment of teacher education and the lived experiences/exposures of teachers and learners as a whole.

**Emerging Themes – Mr. Jesus**

Themes that emerged in this interview, which are related to my research study, are the ideas of what it means to be an urban educator, the mixed feelings of being both prepared and unprepared to teach urban youth, what it means to be culturally competent, and offering more multicultural education courses and experiences to better prepare preservice educators for urban learning environments. Mr. Jesus elaborated on what he believed to be both the general thought and a teacher’s perspective of the term urban educator, by connecting it to both the demographics of working in a city and with youth of color. In addition, Mr. Jesus explained how he has feelings of being both prepared and unprepared to teach urban youth. He admitted that he would not feel fully prepared until he had gained experience in the classroom. Yet, he did acknowledge that his teacher education program had done a fairly good job preparing him to teach in urban learning environments. He also discussed how certain classes made him feel prepared. However, Mr. Jesus also believes that prepared is a tricky term and that he struggles with it because he does not know if he would ever feel entirely prepared for the classroom. Nevertheless, he does feel that this program in general prepares him for the kinds of students that he may be exposed to in the classroom. Mr. Jesus articulates:
I can definitely say that ... the majority of the classes that I’ve had here so far made me feel more prepared. [However], I don’t feel like I will ever completely be prepared. I don’t think I’ll ever be ready for the classroom until after I actually walk in the classroom.... So I feel like prepared is a tricky word for me. Cause I don’t know or think that’ll I’ll be completely prepared for the classroom. [Until] I’m actually in there and have some experience in the classroom as a teacher. But I think to your question, I think that [this institution] does a fairly good job in preparing you...in that regard, I feel like you’re better prepared for the kinds of students that you might see. (Mr. Jesus, personal communication, February 16, 2016)

Although Mr. Jesus believes that his teacher education prepares him to teach culturally diverse students, he adamantly believes that this type of preparation is more substantial to Caucasian preservice educators who have no experience or exposure with interacting or engaging with people of color. He expressed:

*I think it’s more important for, and I don’t want this to come off wrong, but I think it’s more important for White teachers who might have grown up in a more rural more White suburban upbringing where you might not have had interactions with people of color, different backgrounds, different languages that kind of thing. So [if] you grew up in a big city like [this one] and you got exposed or you have like Black friends and White friends and Black teachers and Asian teachers and you got exposed to all that then you may feel better prepared. But I feel like if you especially grow up in a setting where that wasn’t the norm, then being exposed to that kind of learning about some of the statistics you know, Black boys are more likely to be placed in special education, you know Asian people are less likely to be diagnosed with autism ...which is lower than the norm even for White*
people. I think that kind of thing, I think it does give you a better window of the
world, ... But I do think it is more important for White students who were not exposed to a
diverse, diverse group of people. (Mr. Jesus, personal communication, February 16,
2016)

Along with understanding the significance of who may be able to benefit more from the
preparation of teaching in urban learning environments, Mr. Jesus also expressed how the term
culturally competent resonates to him the importance of understanding cultures. In addition, he
believes the term echoes the notion of understanding cultural difference, the understanding to not
group or categorize (stereotype or assume) about cultures because there are also cultures within
cultures. When asked the question what does culturally competency means to you, he stated:

a sense that you understood other cultures ... I can say that if I was culturally competent
than I'll feel comfortable talking to [a] Black person and feel like I wasn’t going to insult
them in some way, whether directly or indirectly, or be insensitive to that person, and
especially to a student .... So just being aware of the type of things you can say the things
you can’t say or shouldn’t say. The competency for me says that it’s like the basic level
like the most necessary level .... understanding better all those cultural differences. (Mr.
Jesus, personal communication, February 16, 2016)

Even though Mr. Jesus explains how cultural competency connects to understanding
cultures, he is the only (preservice teacher participant) that admits how he does not feel as
though he is totally culturally competent, and suggests that his program incorporates more
multicultural education courses. He confessed this, when asked if he felt culturally competent:

No. I would definitely say that I’m not. I don’t fit the typical Latino student. Even if I
was not Catholic, which I think is generally tied to being Latino. And I can’t say that I
Mr. Jesus believed that one way his teacher education program can improve is by offering more multicultural education experiences, especially for those who plan on teaching in urban settings. He believes that this type of experience would be beneficial if it was made available or made into a requirement because it would ensure a certain level of cultural sensitivity. Mr. Jesus stated:

*I think that especially if you are gonna teach [in urban settings] ... then maybe you should be able [to], [or] you should be required to take an [ethnic or cultural studies course].*"  *I think that could be really beneficial so that you’re not just stepping on people’s toes.* (Mr. Jesus, personal communication, February 16, 2016)

In addition, Mr. Jesus senses that improving teacher education programs with a more multicultural framework could also help normalize/standardize other teacher education programs approach because it would ensure that all preservice teachers were being prepared/trained the same or in similar fashions. Mr. Jesus concluded:

*...So you got all these different kinds of schools from different regions and probably with very diverse and different students, who are going to become teachers. But I think if you’re going to normalize, and if you’re going to standardize the way that you become a teacher, I think it is more important and [critical] that you set up a system for preparing teachers to teach a multicultural student body.* (Mr. Jesus, personal communication, February 16, 2016)
On the contrary, Mr. Jesus also mentioned what he considered good things that his teacher education program offers; as well as, ways in which they can improve their program as well. He stated:

*I think that [the university] specifically has a diverse faculty, which I think is very helpful.... I [also] think that the university itself does a good job of hiring or providing professors who have come from a different cultural background or a different ethnic background.... I think [it’s] important to try to have a diverse faculty... For college students, not only because I think it’s good to see people who look like you if you’re a multicultural teacher, if you’re an ethnic teacher I think it’s good to see someone who looks like you. Sometimes it’s good to see somebody that doesn’t look like you,....depending upon where you might have gone to school previously. But I think it’s also important in terms of the background they (the professor) brings to that position....you know there’s a curriculum that needs to be taught, and I think they teach that curriculum. [However], I also think that [some] teach it through their own perspective [at] the same time. Not to say that one way of teaching is better than another, but I think getting both, or getting a good balance, or getting a mixture ... of those ideologies might help you in your teaching style. (Mr. Jesus, personal communication, February 16, 2016)

Furthermore, as it relates to extending field experience Mr. Jesus had several thoughts as they related to this topic. One is that he felt as though it was good to have minimums based on student’s course load because of the difficulty to handle it effectively and balance it; as well as, do well in other courses. Second, he believed that more field experience was better because it helped you prepare for the teaching career, gave you hands-on experience, being able to see what
is appropriate and what is inappropriate; as well as being able to balance and show theory can be implemented with practice. Third, obtaining experience in a schools should be broken up and gain in different schools. He argued:

*I think from a student perspective, [depending] on what else you have going on. [It’s] harder to get that [extended] experience if you have 18 credit hours, versus 12 credit hours. I think then it’s easier to fit in more field experience [with a lesser course load]. I think more field experience is always better because I think that [is] ultimately what you are preparing yourself for.... all the theories are great, I think they’ll help you to become a teacher. I think without actually realizing what that looks like in a classroom, its hard to be an effective teacher....[If] you’re gonna have 15 hours, I think you should have five hours of public school, you should get five hours at a private school, you should get five hours you know maybe at a magnet school, versus a low achieving school....So I think being able to see when it’s appropriate, when it is not appropriate....[A]ll that stuff is great, but if you don’t just see what it looks like in the real world, how it can be implemented, and then I think it’s not irrelevant but it’s close to irrelevant. (Mr. Jesus, personal communication, February 16, 2016)

Overall, Mr. Jesus believes that it may be a challenge to extend the field experience depending upon that individual student course or workload. However, he does think that having more field experience is good, but it should be varied in different learning environments in order to be able to apply the knowledge and skills learned, decipher or determine how and when to use a method or theory, and how to apply it to any given circumstance.
Analysis D: Through the Lens of CRT

While interviewing Mr. Jesus, I sensed that he was taking a very critical look at the movement/progress of teacher education programs historically, currently, and in the future. He argued the most important elements he believed would improve teacher education programs were: being self-aware, culturally sensitive, and self-conscious, in which he believes will cause himself; as well as, others to be prepared to teach urban youth. He explained how no one will ever be fully prepared until they gain experience in the field. However, he did acknowledge that the teacher education program, in his perspective, did a good job in preparing preservice educators to teach in urban environments. Generally, Mr. Jesus thoughts align and correlate with both Ms. Covington and Ms. Isabella in a general sense on how the program does a good job in preparing preservice educators for urban learning environments. However, his idea of how to better the program supports Mr. David’s idea of taking an in-depth look into implementing a more cultural approach to creating an all-around experience of preparedness for future educators especially those entering into urban learning environments and/or teaching urban youth. Mr. Jesus senses the need for preservice educators to be more culturally aware and culturally sensitive in order to effectively teach urban youth. However, in order to be culturally aware or sensitive one must be exposed to various different experiences, and take/study multicultural or ethnic education courses to understand how to be or learn to apply to one’s pedagogy. Mr. Jesus attempts to answer the research question(s) based on his own experience as a preservice educator, his ideas/concerns and the experiences of others in the field of education. In a sense, he answered the question as it relates to his current state as he feels as though he will not be fully prepared to teach in urban environments. In addition, he felt as though teacher education programs as a whole, especially those whose aim is to teach urban educators, should incorporate
more multicultural/ethnic studies courses in their programs in order to better prepare preservice
teachers and introduce a more culturally sensitive approach and understanding to pedagogy. It is
important for students to obtain the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed in each cultural
setting because it enables them to function and communicate effectively across different
communities (Banks, 1993). The ability to be able to communicate effectively among different
cultural groups is important because it allows one to navigate in society without regarding or
disregarding one’s own cultural make-up. Mr. Jesus echoes this notion of the importance of
understanding cultures, he said:

*There’s definitely the social cultural aspect, I think [this particular course] that I took
with [instructor A]...where you do talk about different socioeconomic social statuses,
different genders, different ethnicities, and ways that you can reach your students from
those different backgrounds.* (Mr. Jesus, personal communication, February 16, 2016)

Hence, an understanding of the types of culture is important as well. Core culture (dominant
culture in society) and subcultures (subdivisions of cultures that exist within each other or that
deviates from the main culture) both exist in the United States (Banks, 1993). It is more
important to recognize that we all in some form or fashion participate or navigate between
various cultures that exist in this nation.

Mr. Jesus is passionate about the education field and its effects on urban youth. He
depicts in his feedback, thoughts, and ideas of the urgency of making cultural sensitivity, ethnic
studies, and multicultural education a necessity in the training and preparation of teachers.
Although he feels that he himself will not be fully prepared until he has experience in the
classroom, he does feel that a multicultural framework would be beneficial in teacher education
programs. Mr. Jesus believes a multicultural framework will introduce and/or expose preservice
educators (especially white preservice educators that have not been exposed to people of color, urban youth, or urban learning environments) to what they may see or come across in the field (Mr. Jesus, personal communication, February 16, 2016). Overall, teacher education programs need to “…prepare teachers to understand cultural and social contexts within which students approach learning so that they can build upon the students cognitive foundations, rather than undermining them” (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992, p. 10, 1992). In knowing the interrelation of the schools’ framework we can initiate change by developing strategies that reforms the schools’ environment, while, implementing a multicultural education approach (Banks, 1993).

Generally, Mr. Jesus feels the same as Mr. David in expressing his concern for feeling unprepared but in somewhat different ways. For instance, Mr. Jesus feels that the institution does a good job preparing preservice educators; however, he feels that he will not feel confidently prepared until he gains actual teaching experience. Consequently, the lack of preparation from teachers who teach culturally diverse students is a serious reoccurring issue in urban education (Baker, 2012; Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Schaffer, 2012). In order to properly prepare teachers for urban schools, it is vital to consider redesigning teacher education curriculum (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Schaffer, 2012). Thus, teacher education preparation programs should be designed in a way that prepare preservice teachers for multicultural classrooms and society, and stresses the importance of teaching and using materials that are culturally relevant (cultural relevant pedagogy), and incorporating multicultural perspectives in classrooms (Banks, 1993; Banks & Tucker, 2013, Cook, 2008; Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Nieto, 2010;
Schaffer, 2012). In order to improve the academic success of students of color, it is essential for educators, especially preservice teachers, to embrace cultural diversity, their perceptions of students of color, and its influence on their teacher expectations (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Nieto, 2010; Schaffer, 2012). In addition, it is vital that educators discover ways to motivate and engage students of color in the learning process, and expose themselves (their own selves) to opportunities that will provide them with a holistic view of diversity, effective strategies, and teaching practices when teaching students of color (Baker, 2012; Banks & Grambs, 1972; Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Schaffer, 2012).

In all, Mr. Jesus’s interview echoed CRT tenet five, the transdisciplinary perspective (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, p. 63). Mr. Jesus’s interview connects to CRT tenet five because he understands that being taught about race and culture; as well as, being exposed to other cultural environments/experiences help to dismantle or lessen cultural biases, stereotypes, and ignorance. In a sense, Mr. Jesus’s assumption is that this type of aid (a more multicultural approach to teacher training) will provide preservice educators with pedagogical skills to engage, motivate, and teach culturally diverse urban youth effectively. Furthermore, Mr. Jesus’s interview reiterates CRT tenet five by his continued discussion of the incorporation of more multicultural education courses entwined with teacher education programs to help better prepare preservice students for urban learning environments. Mr. Jesus speaks on how it is important for this to take place because it in some ways give future educators, especially White teacher candidates, a fair chance to be exposed and experience similar foundational courses and both practice and familiarity with urban environments/urban youth. Mr. Jesus stated:
So obviously, in that regard, I feel like you’re better prepared for the kinds of students that you might see. Obviously, there’s no normal in terms of students but definitely it gives you an idea of the kinds of students you could see. And I think it’s more important for, and I don’t want this to come off wrong, but I think its more important for White teachers who might have grown up in a more rural more white suburban upbringing where you might not have had interactions with people of color, different backgrounds, different languages that kind of thing. (Mr. Jesus, personal communication, February 16, 2016)

In addition, the lack of cultural diversity discourse in classes and the exclusion of it in academic curriculum in a way supports colorblindness, which offers a different perspective and goes against the work towards the injustices/social injustices of others (Hiraldo, 2010). Essentially, in order for teacher education programs and academic institutions as a whole to effectively work towards eliminating cultural biasness, racism, stereotypes, and social injustices, the powers that be need to consider incorporating a multicultural approach to both teaching and learning that will better prepare preservice teachers and engage students of color (Hiraldo, 2010). For this reason, teacher education programs and higher education institutions need to both acknowledge and pursue eradicating colorblind efforts and regulations (Hiraldo, 2010).

Mr. Jesus’s interview depicts CRT tenet five because he spoke extensively to the importance of the inclusion of a multicultural approach and including multicultural education courses in his teacher education program. Although he admitted that he did not feel completely culturally competent, due to the lack of experience teaching in urban environments, he acknowledged that he was yet learning how to be. However, he did recognize that his program must do better by including more multicultural classes. Mr. Jesus discussed the importance of
preparing preservice educators across the board so that all future urban educators could in a
sense feel prepared and feel like they receive the same equal amount of exposure, knowledge,
and experience. He feeds off of the experience of others in the field (i.e. his sister and professors)
and the wisdom and knowledge they bring to the classroom. His desires and recommendations
for a more diverse faculty in teacher education programs across the board, speaks volumes to his
insight on the significance and experiences of the cultural other and how that plays a vital role on
the preparation of future urban educators. He essentially believes that a diverse faculty brings
varied experiences to their position/teaching and it is important for students to have a wide-range
of experiences in their learning to influence their own teaching style. Ultimately, Mr. Jesus’s
interview recognizes through the lens of CRT that there is a need to politicize education rather
than keeping it apolitical and assimilationist is crucial to the preparedness of urban preservice
teachers. Mr. Jesus is determined to apply his knowledge and learning experiences to grow
professionally, and mirror the positive experiences that he received through his training to
become an effective urban educator, and formulate his teaching style and curriculum to be
relevant to students lives.

**Collective Emerging Themes (Teacher Educators)**

The future calls each of us to become partners in the dance of diversity, a dance in which everyone shares the lead. (Howard, 2006, p. 13)

While interviewing the teacher educator participants, a few collective themes were shared
across the board. Themes were: the need to redefine the term “urban” for a clearer understanding
in today’s society and understanding those complexities, contexts; as well as, nuances of what it
means to be an urban educator, and how it can impact students’ learning experiences. In addition,
rethink the meaning of the term cultural competency and replace it with words such as: *cross-
cultural, transcultural, or culturally reflexive*, the importance of redesigning teacher education
curriculum so that teacher education programs can help transform teacher candidates’ thinking and ways of being, so that they can transform lives of cultural diverse urban youth in their classrooms and beyond. Overall, participants believe that it is crucial to do more than just talk diversity, but it is even more important to think of ways to embrace and illustrate diverse thinking as a professional attitude in order to effectively prepare future urban educators and positively impact today’s urban youth. Each participant expounded his or perspectives to the interview questions.

**Collective Analysis (Teacher Educators)**

The kind of teacher you will become is directly related to the kind of teachers you associate with. Teaching is a profession where misery does more than just love company—it recruits, seduces, and romances it. Avoid people who are unhappy and disgruntled about the possibilities for transforming education. They are the enemy of the Spirit of the teacher. (Edmin, 2016, p. 208)

After examining the teacher educators’ interviews, the following collective analysis emerged that exposed the following concerns. First, it is important to understand, embrace, and accept one’s cultural background without devaluing another’s cultural experience. Second, the importance of discussing race in the classroom and recognizing social inequalities in society; as well as, in urban education. Third, the issue of racism needs to be addressed head on and eliminated, if not, there will always be challenges despite how well-prepared teachers are in urban learning environments. Largely, how future educators are trained is illustrated through their own pedagogy; therefore, it is important to be sure that prospective urban teachers are exposed to experiences that will closely mirror the reality of their experiences in urban learning environments to be truly effective as an urban educator. Each participant responses are more extensively examined concerning their individual thoughts on the interview questions.
Dr. Stewart’s Interview

Planning for your lesson is valuable, but being willing to let go of that plan is even more so. It is only on the path away from where you started that you can get to where you want to go. (Edmin, 2016, p. 207)

Dr. Stewart is a Hispanic/Latina female tenured professor in her college of education. She prepares preservice teachers to teach a specified content area in bilingual education that examines one’s cultural experience, and offers both strategies and methods that future educators can utilize in their own practice in the field of education. She also emphasizes the significance of both culture and language; as well as, the essential role that it has in the development of minority students’ learning environments, lived experiences, and achieving/promoting academic success.

Emerging Themes – Dr. Stewart

Themes that emerged in Dr. Stewart’s interview that are relevant to my research study are the notion of understanding what it means to be an urban educator. She highlighted the word urban educator in terms of one being able to understand the urban context(s), issues of poverty, and how those factors (both internal or external) impact students’ learning. Dr. Stewart spoke to the importance of an urban educator understanding urban contexts and urban situations, while not so much focusing on the negative, but also on the positive and the benefits of living and learning in urban areas/environments. She claimed:

*Urban context also includes all the benefits and some positive aspects of being in a large city. So that it’s not all negative but understanding that children of poverty in urban settings often don’t have access to all those positive benefits that a large city offers, and how does the teacher and the school provide access to those resources that the city has [or] pretends to have those resources for middle-class families?* (Dr. Stewart, personal communication, September 30, 2015)
In addition, she spoke to the importance of an urban educator understanding the serious issues of poverty, specifically children of poverty, which encompasses; in her opinion, both children of color and non-children of color. Moreover, she asked the question of how does the urban educator and school work together to help provide access to resources that the large city or (urban area) have to offer. She stated:

An urban educator needs to understand the diversity of the duty of children of color, but also depending on the urban situation you are thinking about there are a lot of children of poverty that are white in the United States, and they tend to be in the rural areas also in urban areas. So, how does that work for children that are not children of color, but children of poverty? An urban educator especially in [this city] needs to understand all the nuances regarding to me the most critical aspect of poverty. (Dr. Stewart, personal communication, September 30, 2015)

Lastly, Dr. Stewart articulates the importance of understanding diversity especially linguistic diversity as an urban educator. She explained, “An urban educator in United States is going to have to deal with linguistic diversity, linguistic diversity also includes African-American vernacular that even African American teachers and other teachers don’t really quite understand or recognize as a language.” (Dr. Stewart, personal communication, September 30, 2015). In understanding the importance of diversity, linguistic diversity, and cultural difference, Dr. Stewart also expressed how she feels as though she is also preparing preservice students for culturally diverse classrooms. She mostly clarifies her focus of preparation particularly to those students who minor in ELL, ESL, and bilingual education. As she explains her position of preparing preservice teachers in details, she also provided information concerning the student population that she deals with, and a brief break down of the program, she indicated:
So they have seven or eight classes... we had 40 minors, many undergraduates... ESL and ELL endorsement gives you more opportunities for employment. For the graduate students... preservice teachers [are] doing a Masters in bilingual education. (Dr. Stewart, personal communication, September 30, 2015)

Although Dr. Stewart is very adamant about her belief in the importance of urban educators’ understandings of the varied urban contexts, diversity, and linguistic diversity. She also feels that she prepares preservice teachers for urban youth by providing them with a rigorous program that can in turn improve their employment opportunities if they choose to minor in ESL, ELL, or Bilingual education. However, when asked her thoughts on or about the term cultural competency, she provides an interesting perspective of its meaning in her own point of view. When asked what does cultural competency mean to her she states:

I would call it “cross cultural competency” or “transcultural competency” because to me cultural competency is just about understanding others, versus “transcultural”... “cross cultural” is about understanding others, and my culture, and other people’s cultures and how they both interact. (Dr. Stewart, personal communication, September 30, 2015)

Dr. Stewart’s response provided a multilayered in-depth look into culture and her reservations with using the word cultural competency. However, she suggested using other words instead of cultural competency such as: cross cultural competency and transcultural competency. She believes using the terms cross cultural competency and transcultural competency expresses more of what should be done as it relates to understanding others and the interactions between cultures. On the other hand, when asked if she felt as though she herself were culturally competent she said, “Yes”, but she emphasized that it depended on the particular
cultural context. She believes that culture has disparities/differences within cultures, and admits that she is not culturally competent in all cultures. Overall, she reiterates that the term cultural competency is complicated and misleading.

Although she is not in favor of the term cultural competency and in her thinking about the term cultural competency in other term(s) such as: cross cultural competency and transcultural competency, she believes that it is essential to teach/learn these terms in teacher education programs. She stated:

So it’s important to have cultural competency on a deep, deep level to understand that cultural competency is very nuance, its very complex...culture itself is not one thing, culture changes....So I think it’s a tricky thing that needs to be included in the curriculum. (Dr. Stewart, personal communication, September 30, 2015)

On the other hand, when asked if the teacher education programs at the examined site adequately prepares future educators for culturally diverse students Dr. Stewart explained how the program attempts to do that and there are courses that are mandatory for students to take that are specifically designed to lay that foundation. She also mentioned how some of the courses even discuss cultural and social justice issues around students of color and urban youth. In all, Dr. Stewart expressed that the teacher education program made an effort to prepare preservice educators, but she also felt that there was more work that could be done. She gave a detailed account of two courses that distinctly focus on this particular type of preparation that she spoke of; however, she did admit that due to geographical locations, current statistics, and a general comparison/overview of programs at other universities that more should be done to prepare or improve preparation for teachers. For example, she expressed:
I think the big scheme in comparison to other universities is that we try to cover that because we are in an urban context, we are in a context of know what is it now 90% of [this particular city’s public schools] students are minority and increasing minority students in the surrounding areas of [this city], and also [this state] is now a minority majority state. 51% of [this state’s] pre-K-12 students are minority students. So that’s the reality. So I think that we make an effort to do that…can we do more? Yes! (Dr. Stewart, personal communication, September 30, 2015)

For this reason, Dr. Stewart also thinks that teacher education programs should also include a more multicultural framework, even outside of what is already done in the program. She articulates how she believes that the education courses outside of the two required foundational are based on research that has been done by middle-class white students. Her assumption is that more can be included in the curriculum because the majority of the teacher educators and preservice teacher candidates are White. She thinks one solution to this issue, is to attract more teacher candidates of color, and support them and hear their voices into what things do they think is missing in the in the teacher prep courses from the perspective of a minority teacher candidate going through the program. (Dr. Stewart, personal communication, September 30, 2015)

Fortunately, we see that Dr. Stewart strongly suggests that teacher education programs would improve if they should attract more candidates of color and faculty of color.

Moreover, when asked if she (Dr. Stewart) had any suggestions for improving teacher education programs she again reiterated the need and significance/importance of having more faculty of color, and attracting more teacher candidates of color, utilizing updated/revised curriculum and a curriculum that specifically looks at what is taught and how it is taught.
Furthermore, helping preservice teachers to have or gain a better understanding of certain issues related to culture, culturally diverse students, and urban education as a whole. She emphasized:

*I think we at the teacher preparation level need to bring those things to light that when the teacher candidates are going to the schools they have a better understanding about those issues, and try to do something about it or help the school community to, to bridge all the different cultures, languages, practices, beliefs, religions its very complicated.*

(Dr. Stewart, personal communication, September 30, 2015)

For this reason, Dr. Stewart felt as though extending the field placement hours for one or two years, could be beneficial to students. However, she did note the challenges that could possibly prevent this from actually happening, especially if the opportunity to extend field placement was an unpaid experience. Even though she thinks that the clinical hours are short because of the quarter system the institution is based on, she desires that the experience be extended, but do not know how that issue can be resolved.

In addition, Dr. Stewart explained in detail; in her opinion, the time period that it should be and what it should entail along with describing opportunities that may be offered to future educators, in the near future, she stated:

*Two... at least a year, it’s difficult because it’s nonpaid. So now, they are talking at the [state level] and nationally about paid internships...so student teaching could be like an internship that pays money. I don’t know a one-year [paid] student teaching [internship]... but the teacher candidates could get paid, yeah. I think it’s hard to not to get paid for a whole year. I think that would be hard.* (Dr. Stewart, personal communication, September 30, 2015).
Overall, Dr. Stewart believed that the need for programs to embrace cultural and linguistic diversity is crucial to improving and advancing teacher education programs. In addition, she explained the importance of fully understanding what it means to be an urban educator so that not only teacher education curriculum can be improved or redesigned to better prepare preservice teachers for urban learning environments, but also teachers and communities at large could focus on meeting the needs of students. In echoing research literature on this point, teacher education programs should, “…prepare teachers to evaluate student understandings, conceptions, learning styles and intelligences, strengths, and needs, and then to construct learning opportunities that are responsive to the learner while true to the subjects under study” (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992, p. 10). In addition, teacher education programs should also “…evaluate different pedagogical approaches and assessment options so that they can choose those that are appropriate for various learning goals under varying conditions” (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992, p. 10). Finally, teacher education programs need to “…prepare teachers to understand cultural and social contexts within which students approach learning so that they can build upon the students cognitive foundations, rather than undermining them” (Darling-Hammond et al., 1992, p. 10). In doing the above recommendations, both educators and teacher educators would be better prepared for urban learning environments and be able to see education through a cultural lens (Jordan-Irvine, 2003). Scholars in various texts discuss this idea and ability to see education with a cultural eye. Jordan-Irvine (2003) describes the cultural eye in ways that pertain to African American teachers; however, the concept of the idea can be applied to all educators especially those interested in teaching students of color. Jordan-Irvine (2003) explains how the cultural eye is:
associated with culturally specific ways in which African American teachers see themselves…using the metaphor of sight or vision, that researchers and African American teachers both view their world and their work from the perspective of their cultural eye… researchers should learn to use their “third eye” to (a) understand the perspectives of African American teachers and how their views of themselves and their practice influence African American students’ achievement, (b) envision new ways of closing the gap between Black and White students’ achievement, and (c) see that the problem of the achievement gap reflects a much larger and intractable problem of race and racism in America. (Jordan-Irvine, 2003, pp. 28-29)

While analyzing this definition of the cultural eye in terms of the African American teacher perspective and student experience, we can also adopt this term to all cultural experiences in both perspectives of teaching preservice teachers how to engage and promote high academic success to students of color. In all, the purpose of the cultural eye is to ensure that the influence of ‘culture’ is an integral part of both the teaching and learning process, (Jordan-Irvine, 2003). Overall, both preservice teachers and teacher educators can benefit from viewing education with a cultural eye because it creates a solid foundation for both students and teachers (Banks & Tucker, 2013; Banks, 1993; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2001).

**Analysis E: Through the Lens of CRT**

While interviewing Dr. Stewart, she expressed and resonated with passion and deep concern for cultural understanding and appreciation for both diversity and linguistic difference/acceptance. In her responses, this theme seemed to have resonated with her the most. For this reason, the strong urgency and significance of understanding cultures, what it means to
be an urban educator, and accepting or embracing linguistic diversity (difference) is of extreme importance to Dr. Stewart. Coming from a bilingual education background, her knowledge and expertise suggest that the importance of understanding how to teach students of color is critical and unique, especially to those who come from cultural backgrounds that suggest that one’s culture is significant and should be considered an important component to one’s well-being and in every aspect of one’s own life/livelihood. Dr. Stewart conceptualized these ideas by expressing how an urban educator in the U.S. should be taught and prepared to deal with linguistic diversity. Dr. Stewart explained further by suggesting that teacher educators should unmask certain realities so when preservice educators go to the urban schools for their field experiences, they will be knowledgeable and have an understanding about certain internal and external issues, culture, languages...of urban youth.

The importance of understanding, embracing and accepting one’s diverse background does not come mean at the cost of devaluing another’s cultural experience, nor should the other’s cultural experience be seen as superior to the other. Dr. Stewart expressed this idea by providing an example of how her own biases towards certain matters were not necessarily social justice centered although it maybe culturally relevant to that particular society. She claimed that we should be careful not to present this idea that we accept and embrace everyone’s culture because there are negative things about everyone’s culture including U.S. culture. In all, she believed that to be a tricky/delicate matter that should be included in teacher education curriculum so that it brings a level of exposure and knowledge. This level of exposure and knowledge is important so that the perpetuation of stereotypical thoughts and inappropriate comments do not continue to promote negative assumptions about certain groups of people. Dr. Stewart brought up an important topic of discussion to consider because although it may seem superficial and
generalistic, it explains how certain groups of people feel as though they are superior and others are labeled as inferior based on knowledge that was generated or created through these negative assumptions that were produced by stereotypical notions and inappropriate conversations/comments about others. In addition, since U.S. society as a whole is measured by a standard that is demonstrated through mainstream, white society, it is even more challenging when groups that are considered inferior to deem themselves as valuable when throughout history, and even today, these negative images and assumptions continue to be portrayed in media and various different other avenues in society. These negative images are weighed more valuable than positive images to the point that the positive images of those members of the group that are labeled inferior are almost considered taboo. Although these negative assumptions are in most cases due to a level of ignorance, it still comes off as an element of racism, prejudice, or racial tension, which continues to create stereotypes and inappropriateness of others (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000).

In looking at this interview through the lens of CRT as it relates to race, racism, and racial microaggressions¹, we see a more negative shift of thinking of one’s culture or cultural background as being inferior/unaccepted and not embraced by others (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000). For instance, oftentimes negative perceptions and stigmatisms are placed on others that come from certain well-established or marginalized areas of the world. However, in the case of scrutinizing the urban context(s) it is important to realize that there are both positive and

¹ Microaggressions are subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color, often automatically or unconsciously....microaggressions exist in both academic and social spaces in the collegiate environment. (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, p. 60)
negative aspects of living in urban environments (personal communication, September 30, 2015). Dr. Stewart spoke to this point by clarifying:

*Urban context also includes all the benefits some positive aspects of being in a large city. So that it’s not all negative but understanding that children of poverty in urban settings often don’t have access to all those positive benefits that a large city offers.* (Dr. Stewart, personal communication, September 30, 2015).

Solórzano and Yosso (2000) also suggest that racial microaggressions dwell in academic and social aspects in the educational arenas. Furthermore in looking at education through the lens of CRT, we see that embracing and accepting cultural backgrounds and differences is important because CRT gives us “…insights, perspectives, methods, and pedagogies that guide our efforts to identify, analyze, and transform the structural and cultural aspects of education that maintain subordinate and dominant racial positions in and out of the classroom (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, p. 63). Moreover, CRT will also help urban educators to further understand, as Dr. Stewart eloquently depicts what it means to be an urban educator, understanding the urban context; as well as, how it affects student’s learning both internally and externally, and surrounding communities at large. For this reason, it is important that the number of teacher candidates and faculty of color increase in teacher education programs so that they can share and give voice to their lived experiences both in and out of the classroom, which can help preservice teachers understand how racism, social constructs, stereotypes and the like can influence perceptions of people of color and/or all people in general. In sum, Dr. Stewart’s interview depicts CRT tenet number five, the transdisciplinary perspective (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000).

In addition, viewing education through CRT also challenges racism and the characteristics thereof:
The critical race theory framework for education is different from other CRT frameworks because it simultaneously attempts to foreground race and racism in the research as well as challenge the traditional paradigms, methods, texts, and separate discourse on race, gender, and class by showing how these social constructs intersect to impact on communities of color. (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, p. 63)

Dr. Stewart’s interview illustrates the above quote as she recognizes the importance of the urban educators understanding urban context(s) and how language or linguistic diversity plays an important role to understanding one’s cultural background. Two things that she emphasized in her interview are that an urban educator is going to have to understand the critical aspects of poverty and linguistic diversity, which includes African American vernacular that even some teachers of color do not understand or consider a language (Dr. Stewart, personal communication, September 30, 2015). In sum, Dr. Stewart considered both to be social constructs that impacts and/or influences communities of colors’ image, cultural background, significance and validation of importance/acceptance to both themselves and to society as a whole.

In essence, we see that, from Dr. Stewart’s perspective, characteristics of cultural influence and backgrounds play a large part on how teacher educators teach preservice teachers and what they bring into the classroom. As such, it is important to view both teacher education and education in general through a cultural lens and in light of the CRT framework. Utilizing CRT as a foundational tool to redesign teacher education curriculum can assist future urban educators to understand the context(s) from which they are teaching, prepare them to engage, teach, and motivate students of color, and improve academic success for youth of color as a whole.
In all, we see that Dr. Stewart together with her teacher educator colleagues, seek to reveal and share teaching methods and offer courses/recommendations that may expose or help eliminate the cause of racial oppression. Her pitch is that urban educators need to understand urban context(s) and the benefits of it, understanding their role and duty of being an urban educator, and embrace linguistic diversity as a way to begin or assist with the process of engaging and improving the academic success of urban youth. Doing the recommended can assist preservice teachers to identify inequitable practices and policies, which can help to increase their awareness of such unjust elements; as well as, determine the means to keep education apolitical rather than politicalized.

Dr. Connie’s Interview

The longer teachers teach, the better they are at their practice. That practice may serve to empower students or it may break the students’ spirit. That decision belongs to the teacher. (Edmin, 2016, p. 207)

Dr. Connie is a white female professor (Associate Professor) in a college of education at the examined teacher education program in this research study. She prepares preservice teachers to teach a specified content area offering both strategies and methods they can utilize in their own practice in the field; as well as, in their own pedagogy. Her focus is to prepare future educators to be able to effectively teach all students from various backgrounds in relevant, tangible, and realistic ways.

Emerging Themes – Dr. Connie

Themes that emerged in Dr. Connie’s interview that are relevant to my research study are the concept of understating what it means to be an urban educator, the ability for urban educators to use prior knowledge and lived experiences as a way to make the most out of their student’s learning experiences, providing resources and strategies for preservice teachers to use that will help them teach diverse students effectively and give them multiple perspectives; as well as,
inviting their student’s to share their own lived experiences, analysis of the term cultural competency as a general recognition of students having different experiences, and working towards the goal of adequately preparing preservice teachers for culturally diverse students and learning environments, establishing deeper connections with the community and faculty building closer working relationships with each other to improve preservice teachers understanding of the importance of relationship building and connecting with the community at large, and providing more meaningful experiences in the field placement experience; as well as, recognizes what an urban educator role entails.

First, she defines the word urban educator as being a loaded term that includes but not limited to teaching in marginalized communities (Dr. Connie, personal communication, September 30, 2015). She further explains that teaching in marginalized communities often consists of teaching students of color; as well as, students of poverty (Dr. Connie, personal communication, September 30, 2015). For example, Dr. Connie also defined the term urban educator as:

So what does it mean to be an urban educator, I mean I think it could mean a lot of different things, but I would want to mean would be tapping into students’ backgrounds and life experiences and capitalizing on what they bring to the table in their education. Which I think is often what hasn’t happened in a lot of “quote” urban education. (Dr. Connie, personal communication, September 30, 2015).

Secondly, Dr. Connie also considers an urban educator’s ability to use student’s prior knowledge and lived experiences as a way to make the most out of their student’s learning experiences. For example, Dr. Connie stated:
I mean I think being an urban educator is recognizing the incredible social inequalities in society, and understanding that often in an urban context you are likely to be working with some of the most disenfranchised young people in society and its I think it is the urban educator’s role to work towards eradicating those social inequalities…. So I guess then to be an urban teacher educator is to try to prepare educators to do those things that I just said. (Dr. Connie, personal communication, September 30, 2015).

Dr. Connie also briefly mentioned how it is also the responsibility of the urban teacher educators to prepare future educators of all things that she previously mentioned in her viewpoint and definition of what it means to be an urban educator.

Another theme that echoed in Dr. Connie’s interview is the giving of resources and strategies for preservice teachers to use that will help them teach diverse students effectively and give them multiple perspectives. For instance, when asked if she prepares preservice teachers to teach in urban learning environments she stated:

I like to think that I am, it is my aim to do that ... I am very intentional about it...I teach secondary preservice social studies teachers ... I try to model and ... I try to give resources and provide resources and strategies for my preservice teachers ...offering them multiple perspectives. (Dr. Connie, personal communication, September 30, 2015).

In addition, Dr. Connie explains how she presents specific strategies for preservice teachers to use; as well as, to help them to engage their students and invite them to bring another perspective to their learning. She emphasized the importance of including other perspectives especially since her content area involves teaching historical contexts or moments in history. Dr. Connie believes and expresses to her preservice educators that in teaching students of color it’s
important to be intentional about offering opportunities that include other perspectives. For example, she illustrated:

*tonight we’re doing a strategy called: “opening up the textbook”, which is what they would ultimately do with their students, you we read a textbook passage talk about … the main gist of this story. But then they bring in another source to their students that offers another perspective. … I asked my preservice teachers to do that …juxtaposed that textbook passage with other sources that show the complexity and diversity of other people who were involved. So that’s kind of one example. …So I think by trying to give them strategies that both tap into their students’ knowledge and experiences, I think that I attempt to do that* (Dr. Connie, personal communication, September 30, 2015).

Furthermore, Dr. Connie also clarified her thoughts on the term cultural competency as being a general recognition of students having different experiences. In addition, she explains the term as the desire to inquire knowledge of student’s cultural backgrounds, and acknowledging that the experiences that their students will bring will help them (as teachers) to understand their students more and help shape/strengthen their students learning experiences in the classroom (Dr. Connie, personal communication, September 30, 2015). For example, she elucidated:

*my understanding of that term would be somebody who first recognizes that different students in this case are going to be bringing different cultural strengths to the classroom, and to their learning in general. So part of it is just a general recognition that not all students have had the same experiences. For instance, if a student grows up living in poverty that, that does not mean that, that student doesn’t bring something really valuable to their school experience or strengths. … also a willingness and maybe the skill*
to find out more about students’ lives, and figure out what cultural perspectives they bring to the table, what family perspectives they bring to the table, having or being willing to find out sort of on an individual level from students, but also being willing to read and research sort of I guess gaining a broader understanding of the particular community in which you teach....So I think cultural competency it’s hard to sort of capture it because it means something different in those different contexts....so having an interest in sort of trying to understand those students cultural heritage; as well as, if you’re working in a predominately African American community trying to gain a better understanding of African American history, and how that might shape your students’ experiences in today classroom. (Dr. Connie, personal communication, September 30, 2015).

In all, Dr. Connie believes that cultural competency encompasses both the general recognition and acknowledgement that different students are going to being different cultural experiences to the classroom and to their learning (personal communication, September 30, 2015). Furthermore, Dr. Connie feels as though she is somewhat culturally competent based on who her students are, but through it all, she believes that she is ever-learning and willing to learn more. In terms of cultural competency being an essential tool to both teaching and learning in teacher education programs, she believes that recognizing the context in which one teaches, and understanding students, and the type of students that we teach, helps with the understanding of students in both the classroom and in a larger social context (Dr. Connie, personal communication, September 30, 2015). She states:

Yes!... I think its absolutely essential because I mean part of it is just recognizing that the context in which you teach matters a lot. I mean I think there’s sort of a [way that] you
have to go back and forth between the classroom contexts and understanding the
particular students and trying to gain an understanding of particular students and that’s
essential. But then also understanding them in the larger social contexts, and you know
the difference between teaching [in] the … incredibly privileged communities versus
teaching in really disenfranchised communities, and how that connects to our larger
social structure. (Dr. Connie, personal communication, September 30, 2015).

Moreover, Dr. Connie expects/conceives that her colleagues, as well as herself, work
hard to try to fulfil the goal of adequately preparing preservice teachers for culturally diverse
students and learning environments. However, she feels as though more can be done to achieve
this goal despite the fact that some of her colleagues would not express or articulate the same
ideas that she has in reaching these goals (Dr. Connie, personal communication, September 30,
2015). She stated:

I think that many of us work hard at that goal. I mean I think the jury is out, like we really
need to do more systematic study to find out and this is sort of a the bigger teacher ed.
issue, is really tracking our graduates into the context in which they ultimately teach and
really finding out, what did they gain from our program and what does that look like in
the classrooms that their teaching in now. (Dr. Connie, personal communication,
September 30, 2015).

Overall, Dr. Connie considers that the program should be working towards the goal of
preparing future urban educators for culturally diverse students and urban classrooms. However,
since all of the teacher educators in the examined site’s program (and in her department)
thoughts are not the same for preparing preservice teachers for students of color, it can be
challenging to achieve this goal of adequately preparing preservice teachers to their full potential that is needed for urban learning environments.

On the other hand, it is difficult for Dr. Connie to articulate and/or conceptualize a response to determine if teacher education programs should be redesigned to include a more multicultural approach because she conceives it to be challenging to discuss it in a larger context. The reason is that she feels that there are programs out there that are working hard and doing creative/unique things to reach this particular goal. However, she yet desires to do more or at least have the knowledge to do more, but expresses the challenges in doing so. However, she believes that generally her teacher education program could do more to improve or be redesigned to include a more cultural/multicultural perspective, she stated:

“Yes”, there probably a lot I’m sure we can [do], I know that we can continue working on that. I wish that I was doing or knew how to do more of the things I just described….I’ve been in [in this city ] for five years now, and I find it incredibly complex to navigate, and building those kinds of relationships takes a lot of time and energy and investment and hard conversations and a zillion other things. So “Yes” we should keep working towards improving…and Yes! (Dr. Connie, personal communication, September 30, 2015).

Thus, Dr. Connie offers suggestions to improve the teacher education program at the examined academic site. She believes that the program should establish deeper connections with the community and the faculty should also build closer working relationships to improve preservice teachers understanding of the importance of relationship building and connecting with the community at large. For instance, she stated:
I think I would love for our secondary program to do more where we had maybe more intimate connections with particular communities. So that we could help students do those kinds of you know learning about communities in deeper ways, ....I think we have a lot of competing demands on us that pull us in different directions.... I see that there are a lot of institutional and external constraints... I mean it’s really valuable for our students to see young people in and out of school contexts, so that they gain a better understanding of students in school contexts. I think we can do that in a more coherent structured way. (Dr. Connie, personal communication, September 30, 2015).

Moreover, Dr. Connie suggests that one way to improve the teacher education program’s field experience is to provide more meaningful experiences, she argued:

*I don’t know if longer is always the answer, to me the quality is [what counts] ...I think having quality, depth, and sustain relationships altogether. Because we actually have students out in schools a fair amount [of time], but I’m not always convinced in the most meaningful ways. So I yeah I think if we were able to create higher-quality opportunities then maybe I’d talk more about the length.* (Dr. Connie, personal communication, September 30, 2015).

In all, Dr. Connie desires that the curriculum, which is desired to be taught to and by future urban educators, is one that is actually demonstrated in classrooms. In other words, teacher education programs demonstrating the ability to navigate between the type of pedagogy that we want to see practiced in the classrooms versus what is actually seen or being done in classrooms.

Wherefore, additional questions were asked to Dr. Connie a white female teacher educator, teaching predominately white middle-class group of students; as well as, Dr. Howard
(an African American male professor, his interview mentioned later), to see how their students/preservice educators, responded to race-related conversations or discussions topics.

Dr. Connie summarized her experiences as being crucial to having discussion(s) in the classroom concerning race-related topics. She recommends that future educators share their personal stories, challenges, and understanding that one’s social position in society is vital to how they (as future urban educators) may connect or possibly disconnect with both their students lived and learned experiences. Also, the challenges she faced in her attempts to discuss these race-related topics in diversified ways with her preservice teachers. In addition, Dr. Connie mentioned how the strategy of approaching the topic of race is critical because oftentimes students resist. However, she explained how she approaches the topic of race differently by engaging them on a human level and making them aware or assuring them that these topics are culturally sensitive, but need to be addressed because solutions are warranted to fix the many problems that the field of education faces. The way Dr. Connie approaches the topic of race is with reminding herself and her future educators their social position/social location in society, and explains how that relates/disconnects with their student’s lives. Her outlook or angle in discussing race-related topics with students demonstrates one aspect of Milner (2010) notion of the identity-perception gap. Milner (2010) explains how the identity-perception gap has teachers question their own identity and how they are being perceived by their students. The viewpoint of identity-perception gap is discussed more so in terms of white educators teaching students of color and the identity gap that is present in the classroom. Whereas, Dr. Connie’s preservice teachers are mostly white-middle-class, which academic research literature and studies also discuss the growing number of white female teachers entering into the field of urban education.
For this reason, it is essential that questions are addressed within oneself such as an educator/teacher educator:

[W]hat does a teacher do when the identity she understands herself to possess is not affirmed in her relationships with students? What happens to those relationships when there is a gap between who teachers think they are and how others perceive them? How should they make sense of this “identity-perception gap”? (Milner, 2010, p. 16)

The questions relating to the identity-perception gap are important because they help with the development of a culturally diverse classroom. Thus, it is important to thoroughly examine and consider the identity-perception gap, and how it affects teachers’ attitudes, challenges their self-esteem as individuals, professionals, and teachers of urban students (Milner, 2010). Although the power struggle between students and teachers exists, it often times create resistance between students of color and white educators. Frequently, students of color develop resistance towards White educators because they have a certain perception of that particular teacher (Milner, 2010). In other words, the resistance that exists in students of color towards teachers is determined by the perceived identity that a teacher displays to their students. On the other hand, if the identity-perception gap is understood as an opportunity of growth, it can be viewed as a positive entity. Despite the fact that embracing the identity-perception gap as an opportunity of growth, it is also important to raise questions that will reveal and/or test teachers’ vulnerabilities, pedagogy, and opinions of students; as well as, themselves as professionals in the field of education (Milner, 2010). Essentially, understanding the identity-perception gap in a positive way will allow room for diversity to be embraced in the classroom (Milner, 2010).

Comprehensively, Dr. Connie realizes the need for teacher education programs to fully recognize and understand what an urban educator’s role entails. Also, acknowledge the
responsibility of urban teacher educators, which is to prepare future educators to address and work towards eradicating social/racial inequalities. In addition, faculty must also be prepared to address cultural diversity through professional development and other avenues of teacher education (Mayo & Lark, 2009). Dr. Connie also recognizes that preservice educators need various effective resources and strategies to connect or engage students in ways to make what they are learning relevant to their lives. Likewise, utilizing these effective resources and strategies could help promote and/or increase academic success among students of color. For instance, currently the field of multicultural education has expanded and now includes social justice education and antiracist education just to name a few. The incorporation of social justice education and antiracist education; as well as, others within multicultural education gives a critical focus on improving the academic success of urban learning environments and the equity of all students (British Columbia Teachers Federation (BCTF), 2010; Hytten & Bettez, 2011; Quezada & Romo, 2004). Therefore, academic scholars believe that in order to increase the graduation rates of students of color, effective teaching practices should be identified and implemented (Banks, 1993; Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2001). Hence, it is critical that we must prepare to eliminate issues that cause all students to fail academically.

Dr. Connie presents the issue of acknowledging the social location/status of teachers and students and how this perception (identity-perception gap) that exists highlights the initial influence of teachers on students begin with teachers’ perceptions, expectations, and racial attitudes of their students (Banks & Grambs, 1972; Banks & Tucker, 2013; Darling-Hammond et al., 1992; Goodman & West-Olatunji, 2010; Howard, 2006; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Leiding, 2006;
Milner, 2010; Nieto, 2010; Nieto, 2013; Pollack, 2012; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992; Schaffer, 2012; Thernstorm & Thernston, 2003). With this type of influence, it is crucial that teacher educators prepare preservice teachers for urban environments by using effective approaches, resources, strategies, and practices to help them engage culturally diverse students. Meanwhile, in doing so, helps to eradicate social inequalities in order to promote academic success.

**Analysis F: Through the Lens of CRT**

While interviewing Dr. Connie she displayed a desire for improved/redesigned teacher education programs to acknowledge and recognize the social inequalities in society and urban education. The central theme in her interview was this urgency for teacher educators and teacher education programs to prepare future urban educators to work towards eradicating the social inequalities that exist and provide them with both resources and strategies that will enable them to present other perspectives especially in secondary education content areas such as the social sciences (i.e. history, humanities, social studies…etc.). Although Dr. Connie recognized that it might not be everyone’s goal to eradicate such injustices, her own passion allows opportunities and prepares others; as well as, herself to uncover and reveal possible solutions to attempt to make it happen, or at least start the conversation. In addition, build closer connections with communities, and teacher educators; as well as, faculty working closely together is all of extreme importance to Dr. Connie. Dr. Connie’s knowledge and expertise suggest that the importance of understanding how to teach culturally diverse students, which in her opinion is done by understanding the various urban contexts and how these urban contexts relate to a larger social context. For this reason, the CRT tenet that Dr. Connie’s interview replicates especially as it relates to emerging themes is tenet number three, the commitment to social justice (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, p. 63).
Moreover, Dr. Connie expressed the ability to identify social inequalities in society and the ability to understand urban context(s), which is also the same idea Dr. Stewart expressed in her interview that is also significant to an urban educator’s role (Dr. Connie, personal communication, September 30, 2015). Thus, Dr. Connie’s explanation of what it means to be an urban educator is equivalent to Dr. Stewart’s because they share the same view as to one aspect of being an urban educator is to not only teach students of color, but also students of poverty, which are not always students of color (Dr. Connie, personal communication, September 30, 2015).

Furthermore, Dr. Connie’s explanation concerning her view of the term cultural competency explained how she believes that the term provides a generalized indication that not all students come from the same cultural background. She feels as though it is important to recognize these cultural differences as strengths and to recognize the affect/influence it has on student’s learning. Consequently, her thoughts of cultural competency significantly differ from both Dr. Stewart and Dr. Howard’s notion of the term. Dr. Stewart and Dr. Howard (his thoughts mentioned later) believe that the term is hard to define because it is multilayered and means different things in different contexts.

On the other hand, Dr. Connie’s feedback on if and how her teacher education program is adequately preparing preservice teachers describe a more general approach attempting to achieve the goal. She clarifies that although that maybe her goal or the ultimate goal of the program; unfortunately, this may not be the goal of all her colleagues. Although Dr. Connie’s response is similar to Dr. Stewart as the program tries to achieve this goal or at least works toward trying to reach this goal through various means, measures, and systems that are already in place, Dr. Howard’s response expresses a vastly different opinion as he adamantly depicts how the
department does not prepare students for urban learning environments (which is detailed further in the next section).

Dr. Connie’s suggestions for improving teacher education programs is to create more meaningful experiences and deeper connections with the community, in a way that actually depicts/reflects what the program’s curriculum is charged to do, both during its preparation, especially in the field placement experience, successfully beyond the preparation experience, and while working in the field. Dr. Connie’s response to this particular question is different from Dr. Stewart’s but similar to Dr. Howard’s in that the teacher education curriculum needs to change and reflect that which it is supposedly set to do, and if that is the case then extending time for field placement should be taken into consideration.

While analyzing this interview and reflecting on its themes in terms of CRT, respectively, Solórzano and Yosso (2000) depict the significance that CRT has on the framework of education:

it focuses on the racialized, gendered, and classed experiences of communities of color and offers a liberating and transformative method for examining racial/ethnic, gender, and class discrimination. It also utilizes transdisciplinary knowledge and the methodological base…to forge better understandings of the various forms of discrimination. (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, p. 63)

Dr. Connie stressed the importance of providing opportunities for other’s perspectives to be presented especially in her content area social sciences. In utilizing strategies and resources that she mentions in her interview, the giving of other approaches to preservice teachers to talk about social inequalities provides other perspectives to be heard. The techniques that Dr. Connie uses are of significance especially examining education through the lenses of CRT. For instance,
when topics such as racism are discussed some approaches that Dr. Connie presents to preservice educators allow the opportunity for other opinions and perspectives to be heard:

When the ideology of racism is examined and racist injuries are named, victims of racism can find their voice. Further, those injured by racism discover that they are not alone in their marginality. They become empowered participants, hearing their own stories and the stories of others, listening to how the arguments are framed, and learning to make the arguments themselves (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, p. 64).

The opportunity for other voices to be heard, especially those who are labeled as marginalized communities or victimized by the ideals of racism is what CRT coins as counter-narratives. According to the scope of CRT, counter-narratives duplicate similar thoughts as the quote above, they:

arise from the vantage point of those who have been historically marginalized. The idea of counter itself implies a space of resistance against traditional domination. A counter-narrative goes beyond the notion that those in relative positions of power can just tell the stories of those in the margins. Instead, these must come from the margins, from the perspectives and voices of those individuals. A counter-narrative thus goes beyond the telling of stories that take place in the margins. The effect of a counter-narrative is to empower and give agency to those communities. By choosing their own words and telling their own stories, members of marginalized communities provide alternative points of view, helping to create complex narratives truly presenting their realities.

(Mora, 2014)

In observing Dr. Connie’s class, she allowed counter-narratives to be present in her classroom learning experience. For instance, she granted a space for her preservice teachers to in
act situations, in most cases those that she orchestrated herself, by allowing her students to share experiences of how they would respond, react, approach, or share real life occurrences from their own field placements that bought up some level of concern. She stated,

>a lot of what I talk about in my classes and what I try to model and what I try to give resources and provide resources and strategies for my preservice teachers is offering them multiple perspectives. So in the social studies, history around helping them as preservice teachers see that often we only got one side of history and that there are many stories within history. I try to get my preservice teachers not only that certain broad sense but also specific strategies that they can use with their students....So I think by trying to give them strategies that both tap into their students’ knowledge and experiences, I think that I attempt to do that. (Dr. Connie, personal communication, September 30, 2015)

In addition, as it relates to addressing race in her class, she finds it necessary, but also difficult to talk about with her students. She articulated her experience and view:

>I think many white people often think that its difficult to talk about race. I think it’s important to do, and I bring it up often in my class, and throughout the years that I’ve been teaching preservice teachers I do lots of different things that have to do with race. I often share my own story of sort of my own challenges and sort of thinking when I was a high school student...And trying to recognize what it means for me to be a white woman in society and trying to help my students understand their particular social locations, and how that relates to their students particular social locations. And yeah, so I do try to talk about that in different ways with my preservice teachers. (Dr. Connie, personal communication, September 30, 2015)
Dr. Connie admitted how she attempts to talk about race in her class and how she does so in different ways. She also acknowledges that it is a challenging topic even as a white female. However, her commitment to social justice (CRT Tenet 3) allows her to push past the obstacles to have these conversations. It is evident that Dr. Connie not only provides resources and strategies for her preservice teachers to be prepared for, but she also practices what she preaches as she too demonstrates with her own words and deeds, how it can be done, but one must be committed to the fight against injustices in society theoretically, historically, and presently. In essence, the urban educator in her eyes will be prepared for all three and have the ability to teach others as the fight for social justice continues.

**Dr. Howard’s Interview**

The effectiveness of the teacher can be traced directly back to what that teacher thinks of the student. If the teacher does not value the student, there is no motivation to take risks to engage with the student. It is easier and safer to remain in the traditional model—even though that model has failed the student.

(Edmin, 2016, p. 207)

Dr. Howard is a minority male professor (Associate Professor) in the College of Education at the examined teacher education program in this research study. He prepares students to consider the struggles and challenges of education historically, presently, and socially by examining, the broad scope of how education has influenced or influences one’s own educational philosophy, society, and culture makeup on a personal, local, and global perspective. A few of his courses are required by all students that are majoring in field related programs in the college of education.

**Emerging Themes – Dr. Howard**

Themes that emerged while interviewing Dr. Howard were the importance of having a clear understanding of what it means to be an urban educator. Dr. Howard explained how the term urban can mean many different things and depict an universal meaning that does not
include or associate itself with other groups of people. In addition, he spoke to the notion of being culturally competent by suggesting the elimination of the use of this term and recommends becoming more culturally reflexive instead. The reason for the elimination of the word cultural competency, being culturally competent, and multiculturalism is due to the fact that, in his opinion, it perpetuates ideas of racism. Furthermore, he believes that in order for teacher education programs (including the one he works for) to improve, they must be forced to think in terms of the current state of education. In his view, the current state of education includes, but is not limited to the curriculum that is being taught and reproduced, understanding what it means to care or the concept of caring in multiple angles, and perspectives of the teacher educator’s, teacher’s, and the student’s position.

Dr. Howard considers the term urban educator to be a loaded term. The complexity and multilayers involved in defining the term urban educator is “used to sort of designate a particular population of people” (Dr. Howard, personal communication, October 12, 2015). For this reason, Dr. Howard argued how he personally thinks more towards a liberating education.

In essence, Dr. Howard suggests that if we view the role of urban educators differently by obtaining or developing a clear understanding of what it means to be an urban educator, and think more towards liberating education, we can see that the curriculum that is being taught and the structure of schooling is in light of the white liberal perspective. Although he senses that he is preparing his students/preservice teachers to teach culturally diverse students, he yet believes that the white liberal perspective of schooling, is the major problem that we face. Scholarly literature states that the major problem we face is racism and because of this, it is believed that white liberals or the white liberal perspective perpetrates racism in somewhat subtle ways, such as: “Micro invalidations (i.e. denial, microaggressions, microassaults, microinsults, etc.)…” (1)
Denial; (2) Shame and hurt, (3) Race-related narcolepsy and ignorance; (4) Masochism; (5) Apology and faux compassion; (6) Defensiveness; (7) The pain game; (8) Racial resume; (9) White guilt; (10) Intellectualization” (Sachs, 2015). According to Sachs (2015) the above elements perpetuate subtle racism, which challenges the coming together of whites, liberals, and people of color.

Consequently, Dr. Howard has a difficult time defining and/or associating himself with the word cultural competency. He believes that the word cultural competency should be replaced with a word that associates meaning with accompanying others as a way of walking with or alongside with others, as he explains in his interview (Dr. Howard, personal communication, Oct. 12, 2015). Dr. Howard expressed that if we think in terms of competency or being competent that “…it gets translated into what they think other’s, other people need, especially if we think in terms of the white perspective of what it means to care” (Dr. Howard, personal communication, October 12, 2015). He also argues how thinking in terms of competency “reduces people to little factoids” (an assumption of speculation that is reported so often that it becomes accepted as a fact) (Google, 2016). Dr. Howard further explains, “So if I have or know more information about you, or have more facts about you, than I know about you” (Dr. Howard, personal communication, October 12, 2015). Therefore, instead of defining himself as cultural competent, he identifies himself as being culturally reflexive. He defines culturally reflexive as being a reflection on his relationship with others and to the world (Dr. Howard, personal communication, October 12, 2015). He further explains the importance of being culturally reflexive and how it vastly differs from being culturally competent because in his viewpoint culturally competencies “…are really about “managing people.” It’s about managing…it’s about limiting the possibilities of who they are and who they want to become as
communities” (Dr. Howard, personal communication, October 12, 2015). Furthermore, his notion of becoming more culturally reflexive is supported by the idea that teacher education programs should examine the notion of caring, what they are caring about, from what perspective they are caring from, and what does it mean to actually care (Dr. Howard, personal communication, October 12, 2015). Dr. Howard further clarified how academic scholars should eliminate the term cultural competency because it comes out of multiculturalism, which he describes as “…multiculturalism defines each group as a sort of a discreet separate culture. And if you can know about each discreet separate culture and the facts about them then you are “cultural competent” (Dr. Howard, personal communication, October 12, 2015). Since, everyone in one way or another has to interact with other cultures, the understanding of cultures are important. Therefore, it is also important that the concept and use of multicultural education be defined and understood in a way that teacher educators and teachers can connect the overall approach and apply it to their specified content areas (Banks, 1993).

Since, Dr. Howard does not associate with the term cultural competency; he was asked instead, if he thinks that the term culturally reflexive should be important to teach in teacher education programs. He expressed the following: “Yeah... Because I think it’s important for students who are going to be teachers, and in this case... in most cases predominantly are white, female, and young they don’t have a clue about other people.” (Dr. Howard, personal communication, October 12, 2015). He expounds on how it does not mean that they (in this case whites or white females in particular) do not care, but they are culturally ignorant to somethings because society and the world are positioned to make their views as the norm. For this reason, Dr. Howard believes as though a cultural reflexive curriculum would involve them to “…unravel themselves as the norm....To critically investigate...who they are, you know the communities they
come from, [and] how did they become the “norm” (Dr. Howard, personal communication, October 12, 2015).

Dr. Howard clarified the importance of utilizing the cultural reflexive approach in preparing preservice teachers as he borrows Lisa Deplit’s phrase, “their teaching other people’s children” (Dr. Howard, personal communication, October 12, 2015). Dr. Howard expounds on what he means by reflecting on the Black Lives Matter movement and if whites can really analyze the significance of other cultures. On the other hand, he also illustrates how the rebuttal of the Black Lives Matter can be used to argue that White Lives Matter and Blue Lives Matter as well. As a result, he trusts that the mentioning of the rebuttal simply erases the struggles that African Americans faced throughout history and even today. He concludes his response to this question by stating, “…I don’t think that young teachers and faculty are liberal enough [and] really understand what it means to talk about liberating education in context of black communities. I don’t think they have a clue” (Dr. Howard, personal communication, October 12, 2015). For this reason, he believes that teacher education programs should be redesigned not from a multicultural educational approach because as he mentions previously it perpetuates ideas of racism, but should be designed from a plural aversive or intracultural approach and/or perspective. He defines these terms plural aversive and intracultural as the following: plural aversive means, “coexisting with different communities” [and] intracultural means somewhat the same thing, but there is a sharing (Dr. Howard, personal communication, October 12, 2015). He again reiterated that multiculturalism is assumptions about each other and trying to assimilate those cultural groups to be in someone way like you. He simplifies: “So it’s like just making “multiculturalism” the main theme and the main them is: White people, White culture, and White perspective, and White ways of being in the world, White ways of seeing and thinking. White
ways of living” (Dr. Howard, personal communication, October 12, 2015). Howard (2006) argues the viewpoints of the multicultural perspective from a White educator’s point of view, and the process it takes in understanding multicultural education and culturally diverse students. The process that Howard (2006) describes is the need for White educators to understand their past and present dominance in society, confront the ways in which they are shaped by myths of superiority, and begin to critically think about human diversity and all that it entails.

The recommendations that Dr. Howard suggests for improving teacher education programs are: being or becoming culturally reflexive about the current state of the school and also acknowledging the current perspective in which most traditional academic institutions are in (a white perspective) (Dr. Howard, personal communication, October 12, 2015). In addition, the ability to know and understand what it means to care from the perspective of the cultural groups that are experiencing oppressions. He elucidates this idea by stating: *You can care from any perspective, but it can be pretty lethal to other people. Well, caring to me would be attentive, being called by the particular suffering of the “other”* (Dr. Howard, personal communication, October 12, 2015). Thus, it is important to understand the role that White dominance plays in education, especially in the discourse of education. However, in order to understand the role of White dominance, we must first determine what Whiteness is, and how it is interwoven in society especially among cultural contexts. In general, Howard (2006) serves as a tool to help White educators recognize the need for redeveloping their White identity in order to help all students.

Furthermore, Dr. Howard also argues that the field placement experience should be extended but on the condition that the curriculum reflects the concepts of a caring perspective, and that represents the sufferings and oppressions of others. He construes this idea by stating:
So you know if you have a curriculum and its based on the “norm” and they say, “I care for you,” you can command that to be pretty deadly...pretty lethal to that person’s sense of self and their relationships to their communities.” (Dr. Howard, personal communication, October 12, 2015).

Therefore, Howard (2006) offers four recommendations to help educators prepare, teach, and engage culturally diverse students: honesty, empathy, advocacy, and action. In addition, self-reflection is important to cultural awareness, and it is important for White educators to become knowledgeable of their position, status, and level of awareness of their White identity and how it affects other cultures in society. For this reason, Howard (2006) urges people of color to strongly dislike hegemonic practices such as racism, White dominance, White privilege, and ignorance…not White people. Overall, the theme Howard (2006) attempts to address throughout this text is a question that aligns with my research is, which is “How do we prepare [a] predominately White teacher population to work effectively with racially and culturally diverse students?” (p. 117).

In addition, as it relates to race-related classroom discussions with white students, he admits he has to alter his curriculum. Dr. Howard teaches a required traditional education course for the college of education at the examined site. Dr. Howard provides one example and approach that he uses to re-shift, as he names it, curriculum text(s) in order to create a safe space to have culturally-sensitive and race-related discussions. One approach Dr. Howard mentions is that he uses and reworks canonical texts (classic literature, sacred texts, official accepted as literature) such as Plato and Dewey, and others to help his students think about the implications of the western and traditional thoughts of education (Dr. Howard, personal communication, October 12, 2015; Google, 2016).
After being asked if during these encounters students feel a sense or some sort of guilt, Dr. Howard’s response is that they are complacent, and that he believes they care, but they care from their perspective. Howard (2006) claims, “Our current diversity jargon makes much of the need for White folks to become allies for people of color in the battle for equity and social justice” (pp. 21-22). Scholars and researchers alike need to look more intensively at White identity and racism that goes beyond the fact that other groups suffered because of Whites/White America (Howard, 2006). Instead, Howard (2006) recommends reeducating White America about multicultural education and diversity by overcoming, healing, and being aware of realities (hegemonic factors) that created and disseminated these negative racial influences in the first place. Additionally, when asked if he has white students that challenge him during these race-related conversations, he admits that he has had students to call him a racist. Dr. Howard’s rebuttal to students that calls or believes that he is a racist is that he focuses on the reason why he believes that he is being called a racist. For this reason, he informs them that they (the white students who believe that Dr. Howard is a racist) have a colorblind perspective of the world, and that they are not addressing and ignoring pivotal issues that are significant such as, “race, power, and privilege” (Dr. Howard, personal communication, Oct 12, 2015). It is imperative to understand that the school’s culture, power relationships, curriculum and resource materials, along with teacher’s attitudes and belief systems of students must be changed in order to promote educational equality for all students in diverse groups (Banks, 1993). Therefore, in order for schools to be transformed educators; in general, must be knowledgeable and aware of the influences of diverse students’ and how these influences affect their behavior (Banks, 1993).
Analysis G: Through the Lens of CRT

While interviewing Dr. Howard he illuminated with deep concern the importance of improved/redesigned teacher education programs needing to become more culturally reflexive, admitting/acknowledging their current state as an educational institution, and being able to demonstrate what it means to care from the perspective of those cultural groups who are experiencing oppression. For this reason, Dr. Howard’s interview and its emerging themes portrays CRT tenet number 2; the challenge to dominant ideology (Solozano and Yosso, 2000, p. 63). According to Hiraldo (2010) CRT tenet number two focuses on the permanence of racism, which he elaborated as:

The permanence of racism suggests that racism controls the political, social, and economic realms of U.S. society. In CRT, racism is seen as an inherent part of American civilization, privileging White individuals over people of color in most areas of life, including education. (pp. 54-55)

Dr. Howard’s response to what it means to be an urban educator is somewhat similar to Dr. Connie’s as they both express that the term urban is a “loaded term” (Dr. Howard, personal communication, October 12, 2016). However, Dr. Howard’s explanation of what it means to be an urban educator is one that to some degree erases the idea of what the majority believes or identifies as urban, as he acknowledges that he is uncertain of what it really means to be urban. So in that regard, he thinks more towards a liberating education (Dr. Howard, personal communication, October 12, 2016). By definition, according to Johnson-Hunter & Risku (2003) liberating education is defined as an educational philosophy that makes standard statements about what education, educators, and schools should and should not do about what the aims, methods and content of education should or should not be.
The main goal of liberating education “is to provoke the student to question all taken-for-granted values, ideas, norms, beliefs, etc…that are given presuppositions compromising the dominant social paradigm” (Sargis, 2008, p. 1). Overall, if we view liberating education through the lens of critical thinking and with authentic/genuine conversations, it will increase critical consciousness and the reasoning for including service learning in post-secondary higher education institutions (Johnson-Hunter & Risku, 2003). For this reason, he implicates in a subtle manner that this is a deeper concern or issue than analyzing the preparation of urban educators and its effectiveness as the main focus of the academic success and/or failure of students; particularly, students of color. Moreover, as it relates to Sachs (2015) the factors that perpetuate racism, which are mentioned earlier, are considered challenging obstacles due to the cultural sensitivity of the matters and issues discussed. For this reason, I believe that Dr. Howard would agree profusely, that until we are able to become racially/culturally sensitive and help eliminate racism in a way that defends and protects instead of offends, racism/racist tactics be it indirectly or directly will continue to be challenging to overcome (Sachs, 2015). In other words, Dr. Howard’s point is made clear; we can prepare urban educators for urban learning environments and culturally diverse students to the best of our knowledge. However, it is crucial that we attack the major problem ahead that has been a problem throughout history, which is racism. Until racism is attacked head on and eliminated, there will always be issues despite how well teachers are prepared to teach in urban environments.

In thinking about these issues in terms of CRT, the theory in and of itself tends to name the factors and elements of racism; as well as, identifies its origins (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). CRT also speaks to ways in which these dynamics that contribute to the perpetuation of racism, which can be eliminated and/or minimized through acts of committing to social justice
(CRT Tenet 3). Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, in terms as of what Dr. Howard’s interview responses speak to align more with CRT tenet number two (challenging dominant ideology). Comparatively, the notion of what it means to care particularly to the oppressions of people of color, both conceptualizes and argues against Dr. Howard’s idea of what cultural competency is in his opinion, and what he considers the primary focal point of discussion when reimagining /redeveloping teacher education programs.

The notion of caring is a term adopted from academic scholar Dr. Nel Noddings, who has demonstrated through her study of the ethics of care, the importance of caring and relationship as an educational goal, is a vital element of education (Smith, 2004, 2016). Noddings was influenced by her own academic journey, which made her interested in student-teacher relationships in her professional career (Smith, 2004, 2016). Noddings’s reflection and observation of her own journey helped her to identify three specific areas that she feels matter to her that impacted her academic journey and professional career in someway, which are: “domestic life, learning and writing, and living life as a moral quest” (O’Toole 1998; Smith, 2004, 2016, p. 4). Hence, Noddings outlook on the ethics of care, the promotion of it, and how it should be foundational for ethical decision making, speaks to her passion of effective positive student-teacher relationships and her understanding that caring is a human necessity and “that all people want to be cared for” (Smith, 2004, 2016, p. 5). Noddings approach to this theory depicts Dr. Howard’s perspective as it questions the caring encounters: “what are we like when we engage in caring encounters?” (Smith, 2004, 2016, p. 6) Thus, Noddings identifies characteristics and elements of care in ways to help us understand why the ethics of care is important and argued to be a foundational educational aspect and goal, “Caring involves connection between carer and the cared-for and a degree of reciprocity; that is to say that both gain from the encounter in
different ways and both give” (Smith, 2004, 2016, p. 6). The distinction between caring-for and caring-about is also made as Noddings suggest that in order for us to actually care-for we must learn how to care-about because caring-about is a vital source to society and “the foundation for our sense of justice” (Smith, 2004, 2016, p. 8). As it relates to the notion of caring and education/schooling in particular, Noddings view education as the central foundation to the working of what it means to care in society (Smith, 2004, 2016). Subsequently, Dr. Howard strongly believes that the examined site does not adequately prepare future educators to teach urban students of color because it is from a caring perspective; however, a caring white perspective. Respectively, when examining curriculum and teacher education programs through the lenses of CRT it is important to recognize the structural influence; as well as, the existence, if any, of systematic racism because if any of those components exist, it will be challenging not to ignore the ineffectiveness of diversity action plans and initiatives that may occur with that institution (Hiraldo, 2010). While it is important to consider how educational institutions promote racism be it intentionally or unintentionally, through hidden agendas, hidden curriculum, systematically or the process and procedures of encouraging well intended diversity plans, it is equally as important to acknowledge the racial climate and the students overall collegiate experience (Hiraldo, 2010; Soloranzo et al, 2000).

According to Soloranzo et al. (2000) a positive or negative racial climate is recognized by the following four elements:

(a) the inclusion of students, faculty, and administrators of color; (b) a curriculum that reflects the historical and contemporary experiences of people of color; (c) programs to support the recruitment, retention and graduation of students of color; and (d) a college/university mission that reinforces the institution's commitment to pluralism. In its
negative form, these researchers conclude, these elements are less likely to exist on college campuses. (p. 62)

For this reason, Dr. Howard’s interview emulates this deep desire for the powers that be to take a closer look at their intentions as they try to ensure they are replicating what they are setting out to do without perpetuating ideas and notions of racism. In addition, understand how to care in ways that acknowledge the oppressions of others. In doing so, Dr. Howard trusts that academic institutions and teacher education programs, specifically, can better prepare future educators not only for urban learning environments, but to globally influence perspective while eliminating the elephant in the room, racism.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2013, 50% of the nation’s public school students were Hispanic, African American, Native American, Asian, or two or more races. (National Center of Education Statistics 2016; Chiu et al., 2017, p. 47)

In contrast, less than 10% of American teachers are Hispanic, Native American, Asian, or identify as two or more races, and many are from middle class backgrounds. (Synder & Dillow, 2015; Chiu et al., 2017, p. 47)

Preservice teachers must be taught to view the classroom as a microcosm of the world and that each student is a unique representation of diverse experiences, values, abilities, understanding, approaches, and beliefs. Preservice teachers should be given the opportunity to think critically about diversity and culture in a reflective manner. (Chiu et al., 2017, p. 47)

Introduction

The final chapter of this dissertation begins with leading insights or suppositions related to the redesign of teacher education programs. It concludes with questions and insights discovered and raised within my study, implications for redesign, and suggestions for future research. This chapter proposes varied recommendations through the review of literature and feedback from participants in this study on the importance of redesigning teacher education curriculum to better prepare future urban educators for culturally diverse students. One overarching recommendation is to include a more multicultural approach to teacher education curriculum to create and nurture culturally competent preservice urban educators in order to engage, motivate, and increase the academic success of urban youth of color. The researcher attempts to compile data from a range of past and current scholarly literature, examines research data, addresses limitations, and notes recommendations for both future urban educators and teacher educators, offers suggestions for a redesigned teacher education curriculum, and pedagogical approaches; as well as, suggestions for future research. This chapter breaks down a number of emerging themes from the study; these themes include ideas expressed on understanding and defining the terms urban and cultural competency, field placement immersion
and the inclusion of a more multicultural approach in teacher education programs overall (see Appendix D).

Summary of Study

The purpose of this research study was to present strategies and recommendations that would better prepare preservice teachers for students of color in urban learning environments. The work also depicts the necessity of proper preparedness of preservice urban educators, the significance/urgency of teacher education programs implementing a more multicultural focus in teacher education program curriculum. In addition, I provide recommendations and suggestions on how to improve or redesign teacher training curriculum as a whole to meet students’ needs (urban younger students), engage and motivate them to learn, all the while achieving academic success. This study was conducted during the 2015-2016 academic year at a university located in an urban city, in the Midwest region area of the United States of America. I initially focused on two-traditional teacher education programs that aim to prepare future urban educators for culturally diverse students in urban learning environments. The participants that were identified were four preservice educators (including one novice teacher that recently graduated from the program), and three teacher educators/faculty from the college of education (COE), at the examined site. Due to limitations of the study, the participant size is small; however, it was manageable in size and diverse in levels and status within the respondents, and their feedback concerning their experience in the teacher education program and COE overall.

The study is vital because it provides newer insights and recommendations on the importance of redesigning teacher education curriculum to include a more multicultural focus through the qualitative methods used, such as: unstructured interviews and participant
observations. The qualitative and narrative/counter-storytelling Critical Race Theory (CRT) approaches employed in this qualitative study means that conclusions have been drawn from scholarly literature, experiences in the field, and personal stories from participants; as well as, my own academic journey that help guide the research. My inquiry was highly infused with CRT methodology in order to dissect responses and show their connection to CRT. The following questions were explored in order to fully examine this topic:

**Central research question.** How would the redesign of teacher education programs that include the utilization of cultural lenses, culturally relevant pedagogy strategies, and multicultural educational frameworks, better prepare preservice teachers to teach students of color?

**Thematic critical sub-question.** Are teachers unprepared to teach culturally diverse students?

The query above was used to help guide the research and draw on the conclusions listed below. In addition, the participant interview questions were also used to determine and gather feedback through qualitative means based on preservice teachers status in the program (i.e. during or after field experience), novice teacher’s teacher experience after recently graduating from the program, and teacher educators/faculty of COE experiences with preparing future urban educators. The research questions asked were to determine how to redesign teacher education programs to better prepare future urban educators. Interview questions are listed in Appendix B.

The feedback and responses that were given for the interviews and research questions were analyzed and led to the discovery of emerging themes. Those emerging themes were then examined closer and guided to the most prevalent emerging themes, which led to the following conclusions.
Conclusions to the Redesign of Teacher Education

This section is structured around conclusions to the study that were created by and based on the most prevalent findings in the emerging themes that were found in the research study using respondents’ feedback to the interview questions. In response to each dominant emerging theme, data were summarized and positioned to either support, argue, or enhance existing literature.

Preservice teachers/novice teacher.

1) Inclusion of a more multicultural focus in teacher education programs

All the participants both preservice teachers, a novice teacher, and teacher educators alike felt as though teacher education programs should include a more multicultural focus in their curriculum, teaching methods, and structure of the program overall. Based on the feedback given from preservice teachers, and novice teacher most participants felt as though their teacher education program; generally, prepares them to teach in urban learning environments. Although the novice teacher and most of the preservice educators believed that they were being prepared to teach in urban environments a few believed that it was their own self-guidance (i.e. networking with professional academic/student organizations, connecting with select professors, choosing certain courses to take with particular professors...etc.) that helped them to feel completely prepared to teach urban youth of color. In addition, some participants expressed and/or did not express directly if they are being prepared to teach urban youth. This could be due to the fact that participants (preservice teachers and novice teachers) are in various stages of the program or have graduated and started their career, and now reflect on their experience to determine if they are or not prepared. However, one participant in particular strongly disagreed with receiving the proper preparedness and was convinced that the program should be improved or redesigned to
better equip them for culturally diverse youth in urban learning environments. Along with desiring that teacher education programs be more multicultural in their approach, preservice teachers in this study also believe they should be improved or redesigned to include more multicultural courses and professional development opportunities as well.

According to Chiu et al. (2017), this epidemic of better preparing culturally competent teachers has existed for quite some time and in some teacher education programs it is mandated for accrediting purposes. Acknowledging its importance, “The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) recognized that culturally competent teachers play a crucial role in ensuring academic success of students from diverse backgrounds” (Chiu et al., 2017, p. 48). Generally, most of the teacher educator participants in this study are convinced that their teacher education program is heading in the right direction, as far as preparing their preservice teachers, but admit they can improve in some areas. However, one teacher educator adamantly believes that the program has much progress to make in order to adequately prepare future urban educators effectively. In addition, it is essential that teacher educators direct preservice educators’ perspectives away from divergence of thinking and fallacy of cultural awareness and toward embracing cultural diversity (Chiu et al., 2017). Furthermore, in order to successfully begin promoting permanent change in teacher education it is important to admit the need to do more educational transformation versus doing more school reform (Abbott, 2015; Chiu et al., 2017). Abbott (2015) speaks to the steps in moving beyond school reform and towards a transformation education by arguing that the notion and the importance of understanding how people learn in today’s society is critical to begot effective change.

*Implication(s).* To further the enhancement of better preparing culturally competent teachers, all teacher education programs should be mandated to include cultural competency and
a multicultural approach to curriculum in order to ensure that teachers are prepared to teach and promote academic success for culturally diverse students in urban learning environments (Banks, 1993; Banks, 2015; Chiu et al., 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002). In doing so, could ensure that preservice educators are taught to view the world as a miniature unit of the whole world, and that students bring their own individuality, uniqueness, morals, beliefs, and thoughts to diversified cultural experiences (Abbott, 2015; Banks, 1993; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2001).

2) Notions of cultural competency

Overall, preservice teachers in my inquiry could not fully answer the question of being culturally competent at this stage of their learning. They assumed that they needed more experience in the field besides their field experience that they gained at this point to better answer the question of defining or be able to identify with the term cultural competency. They all believed that since they are still learning how to be culturally competent, experience is needed in order to gage their cultural competency level or ability. Chiu et al. (2017) argue how preservice teachers are now seeking culturally relevant practices and that there is much research that supports culturally responsive practices that are needed in order to influence their thoughts of working with culturally diverse students. In addition, Chiu et al. (2017) move beyond the discourse of culturally responsive and culturally relevant pedagogy and provide teacher educators in particular, detailed and precise resources for aiding the expansion of culturally competency among preservice teachers. Furthermore, Abbott (2015) suggests that instead of moving forward with the quest of school reform, there needs to be a radical transformation in educational school systems overall. The process of the transformation should look at past policies and learning behaviors/systems and recognize that there is a different way of learning
that need to be presented and will help our generation today understand and learn how to navigate in today’s world.

**Implication(s).** To further this advancement of creating culturally competent teachers, teacher education programs and teacher educators alike should embrace the importance and necessity of training preservice teachers having a more culturally responsive curriculum to ensure that these future educators are culturally competent enough and well-prepared to teach culturally diverse students in urban learning environments, today. In recognizing that it is a challenge for post-secondary institutions to face the task of preparing culturally competent and responsive future educators for meeting the needs of culturally diverse students, it takes teacher educators and the powers that be (i.e. administration, stakeholders of academic institutions…etc.) most importantly to become critical and self-reflective of their own cultural biases, identities, and views of the world (Chiu et al., 2017). Although this maybe a very tremendous duty for teacher educators, it is crucial for preservice teachers to be trained with a multicultural focus, become culturally competent, and well-prepared in order to work with culturally diverse students (Cruicksbank & Armaline, 1986; Darling-Hammond, Ramos-Beban, Altamirano, & Hyler, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2001).

**3) Unpacking complex terms “urban” and “cultural competency”**

Furthermore, the general themes of teacher educator participants’ responses brought about the following conclusions. First, the term urban was a complicated word for participants to define. For instance, participants claimed that their definition of the word was loaded and multi-layered. The consensus of most was how do we define urban? or Who or what falls under the category of urban, today? Second, about half of the teacher educator participants also had a difficult time defining the word cultural competency. For instance, two of the teacher educator
participants had a challenging time defining the word cultural competency and suggested that the term be replaced with different words such as: cross cultural competency, transcultural competency, intercultural competency, and culturally reflexive. After much thought, and taking a closer look at their responses, I agree with the teacher educators’ positions on expanding or redefining the words urban and cultural competency into various avenues of understanding so that the word can be understood in diversified ways and levels.

**Urban**

Most of the teacher educator participants had a challenging time defining and categorizing who or what is urban. However, most scholarly literature that speak to the epidemic of urban education and urban youth, talk of locations that are identified as urban cities, school systems (of all kind) located in urban areas that are marginalized, disenfranchised and some cases considered poor or low-income areas. Yet, teacher educator participants in this research study had a difficult time identifying whom and what is urban considering that they believe that the term has evolved beyond what traditional academic literature and discourse identifies as urban. For instance, if we searched for the definition of the term urban, we would notice that most classical dictionary engines define the word as the following: According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary the term is defined as:

- Urban (adjective): of, relating to, characteristic of, or constituting a city; of or relating to cities and the people who live in them: of, relating to, or being a city urban life.

In reviewing the current definition of the term, it can create a conflicting view of what the term urban actually means. For this reason, it is understandable why teacher educators’ responses were that of not knowing how to define the term because the word’s meaning is different today,
than it was in the past, and in scholarly literature, pertaining to the discourse of students of color who are in urban education.

*Implication(s).* In order for teacher educators to embrace the term urban, it must be clearly defined and aligned or connected with what today’s view of the word considers to be defined as urban. It is important that a clear definition is made of the term in order to ensure that we are properly preparing future educators, and not perpetuating the same negative connotations based on past/historical beliefs that relate to race and class; in which the term is categorized and defined in both literature and in media. Clarity of the definition and understanding of the word urban in both past/present perspectives in literature in social media are important because it can help with the concepts that may have been built concerning the term. In addition, it also gives reasons why avenues such as: media and literature, have significance and this significance has weight on its impact, influence, and enabling bias or unbiased meanings, identifications and stereotypical implications about the term and those who are categorized as urban. In general, we must understand the word urban so that we can prepare future urban educators and provide them with such cultural experiences and proficiencies in order for them to understand how to deal with populations of students that are compressed under this umbrella. In essence, how can one (teacher educators) prepare others (future urban educators) for something that they do not clearly understand themselves and/or have a distorted understanding of terms such as urban; train based off their misunderstandings and call it cultural competency when it in fact is indeed stereotypical and perpetuating racism.

**Cultural Competency**

Along with the term urban, cultural competency is another term that teacher educator respondents had a difficult time defining. They did not care for the term or suggested that the
term be replaced with new words, in order to conceptualize the idea of being able to meet the needs of culturally diverse students. Although teacher educator participants understood the context of the questions asked, as it related to the term cultural competency, a few preferred to use the terms mentioned above earlier such as: cross cultural competency, transcultural competency, (Dr. Stewart); intercultural competency and culturally reflexive (Dr. Howard).

Each participant clearly defined what he or she meant by using his or her preferred term instead of the term cultural competency, and explained why they preferred to use their term of preference, and the limitations of using the term cultural competency in their own perspective. Overall, participants believed cohesively that their preferred terms do a better job analyzing the relationship with other people, how these relationships coexisted with others, and could help with the understanding, acceptance, or embracing of one another’s culture for the larger whole of coexistence in humanity or the human race collectively. In addition, teacher educators in this study believed that the term cultural competency was limited in what it is thought to set out to do. In other words, Dr. Howard and Dr. Stewart believed that the term managed others by controlling them by a set of ideals or nuances (i.e. learned behaviors, stereotypes, negative and positive connotations, cultural/personal biases…etc.) about a certain culture or group of people that are different from the dominant culture, without accepting the fact that everyone in the same culture are different although they may have similar traits of some sort. However, comparative to the term urban, the term cultural competency has also evolved over the years. Its definition in most scholarly literature and in general, specifically, related to education today, according to the National Education Association (NEA), it is defined as the following:

Cultural competence is the key to thriving in culturally diverse classrooms and schools - and it can be learned, practiced, and institutionalized to better serve diverse students, their
families, and their communities. Cultural competence is the ability to successfully teach students who come from a culture or cultures other than our own. It entails developing certain personal and interpersonal awareness and sensitivities, understanding certain bodies of cultural knowledge, and mastering a set of skills that, taken together, underlie effective cross-cultural teaching and culturally responsive teaching. (National Education Association (NEA), 2017)

According to the National Center for Culture Competence, the term has evolved and is defined in many ways from past to present. Goode (2017) cited a pivotal work of Cross et al (1989) that provided a foundation of the term cultural competence and since been tailored over the past fifteen or so years. Although the term has been modified the basic core ideas, and framework are harmonious across varied systems (Goode, 2017). Thus, a list was compiled to reflect the meaning of the term, the list of definitions below reflect the definition of the terms that depict the general concept and parallelism to the education field (Goode, 2017). The evolution and definition of the term cultural competence is noted in the following ways, “Cultural competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system, agency or those professions to work effectively in cross-cultural situations” (Goode, 2017, p.1).

OR

Cultural competence is defined as a set of values, behaviors, attitudes, and practices within a system, organization, and program or among individuals and which enables them to work effectively cross culturally. Further, it refers to the ability to honor and respect the beliefs, language, interpersonal styles and behaviors of individuals and families receiving services, as well as staff who are providing such services. Striving to achieve
cultural competence is a dynamic, ongoing, developmental process that requires a long-term commitment. (Goode, 2017, p. 3).

OR

Cultural competence is a developmental process that evolves over an extended period. Both individuals and organizations are at various levels of awareness, knowledge and skills along the cultural competence continuum. (Goode, 2017, p. 2).

In sum, in reflecting on the teacher educators’ feedback of the term cultural competency and seeing how the definition of the term has evolved, it can be assumed that a clear understanding of the term is necessary for the college participants that come from and work in colleges of education nationally, in order to prepare, produce, nurture, and train future educators, for this anomaly of teacher education and in order to effectively reach culturally diverse urban youth for academic success.

Implication(s). To aid with the clear understanding and importance of preparing culturally competent teachers, the term cultural competency should be clearly defined and/or expanded in a way that is fluid with the terms: cross cultural competency, transcultural competency, intercultural competency and culturally reflexive so that it is not limited in its understanding, context, and meaning. In addition, in order to fully understand and grasp the notion of cultural competence, it is important that preservice teachers be exposed to a substantial amount of clinical field experience. The time spent in field placements is essential in order for future educators to know what to expect when they transition into becoming in-service teachers in diverse urban learning environments, which also questions the discourse of the necessity of extended time in field placements.
4) Field placement immersion

Lastly, teacher educators strongly believed that field placement immersion is both beneficial and essential to preservice educators in gaining an understanding and providing exposure to be prepared for urban learning environments. For instance, teacher educator participants found that field placement immersion will be beneficial, if the quality is structured better, more meaningful and depicted in quality; as well as, researched to be a successful product of classrooms/learning environments, which is being taught in the teacher education program classrooms.

Based on these conclusions, we are provided with starting points in order to improve the redesign of teacher education. Although the insights and suggestions above are only a piece to a bigger puzzle, they offer us a starting point to begin and leave room for further research to continue to bridge and/or connect these ideals together with a cohesive emphasis to close the achievement gap among all students. Chiu et al. (2017) suggest that teacher educators, preservice educators, and practitioners should increase their level of knowledge for cultural competency, due to the lack thereof, they grapple with engaging and teaching culturally diverse learners effectively. In addition, Chiu et al. (2017) recommend that teacher education programs recruit more culturally diverse teacher candidates in multiple subject areas with the notion that it will improve the academic success of urban youth of color.

Banks (2015) argues how urban teacher education programs should be transformed and should include more high-need field experiences for prospective teachers. Banks (2015) defends proposed claims by examining the lenses of importance/significance of preservice teachers having more field experience through the lenses of 1) the current state of teacher education
programs; 2) the force for change; 3) the impact of field experiences; and 4) the challenges that are faced.

**Current state of teacher education programs.** According to Banks (2015) the current state of teacher education programs as they relate to including more field experiences for future educators is eccentric (unconventional) versus well-designed experiences that promote skills and development. For this reason, prospective teachers tend to learn theory intensively in separation from practice with brief clinical experience, which supports the gap between theory/research and practice (Banks, 2015). As a result, teacher candidates feel unprepared to teach culturally diverse students in urban learning environments (Banks, 2015).

**Implication(s).** To support the idea of including more clinical field experience for preservice teachers, teacher education programs need to be redesigned to include more time for field experience. According to Banks (2015), the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) recommends that the redesign of teacher education programs incorporate field training because it is crucial to developing effective future educators. In addition, other educational institutions recommend that clinical experience be the core of teacher preparation versus academic preparation and coursework, a divergent approach to most traditional education programs (Banks, 2015). A comparison is made between the process of residency for medical students and how teacher education programs should be structured. It is argued that future educators need varied and diverse classroom experiences together with theory and coursework; just like medical residency programs are diversified. Furthermore, along with gaining multiple experiences combined with theory and coursework the following guiding principles which some, not all are listed below:
Content and pedagogy are woven around clinical experiences throughout preparation in coursework, laboratory-based experiences, and school-embedded practice.

Data are used to judge every element of the preparation program.

Candidates are prepared to be content experts; know how to teach; and be innovators, collaborators, and problem solvers.

Candidates are provided intensive feedback.

Mentors and supervising teachers are rigorously selected and should be effective practitioners.

Technology is used to share best practices and facilitate ongoing professional development.

Research is conducted on teacher effectiveness, best practices, and preparation program performance to support continuous improvement. (Banks, 2015, p. 61)

The guiding principles, that are mentioned above give a glimpse to the solution of a larger issue to better prepare teachers for urban environments, offers ways to improve and/or redesign the field experience element to teacher education preparation, and depict the importance of a diverse quality, and effective approach/method to produce highly qualified and trained professional teachers for urban youth. It is important to acknowledge and help others to recognize the importance for an urgent change to be made in order for future educators to not only feel prepared, but actually be prepared to teach urban youth.

A force for transformation. Although research has been done to acknowledge the need for effective teachers to produce academic success and student/teacher retention; unfortunately, some teachers do not want to work in urban environments due to staggering numbers of dropout rates, violence, teen pregnancy, and low academic achievement (Banks, 2015).
Moreover, approximately 50% of teachers leave urban learning environments within their first five years of teaching because of an unpreparedness to teach in urban environments, lack of support from school administration, behavior problems, classroom invasions, and lack of resources (Bank, 2015). However, some scholars agree that it is the duty of teacher education programs to develop and nurture culturally competent educators so they are adequately prepared to work with culturally diverse urban youth (Banks, 2015; Chui et al., 2017; Jordan-Irvine, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2001). Moreover, the most influential learning opportunities is through establishing preservice teacher experiences in urban P-12 schools that will offer them these possibilities/chances to experience it first-hand (Banks, 2015). After conducting my research, it was evident through participants’ feedback that teacher training programs should be redesigned and should consider modeling themselves after some notable effective teacher preparation programs (Banks, 2015). Effective and successful teacher preparation programs are believed to be based on the following seven principles:

- Intertwine classroom practice and education theory together in a year-long residency;
- Focus on candidate learning alongside a trained, experienced, and well-paid mentor;
- Prepare candidates in cohorts to encourage a professional learning community, promote school change, and raise collaboration;
- Build effective partnerships and draw on community-based organizations to foster “third space” for teacher preparations;
- Serve school districts by catering to both their curricular goals and instructional approaches as well as their teacher supply problems;
- Support candidates for multiple years once they are hired as teachers of record and;
- Launch incentives and support differentiated career goals to reward and retain accomplished teachers. (Banks, 2015, pp. 61-62)

In addition, to the seven principles listed above, research shows how schools of education must put forth an effort to redesign teacher education programs that is detailed in their approach to prepare and train future urban educators (Banks, 2015). Along with the idea of proper preparedness and revised teacher education curriculum, one way to improve the effectiveness of teachers in urban schools is to improve and/or develop the self-confidence of teachers’ abilities (teacher efficacy) (Banks, 2015). Teacher efficacy is “…teachers’ beliefs about their own effectiveness as teachers” (Banks, 2015, p. 62). In other words, if a teacher is not confident in his/her own effectiveness and teacher ability, he/she will not put effort into meeting students’ needs (Banks, 2015). If teachers feel prepared they also have high teacher efficacy (Banks, 2015). Unfortunately, it has been found through research that when preservice educators teach in urban schools after being trained through traditional teacher education curriculum, they experience moments of cultural shock and develop unhealthy attitudes to reach their own students (Banks, 2015; Grant, 2015; Rhodes & Milby, 2015). It is assumed through both academic literature and data from my research study that a redesigned curriculum should address the reality of urban education (Banks, 2015). In addition, it is also believed and expressed in my research study that the field experience is the most important aspect of the teacher training experience because it connects the separation between theory and practice; meanwhile, offering the opportunity for preservice teachers to comprehend the reality of teacher demands in learning environments (Banks, 2015). Although teacher education/preparation programs have the most opportune ability to better teacher preparedness, quality, and instruction, researchers have a difficult time deciding on how to prepare and retain future teachers; as well as, how to measure
credibility for prospective teachers entering into the field (Abbott, 2015; Chi et al., 2017; Futrell, 2010). All students deserve a quality and effective education especially culturally diverse students in urban, marginalized, and low-income areas (Banks, 2015). It is important to understand the impact of preservice teachers’ field experiences in urban learning environments.

The impact of field experiences. In general, field experiences provide the opportunity for prospective teachers to apply their curricular knowledge to a classroom learning environment. For this reason, field experiences should be designed in a way that show proficiency and understanding of what to expect in their future career and professional role (Banks, 2015). Teacher preparation programs should work together and build partnerships with school districts in order to redesign them in order to improve preparation so that preservice teachers can better meet the needs of students and develop confidence as teacher themselves (Banks, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2001).

For this reason, listed below are a few principles for programs that are centered on field experiences and that offer strategies to help improve teacher education (Banks, 2015). Some of those recommendations are:

- More rigorous accountability. All teacher education programs should be accountable for how well they help improve P-12 student learning and address the needs of schools.
- Revamping curricula, incentives, and staffing, so that practice, content, theory, and pedagogy can be closely coupled.
- Expanding the knowledge base to identify what works and support continuous improvement, as this information will assist in shaping future research as well as public policies on preparation. (Banks, 2015, p. 63)
In addition, there are three elements of field experiences that are considered the most effective of clinical field experiences:

- Having cooperating teachers and university faculty supervise teacher candidates,
- Providing more than one field experience, and
- Making sure teacher candidates receive egalitarian treatment from their supervising teachers. (p. 63)

Overall, as mentioned by participants of my research study, they all believed that a well-qualified and structured field experiences may be or will be beneficial, and extended clinical field experiences may cause future educators to become more thoughtful and self-reflexive because they tend to develop more patience, tolerance and empathy for students (Banks, 2015). However, studies show that short time spent in the field may not fully prepare teachers for urban learning environments (Banks, 2015). For this reason, some researchers believe that the lack of skills and knowledge on how to properly prepare urban educators is the result of the limited amount of research concerning teacher preparation in urban learning environments (Banks, 2015). As a result of improved and redesigned teacher education programs, and better prepared teachers, this can produce qualified teacher selection, which could improve the academic success of culturally diverse students in urban learning environments (Banks, 2015).

Implication(s) (a) To encourage and support the idea of designing a more quality and effective field experience for future urban educators and teacher educators, education programs should focus more on extending clinical practice student teaching experiences and recruiting more prospective educators of color. (b) To support the idea of extending clinical practice (student teaching field experience), teacher education programs should focus more on redesigning and structuring a more improved and effective field experiences of quality, so that
future urban educators can know what to expect and how to respond/manage these learning environments. Furthermore, along with extending the time for students to do their clinical training participants of this study mentioned that there should also be some discourses around paid internship seeing that most field experiences happen during the day and during full-time working hours. Dr. Stewart, one of the teacher educator participants of this study suggested that the consideration of pay should be recognized since students may have other commitments (i.e. family obligations, coursework, late evening work...etc.) that they have to attend to and providing them a monetary reward can assist with any financial loss or gain they may have during their clinical field experience (Dr. Stewart, personal communication, September 30, 2015).

Thus, it is also crucial that the field/clinical experiences be accompanied with courses that connect with these experiences with relatable topics and discussions to help prospective educators to work through struggles and concerns so that negative connotations and stereotypes are not constructed and perpetuated (Banks, 2015). It is important to both acknowledge and recognize the challenges that preservice teachers face.

**The challenges that are faced.** In addition, while conducting my research it was agreed among both teacher educators and preservice teacher participants that teacher education programs; generally, should be redesigned with at more multicultural focus. Scholars and researchers alike believe that teacher training programs need to be redesigned to help preservice teachers to interconnect subject-content, field experience and cultural awareness together (Banks, 2015; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994, Millner, 2005). Participants in this study and other studies acknowledged the overwhelming amount of white females entering into the field of education. Although there is a compelling appeal for teacher education programs to train
preservice teachers to successfully teach diverse urban youth across the nation. Unfortunately, the ongoing criticisms have caused the U.S. Secretary of Education (Arne Duncan) to blame teacher preparation programs for dropping the ball in preparing future educators for 21st century classrooms (Banks, 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2002, 2006; Duncan, 2009; Galman, Pica-Smith, & Rosenberger, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1999; McFadden & Sheerer 2006; Risko, 2006; Sleeter, 2008; Villegas, 2007;). Participants recognize that the training in teacher education programs is crucial to assisting with the preparedness of prospective urban educators. Even though one prevailing issue is the blame for teacher education programs inability to properly train future teachers, another concurrent issue is that of teachers being able to successfully teach culturally diverse urban youth (Banks, 2015; Villegas, 2007; Weisman & Hansen, 2008). Generally, all participants believed that the field experience should be extended, especially new teachers entering into the field. New teachers need additional training to deal with the challenges of an actual classroom in order to be an effective and successful teacher in urban settings (Banks, 2015; Farkas, Johnson, & Foleno, 2000; Ladson Billings, 2001; Villegas, 2007; Weisman & Hansen, 2008). However, the claim is that teacher educators feel excluded and settle for the dominant/traditional curriculum (Banks, 2015; Blackwell, 2003). For this reason, participants (preservice teachers and teacher educators) in this study believed that in some cases many teacher preparation programs fall short in adequately preparing future teachers for today’s classroom (Banks, 2015; Blackwell, 2003; Duncan, 2009; McFadden & Sheerer, 2006; Risko, 2006; Villegas, 2007).

In light of redesigning and confronting challenges in teacher education programs some of the following principles are suggested to help structure better and improved teacher education programs for urban education:
• Resources provided to facilitate school-university collaboration, with school and university faculty meeting on an ongoing basis to implement and evaluate the program.

• Program coordination, with faculty meeting on a regular basis to discuss the connections between courses and field experiences and to monitor candidates’ progress in the program.

• An emphasis on addressing the diverse needs of an urban student population, with candidates completing course assignments and field experiences in urban schools.

• Supportive learning environment with ongoing advisement and mentoring by coordinators, faculty, and university supervisors.

• Data-driven model that informs program practices.

• Understand the importance of valuing students’ cultures and lived experiences—and making space for them in the classroom—while espousing the crucial importance of subject area content as well.

• Examine the ways their own racial, cultural, and class identities have shaped their perspectives and, if they have economic and social privilege, analyze the advantages they have enjoyed that may have previously gone unrecognized.

• Examine and critique the sources of economic, racial, gender, and linguistic inequity within schools and communities, and understand how these factors influence students’ lived experiences within and outside of the classroom.

• Explore together whether and how educators can and should be part of social movements that seek to overcome racial, economic, and linguistic barriers.
Focus on urban schools but with interest in collaborating with others who attend to the related needs of rural, small town, and suburban schools. (Banks, 2015, pp. 66-67)

The above points explain various aspects of why the redesign of teacher education programs is necessary especially the extension of field experiences for future urban educators. In addition, they identify some possible challenges and limitations in doing so, in that regard, the next sections will discuss similar limitations in the research study and thereafter discuss suggestions to further the research.

**Limitations for Redesigning Teacher Education With a More Multicultural Focus**

One of the first limitations of this study is the altered site locations, and restrictions on the academic sites used for this study. In other words, the inability to examine multiple teacher education programs at different academic sites that were identified at the start of the study, which solely focused on primarily preparing future urban educators. The second academic site that was identified, but was unable to be studied, surprisingly at the start of the study. My chair and I were disappointed initially because we were certain that we would have access to this location. However, after multiple failed communication attempts to examine the second site, only one site was used for this study.

Multiple traditional teacher education programs at different educational post-secondary institutions whose emphasis is to prepare urban educators would have been beneficial to this study because it would have provided multiple perspectives, approaches, and recommendations to the study. At the time, only two teacher preparation programs were significantly identified as preparing urban educators; however, only one site was accessible for examination; the reason for this is discussed throughout this section. Later towards the end of the study, an article was written concerning, the second site’s particular institution that might be the answer to why their
lack of involvement in this research study took place. The article written poses a question to analyze if there is something wrong with this specific teacher education program, at this higher education institution. The background story, this higher education institution is located in an urban marginalized area of a major city in the Midwest region of the U.S. and about thirteen miles from the first academic site actually examined and studied for this research study. The institution is also where myself and many others earned our college degrees be it undergraduate, graduate or both. However, one alumna, a female person of color, who received her advanced degree there was being honored along with many others. With this recognition, the honorees were initially asked to participate at the commencement ceremonies, as well as, given a few minutes to speak. Unfortunately, the college of education (COE) at this academic institution changed their minds and decided to use the speakers’ time to network instead (Isaacs, 2017). Bothered by the change in plans, this alumnus commanded the wishes from both students and faculty at this institution to bring to light some of the issues that this COE was facing in their urban education program. The honoree and alumnus of this university took the time to write a letter addressing the issues that the COE was facing in their urban education preparation program, instead of taking the honor/recognition given to her. She felt as though it was more effective and important to shed light to issues rather than taking the generous recognition (Isaacs, 2017). Her letter brought much attention to the issues of neglecting its commitment to students of color, specifically, African American students. In addition, she spoke about low enrollment, retention rates, and deficient academic and institution support with no clear direction for an occupational career in her letter (Isaacs, 2017). She also spoke to the contingent admittance to doctoral programs and the restrictive time given to meet required goals to meet standards. She made a personal connection to this by sharing her own experience as being accepted to her
graduate program through conditional admittance (Isaacs, 2017). The attention from the letter reached the dean of the COE who, after being interviewed, changed the policy of conditional admittance and issued a longer period of time for students to meet all requirements (Isaacs, 2017). The dean also assented to the fact that even though there is a large number of Latinos in the program, there is also a low number of African American students in the graduate program; as well as, graduating from the program overall. The dean of the university explains his position on the low number of African American male enrollment to COE programs or interest in the field of education; in general, as being a national concern based on his reasons for young African American males believing that:

- “School is a hostile place”
- “There is no “power” in being a male teacher”
- “Teaching has been “devalued” because of the views or stigmas society has put on “public education” (Isaacs, 2017, p. 4)

The dean provided other significant claims and the most important one being, “We’re not a perfect place, but we’re striving through our imperfections” (Isaacs, 2017, p. 6). The writer of this article in so many words, states how the low number of African American students that are being both recruited, accepted in, and graduating from this college of education, at this academic site is ridiculous.

Based on the information above, one can clearly see why no one reached out to me concerning my research study. It is obvious that they did not want to be outed or put to question concerning their lack of diversity in student enrollment, retention, and graduation rates. In addition, it could be assumed that the possibility of being confronted on strategies and approaches taught to their preservice teachers being put to question, could have been
intimidating especially when they themselves do not uphold the standards they proclaim to provide prospective urban educators. In addition, the possibility of regurgitating traditional methods of preparing teachers while unfulfilling their duty of actually adequately preparing urban educators is misleading to potential teacher candidates and detrimental to the success of future urban educators and the academic success of the students they teach. However, this study could have possibly benefitted the institution by offering ways in which this teacher education program could have adapted or redesigned both their approach; as well as, seek varied ways to really depict what they were originally set to do by being the examples themselves.

A second limitation of this study was the delay of the approval from the college’s dean at the actual examined site. The dean at the actual examined COE teacher education program; unfortunately, had some reservations and/or questions that prolonged the finalization of the (IRB), process and delay of my research in the beginning. My goal was to begin researching in Summer 2015; however, with the dean’s reservations, I was unable to start interviewing until Fall 2015. The dean’s skepticisms had a lot to do with his concerns with my research outing if you will, their academic learning environment challenging their approach, methods, and pedagogy while determining through critical examination if the university indeed set-out what it is missioned to do, prepare future urban educators. Out of fear, the dean asked my chair if I worked for some private organization and if I were trying to ruin the university and the COE’s reputation. After my chair put him at ease concerning my character and the purpose of my work, it was finally approved weeks later, and I was able to begin interviewing my participants. My assumption is that the dean was yet fearful because about a year later the COE of this institution started sending out surveys asking its students to rate their experiences and express their concerns in order to improve the COE and making sure they have an overall positive learning
experience. If the research began earlier, I could have had more participants interviewed for this study. People told me that they were interested in the research study; however, due to the time it started, they had to decline because the semester had already begun, and they had little to no time for an interview and the other requirements to participate, which brings me to my last point concerning limitations for the study.

The final limitation of this study was the small sampling size of participants used in this study. This sample size was driven through research questions and purpose of the study, in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the examined topic. The classification of the sampling size population is combined using a mixture of the defined qualitative sampling strategies identified as combination or mixed purposeful sampling (Nastasi, n.d.). The mixture of sample strategies used were: stratified purposeful sampling (participants were varied based on status, years in the program, and experience in the field); purposeful random sampling (a credible random selection of participants (teacher educator/faculty (especially) and preservice teachers) was made to represent the general body of the examine site); convenience sampling (participants were accessible and in some way affiliated or connected with the examined site (Nastasi, n.d.). Due to the adjustment of only being able to have access to one academic site to examine the research, the number of participants was reduced. Although there was a fair number of wide-ranged participants in total (both preservice teachers and teacher educators), it could have been beneficial to have more participants, particularly if the dean of this college under study had responded in a timelier manner or if access to the other university was available. In other words, more varied input could have been given towards the need to redesign teacher education curriculum to include a multicultural approach to teacher education programs to better prepare preservice educators for culturally diverse students in urban environments; as well as, future
urban educators acknowledging if they believed or not that they are indeed prepared or unprepared to teach in urban environments, despite their current status in the program, and, during, or after their field placement experience. Overall, according to (Nastasi, n.d.) the sampling size used in this research study, suffices for this kind of research because the consideration of the rule of thumb based on data collection method, which allows for interviewing key participants that were used and identified in this study (Nastasi, n.d.).

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Teacher educators can guide conversations and provide spaces and activities for these reflective practices (Chiu, et al., 2017, p. 48).

This section outlines the recommendations for teacher education programs to both improve and redesign teacher education curriculum. Additionally, if future researchers should expand on this study, the following recommendations for research should be considered:

- teacher educators influence on curricular change,
- evaluation tools to determine teacher effectiveness,
- recruitment of prospective teachers of color, adding, changing, or be more explicit in meanings of words when it comes to being prepared to teach urban youth,
- effective transformation of teacher education programs,
- increasing teacher retention,
- redesigning field experiences.

Tenets of Critical Race Theory were used in examining participants’ responses and observations to reflect ways or identify how educational institutions are reinforcing racism rather than dismantling it through proper research, pedagogy, training, and practice to make their institution a diverse and multicultural learning facility (see Appendix A). While conducting the
academic research, discovering and generating themes from essential data, and obtaining responses from participants’ feedback while analyzing it through the lens of CRT, in this study, it can be concluded that implementing a more multicultural approach to teacher education program curriculum, more research should be done on how to convince teacher educators that cultural competency is essential in preparing preservice teachers for urban cultural learning environments. Further research questions that come to mind are listed below and these questions address in some way CRT tenets by depicting the necessity of a curriculum that includes the conversation of race and the acknowledgement/significance of cultural difference, examines how we determine if we are adequately training effective prospective teachers, questions how or if we are indeed appealing to teacher candidates of color, and how the redesign of teacher education curriculum can benefit from producing quality teachers and quality learning. In all, the questions above in this research address one of the two things that CRT does in education research, which is analyze both practices and strategies through the lenses of CRT, in order to journey through and counter-attack racism (Sleeter, 2012).

Influencing Teacher Educators

Question 1: How can we influence teacher educators about the importance of implementing a more multicultural approach to teacher education programs to better prepare future urban educators?

One suggestion is that teacher educators should become familiar with scholarship that speak to the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy. For instance, Chiu et al. (2017) recommend, “Teacher educators are encouraged to review the work of Gay (2010), who believed it is often challenging for teachers to teach in a culturally responsive manner if they do not first understand cultural differences” (Chiu et al., 2017, p. 48). Along with understanding cultural differences
and reading or becoming familiar with scholarly literature on culturally responsive pedagogy, it is also important to recognize how just being knowledgeable about cultural diversity is not enough (Chiu et al., 2017). A deeper knowledge and understanding has to happen beyond superficial definitions, beliefs, and depictions in social media (Chiu et al., 2017). In addition, another recommendation is that the powers that be (i.e. scholars, researchers, and education policy makers...etc.) should recruit more teachers of color in order to diversify teaching staff and offer a better response/reaction to the growing number of culturally diverse students (Banks, 2015). More research is needed on influencing teacher educators because in order for an improved teacher education curriculum to be effective, it must first be embraced by the powers that be and teacher educators in order for it to be implemented and taken seriously. Research on this topic would be beneficial in order to identify concrete evidence and offer effective ways to influence teacher educators to buy-in to a new way of thinking, approaching, motivating, engaging, and preparing preservice teachers for culturally diverse students in urban learning environments. The above is related to CRT because it examines and/or gages the necessity of having or appealing to faculty of color in order to create a certain connectedness and provide understanding of cultural difference to diverse urban youth in urban learning environments. It also provides opportunity to use counter-stories and share narratives of marginalized experiences from both the student and faculty perspective which infamously involves the CRT approach.

**Evaluation Tools**

**Question 2:** How can we evaluate teacher education programs to see if teacher educators are teaching effectively in a culturally diverse manner, in order to better prepare future educators?
Futrell (2010) suggests that we need to ask ourselves if we should continue to reform or if we should transform our teacher education programs in order to improve them; meanwhile, Abbott (2014) argues that a definite transformation is needed in order to put the learning back into the hands of the learner, which will enable a more quality education. In terms of understanding the differences between reform and transformation, decide on the best option or definite modification for teacher education programs, the term reform is thought as “…changing procedures, processes, and technologies with the intent of improving the performance for existing operation systems” (Futrell, 2010, p. 432). In contrast, the term transformation is “…making it possible to do things that have never been done by the organization, repositioning and reorienting action by putting the organization into a new mode of doing the work” (Futrell, 2010, p. 432). More research on which option best benefits teacher training programs would be beneficial because finding solid evidence and developing methods/strategies that are executed in order to help improve future urban educators preparedness for culturally diverse urban youth and learning environments is crucial to the state of teacher education and education as a whole. In addition, teacher educators and preservice teachers need a clear understanding that just being or learning to be cultural competent is only a start, and not the end all of learning how to teach students of color. For this reason, Chiu et al. (2017) agree with the following view: an understanding of cultural differences does not automatically equate to an equitable, culturally responsive pedagogy. It is beneficial to focus on both systemic societal constructs that maintain deficit thinking in relation to students from nondominant cultures, and for educators to critically reflect their own prejudices and biases. (Chiu et al., 2017, p.48)
Along with choosing and understanding the best option for the future of teacher education programs (reform or transformation), it is also important for teacher educators and prospective teachers to understand their own biases, and realize that culturally responsive teaching goes beyond just understanding cultural differences, but causes one to self-reflect his or her own life in a critical manner and how his or her perceptions can effect or influence student academic achievement or academic failure. More research should be done on how the understanding of cultural difference or being culturally competent is only one part of the answer, and that it also requires more work on a personal level to recognize and identify our own isms and social constructs that causes us to form discrepancies, philosophies, and ideals that can also impact teachers’ attitudes and students’ learning experiences.

**Recruitment**

**Question 3:** How do we recruit more faculty and preservice educators of color, and adequately prepare them to teach students of color effectively as a whole?

Even though there could be multiple ways of recruiting faculty and prospective educators of color, one way is to appeal to those who have attended these urban schools and/or schools that they have attended as an overall (Banks, 2015). Research shows that candidates that come from these schools tend to be more open to teach in these areas versus candidates that have not (Banks, 2015). More research is needed for recruitment because studies show that there is an overwhelming disproportionate number of faculty and students of color in teacher education programs, as well as, teaching in urban learning environments and in the profession across the board. Further research would be beneficial regarding recruitment because teacher educator programs, as well as, education systems can use the new founded knowledge, and begin to
incorporate strategies/approaches/methods in order to see a more diversified faculty and prospective educators of color in teacher education programs and in the classrooms thereafter.

**Explicit Definitions and Understanding of Complex Terms**

**Question 4:** How can we change the language and the use of the term “cultural competency,” and use words such as “cross cultural competency,” “intracultural competency,” or “transcultural competency” to improve teacher education curriculum and develop a better understanding of how to better prepare preservice teachers for culturally diverse students?

More research is needed on how to properly define these terms in today’s society and how to utilize them when preparing future urban educators. More research on how to use these terms as they relate to urban education can be beneficial because it could provide a clear understanding of the terms both historically and present day. It is also essential to understand these terms and how they are used in urban education because it can help prospective teachers’ understandings of how to embrace cultural difference in the classroom, help prepare them for the population of students they will teach, and expose them to what they could encounter and/or should expect in an urban classroom.

**Hiring Quality Teachers**

**Question 5:** How can the transformation of teacher education programs promote or encourage the hiring of highly qualified teachers?

Research shows that some ways transformation of teacher education programs can encourage or promote the hiring of qualified teachers is by preparing teacher candidates for a 21st century learning environment, meaning that teacher educators should have professional development opportunities that will help them implement technology as a supplement for effective teaching
and learning tools (Futrell, 2010). Secondly, cultivating professional and learning communities; meaning that these environments should be improved in order to enhance the field of education as a whole especially and including teacher educators, future educators, and stakeholders (Futrell, 2010). Third, redefining national teacher certification standards in other words reevaluating how teacher certification standards are measured and what goals need to be achieved in order to qualify and credentialize prospective candidates (Futrell, 2010). Lastly, redesigning field experiences and accreditation, research shows how the desire, urgency, and necessity to have both teacher education programs and clinical experience restructured are growing in number. The thought is, that if these experiences are redesigned, it can improve its quality and better prepare preservice teachers for learning environments (Banks, 2015; Futrell, 2010). In addition, establishing common standards could possibly unify what is being taught and create a common-ground, if you will, of what the expectations are in the field (Futrell, 2010). More research should be done in the area of hiring quality teachers because it forces teacher educators and training programs to produce more teachers of quality and for a potentially competitive field. It could also attract more candidates to their programs as well. In sum, hiring more qualified teachers could also improve the academic success of students as well, especially those in urban and low-achieving learning environments.

**Retention**

**Question 6:** How can we increase the retention of K-12 teachers in the field of education?

Accompanied with recruiting more teachers of color, the question also becomes how do we retain teachers that are newly hired and also keep the ones that are ready in-service. More research should be done on teacher retention because research shows there is an overwhelming
amount of teacher shortages, teacher underrepresentation, and teacher turnover especially in the field of urban education (Banks, 2015). Discourse is increasing about redesigning teacher education curriculum and other suggestions are made to better prepare future urban educators; however, teacher retention tends to be dismissed or measured as equally as important after these attempts are made. Research regarding teacher retention would be beneficial because it can help identify the causes, problems, and potentially develop effective solutions to keep and help teachers to find hope especially in urban learning environments.

**Improving Field Experiences for Teacher Educators**

**Question 7:** How can we find definitive ways to design field experiences in a way that aids future educators to become better teachers?

In redesigning teacher education programs, working together with school districts should be considered in order to access the professionalism of prospective teachers, their performance and impact on student’s learning. In addition, prepare them for the population of students that they are planning to teach; for example, if they are planning to become urban educators or teaching culturally diverse students than the following should be considered, according to Chiu et al. (2017), “First, instructors must develop critical consciousness and understand themselves as racial/cultural beings. This understanding will assist the instructor in identifying potential conflict and/microaggressions that may occur” (p. 48). In addition, developing a critical consciousness can also help with the development of diversity awareness, identity development, and create cultural sensitivity to embrace and/or deal with cultural difference. Chiu et al. (2017) trusts, “Preservice teachers need to be culturally aware in order to plan for classroom activities, which are grounded in real-world examples and authentic experiences to bridge any disconnect between theory and practice” (Chiu et al., 2017, p. 48). Finally, professors should allow space
for students to express themselves emotionally to talk about culturally sensitive topics in avenues such as race, power, and privilege that affect them or their students at large in today’s society (Chiu et al., 2017). In doing so, they allow students to feel safe and comfortable with the fact that certain topics are unavoidable and acceptable topics to discuss in the classroom in order to strengthen both the conversations and understanding of what cultural diversity is and set out to do (Chiu et al., 2017).

Months after my study, I met a young lady who was a freshman student at a different college in a suburb, miles away from the examined site who was frustrated with her education. An unnamed white, female student who attends another higher education institution mentioned how high school teachers are not preparing students for college. She stated that high school today is a review of middle school and that high school teachers are lazy, not teaching anything and not preparing students for college, making it difficult for students entering into higher education. She professed her hopes that my work, along with others can change all of the issues she mentioned alone.

After listening to this student’s concern other questions for further study came to mind in terms of redesigning teacher education curriculum with a more multicultural focus and adequately preparing future educators for urban youth. Those questions are as follows:

**Question A**: How can secondary education teachers and institutions teach in a way that prepares students for college?

**Question B**: How can traditional/nontraditional secondary teachers and institutions; as well as, some post-secondary colleges and universities “de-track” in a way that can promote more quality learning and academic success that engages and motivates students to their full potential?
Policy Recommendations for Future Study

The race is not given to the swift nor the strong but he who endures until the end. (Ecclesiastes 9:11)

Question 8: What policy implications and recommendations are needed to change and improve teacher education programs, in colleges and universities to better prepare future educators for culturally diverse urban youth?

After conducting the research study, it was discovered that in order for the future study recommendations to be both successful and effective, policy changes and implementations should be considered. It is imperative to understand that policy influences change, and that change can be either effective or ineffective based on the proper procedures made for that particular recommendation. Therefore, the ultimate solution to structural change in education, teacher education, and more specifically urban education is through proposing implementation of policy changes. In addition, in order to eradicate cultural bias, discrimination, and racism in teacher education curriculum, changes in policy must be implemented and happen more-so in a domino effect to produce successful and effective results.

Oftentimes in research, the problem(s) in education are more so highlighted and discussed in academic and political circles alike rather than finding possible concrete solutions to help eliminate or minimize these problems; as well as, discovering how to go about executing the plan of resolution. Hence, it is also important not to forget those who work tirelessly to study, research, and persevere through many obstacles to expose themselves to higher positions in order to make sure these changes happen, and happen expeditiously. In light of this, I advocate for policy guidelines for the future recommendations above involving (a) inclusion of a more multicultural approach in teacher education programs; (b) understanding complex terms: cultural competency and urban both the use and definition of the term; (c) recruitment and of teachers of color and retention of all teachers in urban learning environments and d) field placement
immersion. For this reason, the proposed policy recommendations for future studies are reviewed (both historically and presently), emphasized, and listed below.

**History of Policy in Education**

The aim of providing good education to American children in public schools is one that has been fraught with controversy since public education began in the United States. Efforts to meet educational needs with policies that appeal to parents, educators, and politicians inevitably have created debate at both the national and local levels, prompting a variety of questions. (Merino, 2015, p. 16)

The history of teacher education, school reform, and policy dates back to 1837 when the state of Massachusetts was the first to develop a board of education with the implementation of standards (Earley, Imig, & Michelli, 2011; Merino, 2015). In addition, in 1892 the National Education Association (NEA) implemented the standards for high schools paving the way for students to receive a general and recognizable education so that they had the opportunity to attend college if they decide (Earley et al., 2011). As a result of both beginnings of such recommendations, later they were implemented nationally as standards and of much cause of discrepancy in discourse still today (Earley et al., 2011; Merino, 2015). According to the Department of Education and other notable scholarly sources that discuss both the beginnings and present conditions of policy in education and federal government programs (federal funding), these programs pride themselves with, and stress the fact that education is primarily a State and local responsibility in the United States....The structure of education finance in America reflects this predominant State and local role (Funding: The Federal Role in Education, 2017, p.1; Earley et al., 2011; Merino, 2015). Today, the question becomes, if this is actually the case, why are there so many federal programs governing the state of education and measuring and standardizing academic excellence and/or failure to determine the future of all students?

During the 1960s and 1970s there was limited amount of influence that the federal government had on teacher education. The support it did offer at the time was programs such as:
United Federation of Teachers (1960), Teacher Corps (1965), and Trainers of Teachers program (1967). The purpose of these federal government programs was to distribute financial merit and grants to higher education institutions for both collaboration and for the community to better prepare teachers (Earley et al., 2011). Yet, stakeholder’s expectations changed because the thought was that these programs would better prepare teachers using shorter measures; nevertheless, federal funding was eliminated (Earley et al., 2011). However, the National Defense of Education Act (NDEA) believed that in order to strengthen the value of education system, it must be a priority of the federal government (Earley et al., 2011). Furthermore, the emphasis of the federal government programs and the of Department of Education; generally, was to “[gather] information on what works in education to teachers and education policymakers...” (Funding: The Federal Role in Education, 2017, p. 1), which continues today. These summer programs, specifically, National Defense Education Act (NDEA), Teacher Corps program, and the Training at Teacher Program are identified in scholarship as depictions of a huge and continued disconnect between education policy (nationally) and teacher education policy (Earley et al., 2011). In other words, the start of federal programming for teacher education preparation created a gap between recognizable policy and teacher education policy, which the gap continues to widen today; as well as, negate what is considered adequate preparations for teachers and how to properly accredit the actual teacher profession as deemed necessary. Generally, the purpose for these federal programs were to prepare in particularly future urban educators; however, these programs were noted to be incorporated nationally through measures that were ineffective with facing challenging problems in urban education (Earley et al., 2011). One suggestion to this dilemma of the disconnect between federal movement programs aiding with the financial aspects of education as a whole is to eliminate
federal funding and let the concerns and decisions of education be made by the state and local officials as it was originally planned to be in the first place (Earley et al., 2011; Merino, 2015; Funding: The Federal Role in Education, 2017). The purpose behind this notion of returning educational concerns back to the hands of state and local officials is because most federal government programs run schools as federal entities such as businesses and jails, which are both heavily based on a system of diverse branches that supposedly offer fair treatment through varied organizations that are through to protect the welfare of United States citizens. This level of governing is more intense and severe, and involving itself in state and local affairs such as education, or any kind for that matter unnecessarily intensifies concerns and issues any kind or ignore its importance overall. So, in that regard, it is important to consider the reality, rights, and regulations of how schooling was founded and return back to the local and state officials handling as the days before. Overall, the significance and importance of policy in teacher education now is to ensure that the discourse of change and improvement with be manifested into a reality of positive change and effectiveness when desiring to improve and/or redesign teacher education programs to better prepare future educators for cultural diverse urban youth. For this reason, it is important to consider the following implications.

**Policy Implications for Future Study Recommendations**

There is a lack of agreement about the problems faced in education and a lack of knowledge about existing education programs. (Merino, 2015, p. 19)

One factor to consider when reflecting on policy changes in education is to deliberate on how one is placed into an office of dominance and of stakeholder responsibility. It is recommended that future studies should examine dismissing politicized appointments and incorporate the community, teachers, and other local officials to *elect* the best individual to
represent the field of education, teachers, and teacher education on both a federal and/or national level of appointments such as (i.e. Chief Executive Officer of Public Schools and U.S. Department of Education...etc.). The thought behind this recommendation is that appointment versus election to a position does not allow the full capacity to view the candidate holistically or offers the community to have input or voice their concerns or favors upon a candidate of choice. Moreover, appointment over election does not consider, or in some cases, does not approve with actual creditability of that individual for the job but reflect in most cases ignorance of that position resulting to negative pushback for that individual, and questions sincerity of the job and for the people.

In addition, another recommendation for future study is discover ways to influence notable national organizations in education such as: the National Association of Education (NEA); National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards (TEPS); National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), United Federation of Teachers (UFT), and many (others) to not solely rely on federal programs for funding, if any, but also allow and encourage opportunities for competitive grants and proposals contingent with appropriate data as foundational and continual support for that particular educational institution. The consideration behind this recommendation is that it gives account to what is needed for adequate teacher preparation, what is effective and ineffective in the classroom, and allows discourse; as well as, a space to both examine and reflect on areas of improvement and possible solutions.

The final policy recommendation for future study is for the powers that be to eliminate the “value-added system”, which evaluates teachers’ performances based on students’ academic performance and test scores. The “value-added” measures and systems are processes used to
examine teachers’ performances and other measures annually and are used to determine and compare students’ current test scores with their previous scores, and also in comparison to other students in the same grade (Earley, Imig, & Michelli, 2011; Harris, 2011). In addition, it provides a sort of estimate of what each individual teacher contributes to students’ learning. Due to the failure of Bush’s administration enactment of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and motivated by teacher reform efforts, the purposes of the “value-added” systems such as Race to the Top (RTTT) through the Obama administration were to help increase accountability by: (a) “establish[ing] data systems and use data to improve [academic] performance, and (b) increase[ing] teacher effectiveness and the equitable distribution of effective teachers” (Earley, Imig, & Michelli, 2011, p. 26). However, the challenges with the “value-added” systems according to Audrey Amrein-Beardsley falls under three basic restraints, which are: “1) Reliance on Standardized Tests; 2) Lack of Evidence of Validity; 3) Lack of Transparency” (Earley et al., 2011, p. 35).

First, the reliance of standardized tests is a limitation to the “value-added” system because it is mystified by the realization that the “value-added” system only accounts for certain grades that are tested depending on the state (grades 5-9). The problem with this is that these tests are administered annually and may not include material that is actually on the test (Earley et al., 2011). Second, the lack of evidence of validity is a constraint to the “value-added” system because the data used is in evaluation of teachers, decisions to hire or fire in-service teachers, and reward merit or incentives to schools (Earley et al., 2011). With this regard, until data are provided to teacher education programs concerning performances of individual teachers it could be challenging to suggest program modifications, and helpful examination of understanding the performance of novice teachers is restricted (Earley et al., 2011; Harris, 2011). As a result, the
expectations for accountability are driving reports, placing unnecessary pressures on teacher education programs to confront accusations that their programs are producing incompetent and ineffective novice teachers despite the fact that there is a population of students that are not included in the examination (Earley et al., 2011). Finally, the lack of transparency is an imperfection to the “value-added” system because without knowing and/or including the exact data of population of students (graduating teacher candidates) it is impossible to accurately calculate the teacher education program’s (value-added) effect (Earley et al., 2011). In addition, without transparency of data, those with an understanding of the data will challenge its consistency of the studied population (Earley et al., 2011). Therefore, eliminating the “value-added system” would help and encourage stakeholders to focus on a student’s overall academic performance (i.e. everything outside of standardized tests and test scores), yearly not exclusively on (testing grades and years (i.e. Grades 5-9)) but every year evaluating the student’s performance holistically. Thus, the thought behind this recommendation suggests and proposes a more accurate and less intensive accountability system that is more precise and can help produce the necessary changes for redesigned and effective teacher education programs based on strength, consistency, and credibility of stakeholders and policymakers in education for the push for equity in education for all students, and especially for students of color.

Overall, policy recommendations and implications concerning the restructure of teacher education programs should eliminate the value-added systems completely because of the reasons above. Therefore, policy recommendations and implications should include the election high-stake positions in education that represent the concerns and issues of education on a state, local, and national-level; obtain funding outside of federal government programs; incorporates a transparent and accurate account of populations served especially if that specific program is
designed to prepare urban educators; a redesigned teacher education curriculum of that program that includes a multicultural approach, increased amount of ethnic studies/multicultural education courses; enter national accreditation; increase time in field experiences in order to provide sufficient amount of time in the field to face the realities of the cultural experiences of urban youth; allow access to the community and stakeholders to provide data of current research so that policies that are created or enacted precisely align with the realities of issues and concerns of educators and students as a whole, and finally involve current research that aids to better prepare teachers and provides techniques and strategies to improve education as a whole (Earley et al., 2011; Funding: The Federal Role in Education, 2017; Harris, 2011; Merino, 2015).

Therefore, the above policy implications and recommendations inform my own research study by suggesting that the hierarchical structure (administrators of policy) of how education is thought of, the way it functions, and the measures that are implemented, standardized, and what constitutes as “academic success”, should be restructured. In addition, it should also include methods that will enable the best effective pedagogical strategies for future teachers to use to engage and motivate students to learn and promote all students to achieve academically. For instance, as the participants of this study highlight in their feedback of what a redesigned teacher education curriculum should mirror, policy can inform this by enforcing the infusion of more multicultural education courses in teacher education programs, utilizing a nontraditional (nonEurocentric) curriculum when teaching in urban learning environments, and incorporate a curriculum that speaks to the population of culturally diverse students’ needs, which will help explain how they organize their thoughts and study spaces and how it positively effects the way that they learn (Ms. Covington). Second, policy implications and recommendations can inform this study by introducing more critical perspectives to teacher education curriculum as a way to
explain why teachers should incorporate different transparent cultural perspectives to both teaching and learning especially in urban learning environments (Mr. David). Third, policy implications and recommendations can inform this study by depicting the actual mission and vision of teacher education programs, and its purpose of who they are preparing, “urban teachers” when assigning and developing courses, designing curriculum, and selecting field placements, in order to eradicate traditional practices and include a more diverse learning experience so that all cultures and races are considered in the preparation of future urban educators (Ms. Isabella). Fourth, policy implications and recommendations can inform this study by developing ways to advocate and encourage the hire of more faculty of color to share their experience and provide a more sociocultural aspect to the preparation of future urban educators (Mr. Jesus). In addition, policy implications and recommendations can inform this study by seeing the importance of embracing cultural difference without devaluing them in order to make another superior or the standard way of how all cultures should navigate or function (Dr. Stewart). Furthermore, policy implications and recommendations can inform this study by acknowledging that it is important that race is discussed in the preparation of future teachers in a way that promotes social justice and equality with wanting all students to achieve academic success (Dr. Connie). Lastly, policy implications and recommendations can inform this study by accepting the fact that until racism is eliminated, despite how well-prepared teachers are, there will always be biasness, concerns, and microaggressions that cause students of color to be the majority when it comes to academic failure all together (Dr. Howard).

In summary, these and other further research questions came to mind during and after conducting this study. This research study is only one part or one step to the overall solution to helping to prepare preservice teachers to become more effective in teaching and increasing
academic success of culturally diverse urban youth across the board. The hope is that those that choose to do research in urban education in the near future will use this study as a guide or step forward to help find the answers that they need to progress and move the research forward. In turn, acknowledging and proving that a quality education is needed and one way to help make and produce valuable citizens in society. Also, assisting with the movement to improve academic success of all students, despite race or cultural background; realizing that we all need and learn from each other. The world should be able to appreciate the emphasis on preparing others for the work that is ahead, in improving education by reimagining it and redesigning curriculum that is best suited for both today’s generation and future generations to come.


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APPENDIX A

Theoretical Framework and the Five Tenets of Critical Race Theory

**Theoretical Framework Visual**

- **1903**: W.E.B. DuBois's notion of "Double-Consciousness"
- **1954-1968**: Civil Rights Movement, Racial Identity and Acceptance
- **1970-Present**: Derrick Bell, Critical Race Theory (CRT), Center of Research Study

Beginning of the IDENTITY Struggle -> Who Am I? -> Self-discovery, self-love, and self-hate process

**CRT Analytical CRT Process of Examination**

- **Tenet 1**: The centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination
- **Tenet 2**: The challenge to dominant ideology
- **Tenet 3**: Commitment to social justice
- **Tenet 4**: The centrality of experimental knowledge
- **Tenet 5**: The transdisciplinary perspective

Societal Issue(s) Examined through CRT

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CRT Tenet 1
the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination

CRT Tenet 2
the challenge to dominant ideology

All Lives Matter
Color-Blindness
Melting-Pot
Salad Bowl
We are ALL God’s Children

VS.
CRT Tenet 3
commitment to social justice

Cultural Competency

CRT Tenet 4
the centrality of experimental knowledge

My Research Study
Exposing Traditional Teacher Education Programs

Racism
Low-graduation Rates
ReDesigning Curriculum, Relinking Education: Preparing Preservice Teachers for Students of Color in Urban Education
Hidden Curriculum
Widening Achievement Gaps
CRT Tenet 5
the transdisciplinary perspective

**Traditional Standard Curriculum**
*(Struggles to meet students needs)*
- Irrelevant
  - Disconnects to students lives
  - Disengages and unmotivates students to learn
- Culturally Bias
  - Excludes multicultural or multiethnic approaches
  - Culturally insensitive and overlooks and does not acknowledge others’ cultures
- One-Size Fits All Learning Approach
  - Standards (traditionalized learning approaches) can disqualify and hinder students (particularly students of color) academic performance
  - Perpetuates racism and widens the academic achievement gap

**Multicultural Framework Curriculum**
*(Engages and motivates students to learn)*
- Cultural, Ethnic, and Women Studies
- Multicultural Education curriculum
- Social Justice Curriculum
- Anti-racist Curriculum
APPENDIX B

Interview Questions for Participants in Study Directions:

This interview is being recorded for research purposes. Please let me know if you object to being recorded at any point before, during, or after the interview.

Recording starts now.

Teacher Educators:

1. What does it mean to be an urban educator?

2. Do you feel like you are preparing preservice teachers for culturally diverse students in urban classrooms? Why or Why not?

3. What does cultural competency mean to you?
   a. Do you feel that you are culturally competent?
   b. Is culturally competency an essential tool to learn/teach in teacher education programs? Why or why not?

4. Do you feel your college adequately prepares future educators to teach urban students of color? Why or why not?

5. Do you feel that teacher education programs should be redesigned to include a more multicultural approach or cultural perspective? Why or why not?

6. Do you have any suggestions for improving your teacher preparation program in order to become a more prepared and effective teacher for youth of color?
Preservice Teachers:

1. What does it mean to be an urban educator?
2. Do you feel like you are being prepared to teach culturally diverse students in urban classrooms? Why or Why not?
3. What does cultural competency mean to you?
   a. Do you feel that you are culturally competent?
4. Do you feel that teacher education programs should be redesigned to include a more multicultural approach or cultural perspective? Why or why not?
5. Do you have any suggestions to improve your teacher preparation program in order to become a more prepared and effective teacher for youth of color?
APPENDIX C

Complete Transcripts of Interviews

Ms. Covington’s Interview

Interviewer: What does it mean to be an urban educator?

Ms. Covington: ...teaching in urban environments, [especially in] a city like [this one], but I think you have to be careful with the term urban because sometimes [when] you’re reading it you’ll say they mean something else, they mean the specific demographic. So I think just in general it usually means teaching in a city to a diverse student population.

Interviewer: Do you feel like you are being prepared to teach culturally diverse students in urban classrooms? Why or Why not?

Ms. Covington: Definitely, there are so many ideas that I haven’t even thought about before I went to [this academic site], and [instructor A] and [instructor B], the music education professor, they really strive to implement that ideal of culturally responsive teaching. So from Freshman year [I] was introduce[d] to that and then throughout the four years, I was able to understand more of what it meant, not just [defining] it, but [also] what it meant as it related to my teaching practices....So, I think [this learning institution] does a really nice job, well at least my program did of making sure that we worked hard, [were] culturally aware, and not just [know] the culture of my students....It is more like of a mindset you have to teach with.

Interviewer: What does cultural competency mean to you?

Ms. Covington: I think that cultural competency; I guess it’s just being aware that culture affects how we learn. So, if I’m teaching a curriculum I need to be aware that: A) all students don’t learn the same, but their culture actually affects the way that they
learn. So, the standard curriculum that I feel like is being pushed right now, teaches mostly to like Eurocentric white students. And in the cultural other, many different things like how they organize their thoughts, or their study spaces, of their reactions all things different things that we don’t even or well that I didn’t think about before affects how they learn. So, if you’re just teaching to that standard curriculum and not relating it to the students’ lives then that’s not being culturally competent. [You] need to beware of your student’s cultures in more than just [on] a surface level… [because] through observing, observing lots of different teachers through my four years of college, and trying out different lessons myself, I noticed that when the curriculum doesn’t connect to their lives, which culture is a huge part of that then there is this huge disconnect, to their school and home and it needs to be connected…. [the teacher preparation program at this university] has affected my teaching,…tremendously because I just graduated so every idea that I [am] trying out right now I pretty much learned at [this institution].

Interviewer: Do you feel that you are culturally competent?

Ms. Covington: I think as a teacher, you can always get better, you can always grow, you can always learn, especially in that area. There [are] so many things to think about especially as a first year teacher….I need to make sure I am being culturally responsive and competent…. I know I am just at the beginning of my journey as a teacher, and as someone and [as] a teacher who is culturally competent. So, I just want to get better.

Interviewer: Do you feel that teacher education programs should be redesigned to include a more multicultural approach or cultural perspective? Why or why not?

Ms. Covington: “Yeah, I think that it definitely could have more of a multicultural perspective. I mean I took one class that was [on] “Multiculturalism” and I happen to
have a really great professor, but I mean I have heard some of the classes…it’s just like it could be great or it could not. It shouldn’t just be one class…. It should be throughout the entire four years....

Interviewer: Do you have any suggestions to improve your teacher preparation program in order to become a more prepared and effective teacher for youth of color?

Ms. Covington: *This may be more specific to music ed, but I think that they should have more ed classes earlier. We have our first years[, which] are very music heavy... we take like our theory [courses] …etc., I think that it could be expanded out a little to include more of the ed classes, and those could be classes to prepare you for urban teaching. I think that I got lucky with the professors that I had, but I know that is probably not the case for everyone. So, having more opportunities to have classes with those professors, I think would be really important.*

Interviewer: Do you think that the field placement experience should be extended?

Ms. Covington: *“The music ed program is a little different than just the regular ed students have. We have a practicum junior year, where we teach a class once a week...we actually get to pick where we student teach. So, I picked a placement [here in the city] and then a placement in [in a west suburb]. You get to know the teachers ... you get to do all the work yourself...which is nice....I think that students have to go out of their way to get field experience like that. [However], I think it should be more a part of the program.... Yeah, it would be nice to have it extended...I like to acknowledge that there is so much to get packed into four years. [In] the music ed program we have our three classes and then we student teach our fall quarter going into winter break, and then we take classes again. So, we just finish it in four years... And its jam packed, and so when I*
say things like yeah we should have the field work extended and have like of a more multiculturalism thread throughout then something has to go because it is jammed packed. I think that they could rearrange things. I think it could be beneficial because then you can...; for example, try out like that curriculum that I wrote for the middle schoolers. But I only taught the students for six weeks, and this curriculum was like for a whole year. That's fine I don't have to teach it for the whole year. But I wasn't able to do as much as I would have liked...there's so much trust building that has to happen if you are gonna ask the students to write their own raps or like talk about those tricky topics. So, [things] like trust building takes almost like two months and I only had like six weeks...you know?

Mr. David’s Interview

Interviewer: What does it mean to be an urban educator?

Mr. David: Being an urban educator means... you are prepared and you're experienced with working with the specific challenges that come along with teaching in an urban area. And the urban educator, you could just say is just the person who teaches in the city, but I think that the true urban educator is a person who can teach in the city.

Interviewer: Do you feel like you are being prepared to teach culturally diverse students in urban classrooms? Why or Why not?

Mr. David: Yeah, in some ways yes and in a lot of ways, No. ...I am just so frustrated and disappointed with my education in certain ways. I told [a] professor [this] verbatim: I think it's just strictly by luck that [this university] has prepared me to be the person I am, and a whole bunch of personal initiative.... Stuff that I’m doing myself, to better myself. You know I haven’t really been put [into] contact with those kinds of resources
through my education…. So I’ve been in the teacher education program for about three years now, and I have had maybe five professors who have prepared me to teach culturally diverse students… you know [this university] has this… framework that’s like 10 words, what’s the title? It’s like cultural responsive multicultural urban educator, it’s like 10 words, and it’s like no one knows what it means. And no one addresses it, but they put it on all of the syllabi.

You know I’ve met a lot of the teachers [in] the teacher educator [program] that I work with right now, who are second wave baby boomers, who were right at the end of their professional careers….And many of them are in my opinion, just like clinging on with tenure… you know yesterday in a class an elderly older male professor [referred] to some students as quote “not quite gangbangers…But”… He was telling an anecdote about when he was a middle school teacher and he’s talking about how they paired up there eighth-grade boys with kindergarten [students] for this reading program. It was really cute. It was students would work with one another and mentor, but he said that the students are chosen eighth-grade were not quite the gangbanger type but you know, almost there… Or something like that and my jaw dropped. That a professional who is preparing me to be an educator would say that in that sphere. Because that man doesn’t know any different I think. And he’s I guess a genre of teacher educators right now really furthering an older model of teaching that is less responsive. And unfortunately, I see a lot of my classmates, a lot of my colleagues who are being trained in that way. And I feel like you know the odd one a lot of the times. I have three or four friends in the education program who think the same way that I do. And another thing is a lot of [this institution] is physically located within an urban center and has the ability to put its teacher
candidates in urban classrooms to gain experience with these things. However, I’ve noticed that a lot of teachers will recommend that you visit very upper-class magnet and I know that we talked about the idea of race in this discussion but white schools. That are you know physically in an urban center but that’s not the urban classroom in my opinion. Because that is something that is kind of transplanted like and that’s what comes down to how you define urban again. But you know, teachers, professors, are kind of shuffling their students into these privilege[d] classrooms. And then when they’re done like they help they love to student teach us in “the prize schools”, and they love to get students hired at these like great schools and it’s like I have been actively not going to those schools in order for me to learn more about people... [Out] of the five professors who have impacted me, four or five professors impacted me at the college level. All of them are African American and they are the first African American teachers I have had in my education career.

Interviewer: What does cultural competency mean to you?

Mr. David: [C]ultural competency ... is empathy and learning how to recognize and practice your empathy....[S]ome people would say it’s just... it’s learning about a culture in order for you to be competent enough to work and live within that culture and speak the same language....this is a tough question.... cultural competence I have a hard time with it because a lot of times, it makes it seem like culture is static thing like it’s a box....[For instance], [it’s] like I can’t just learn how to teach Latino kids and become...culturally competent. However, I can make my life goal to always work to understand and learn from my students in order to impact the way I teach them. So the point for me is, is to be culturally competent, you just have to have the preparation. [I]
think anyone can do it, but you need training. I have ... the privilege of having grown up in a family in communities [that] really promote this, and so it for me it’s easier. To you know, learn from other people, and put down my understandings of what a person should be or is. [However], I think that for a lot of people, you do need training, and work on it...

Interviewer: Do you feel that you are culturally competent?

Mr. David: I do and I don’t. I do feel like I have the right attitude and the energy and commitment to do so. I don’t think I’ll ever get there...because it’s a process.

Interviewer: Do you feel that teacher education programs should be redesigned to include a more multicultural approach or cultural perspective? Why or why not?

Mr. David: Yes I do, I completely support the work that you’re doing. [I] hope to be involved in this and in what you and other people are doing at this time is saying the things that we are doing are wrong a lot of times. [We] need to fundamentally change what’s happening. I mean I guess I would say that’s what I’m trying to do with my own teaching as an elementary school teacher. I want to change the way that I work with students to be different from the teachers who have possibly negatively impacted them. Because I want to first of all, make my teaching innovative also show students that it can happen, it could work. But that’s a personal thing that I’m doing. But we need institutional change!.... I’ve been frustrated with my education for the last couple of years. It hasn’t gotten me down, but you know the class I’m going to right now... it has prepared me none. The class that I just came from today, has prepared me none ... you know it’s just like for lack of better term just crappy quality sometimes. But I had
amazing clips of really powerful educators (like our mutual contact) who have helped me with challenging the way I think and you know redesigning what I do.

Interviewer: Do you have any suggestions to improve your teacher preparation program in order to become a more prepared and effective teacher for youth of color?

Mr. David: Introduce more critical perspectives and lenses into every single class. Because I’ve had the ones that presented multiple perspectives and shown real-life examples from people of all different kinds, like all different kinds of people just adding layer, upon layer, upon layer of understanding from another person would help if it was done at every level. I think that a lot of teachers especially teacher educators who are just doing what they been doing since 1975, [and] there is no critical perspective there. There are no critical lenses on why we do what we do. Another thing is direct and structured work in all different kinds of communities…. have teacher preparation programs make students go to the all different sorts of schools and help them do that. Because there’s a lot of stigma about urban schools that say you don’t want to go there it’s not safe. You don’t come from that neighborhood…that’s bullshit. You need to have some understanding of your surroundings, but other than that all your stigma and misunderstandings is just going to get in the way of you communicating with people and experiencing the world... you know ... I would say sort of [have] seminar work from people who are working currently in the field: ... teachers, guidance counselors, administrators that are in these schools with students of color. [Learning] from them and understanding the things that [are issues today] because it’s hard to say that it’s hard to keep the teacher education program current. [One] of the ways to do so is to introduce people who are teaching right now, and I can [speak to ] all different places in
[the field of education] because I think I’ve learned from just chatting with like guidance counselors and stuff or like a resource person, but I would like to have seen that in my education more….I think what it comes down to is getting lots of different experience and learning from lots of different people. Because if you don’t do that there’s no way for you to be prepared to teach point blank. And I think that like just my personal experience with the most part has given me those tools, but my teacher education program has not done so.

Interviewer: Do you think that the field placement experience should be extended?

Mr. David: Yeah, so one thing that I am really kind of jealous of are some of those alternate certification processes for teachers who do use the clinical model, where you like teach all day and then you go to class all night and go to workshops and seminars because I would have loved to do that. Because I think that [in the] field, you should be learning by doing and reflecting on that at the same time. Not just sitting in a lecture and going to school for three hours a week. Personally, I feel that I should not have more field experience because I have so much to do right now. However, if the program is changed around to adapt to that and made more field experience part of the goal…the goal than that would be yeah, definitely with structural support. Because a lot of professors would just send you out in the field, and the only thing is you turn in a time log and evaluation, and reflection paper. And you know a lesson plan that you may or may not teach. But I have one teacher who made us all go to the same school on the Westside. We would all ride there and all go in and sit in back of a classroom and watch a math lesson then all of us would sit in different room and talk for about an hour about
it that was awesome. I would love more like that and of me teaching and getting
experience and feedback.

Ms. Isabella’s Interview

Interviewer: What does it mean to be an urban educator?

Ms. Isabella: I would say to be culturally aware, to understand that… you know, not all
your students are going to be the same; as far as, race, culture, and gender identification
so to keep that as a consideration.

Interviewer: Do you feel like you are being prepared to teach culturally diverse
students in urban classrooms? Why or Why not?

Ms. Isabella: I think so, definitely. I think you know not being biased, but [this university]
is very, very good. I feel like in every class we always cover cultural thinking, culture
recognition, and differentiation in every class [and] even as part of our lesson plans.

Interviewer: What does cultural competency mean to you?

Ms. Isabella: Can you define “competency”? [After explaining the definition] …I
wouldn’t say that I’m the best in knowing different cultures. [However.] if I’m
approached, I don’t know much about the Russian culture [or] Polish culture. But if I
have a student in my classroom that’s Polish or Russian I would want to get to know, you
know, a little bit about Polish and Russian culture. So that is something that I can
connect the student with. Something that I learned through [this program] is connecting
or making interpersonal relations or connecting your students’ experiences to your
lessons or even to your classroom setting.

Interviewer: Do you feel that you are culturally competent?
Ms. Isabella: I would say that I am sensitive to other cultures....I wouldn’t want
somebody or another student in my classroom to feel uncomfortable because I have been
in there shoes. Though that I am not aware of all cultures,...I would love to learn about
my students’ cultures....I feel like if you ask me this question ten years from now, I would
have a more clearer answer for you. Right now, I’m just learning.

Interviewer: Do you feel that teacher education programs should be redesigned to include
a more multicultural approach or cultural perspective? Why or why not?

Ms. Isabella: [I] think so because I mean a really good answer would be [this city].
Because we live in [this city] ...[fit] is so diverse I mean like the neighborhoods in [this
city]. [For instance], [UV], or if you go to like [RP], it’s all Indian and Pakistani...go to
[P]. So yeah, [they] should. [There’s a couple of things... like my intro classes, they
weren’t so culturally heavy and it’s just soon as you get into your “advanced standing”
you know [this university/program] pushes that. [Now] I see it in every single one of my
classes. I think it’s something that should be recognized your first day [of] intro to
education classes.

Interviewer: Do you have any suggestions to improve your teacher preparation
program in order to become a more prepared and effective teacher for youth of color?

Ms. Isabella: [this university] does a great job talking about different cultures and races
and how to implement them into our lessons us as future teachers. But I feel like this is
not something that you just put in you know like “oh don’t forget you [have] to recognize
culture.” I think it should be a class by itself. [An] extra class, I know it’s more
work,...but I think it’s really important. Yeah, you know it’s not something that you can
just talk about ...for a little chunk in a three hour class. I think it should be a little bit
more expanded and have its own class…. Yeah, we should have a class that’s dedicated to keep in consideration the different type of cultures, races, you’ll come across in your education career. [Also] to learn not to pressurize. I guess it could be a downfall if you get too [much] into the culture or you can annoy the child too...So how to know that balance where you are connecting with the student, but you not letting them know, hey I just spent 5 hours Googling and researching your culture, you know? So where do you keep that balance?

Interviewer: Do you think that the field placement experience should be extended?

Ms. Isabella: Well …I would love a class in multiculturalism. So yeah, I don’t know if they still do this but in my elementary school, I went to [Blank] Elementary, and we had a classroom that only had Spanish speaking students and another class that only had like Hindi or Hindu speaking students. And I don’t know if they still do that but if they do, but I would love to go in one of those classes and just see how the approach in that class is different than like an all-inclusive classroom....But if I had to start all over, I would say I wouldn’t mind if I had that [extra course/time], or like a professional development class, I would love to do something like that [as well].

Mr. Jesus’ Interview

Interviewer: What does it mean to be an urban educator?

Mr. Jesus: I think it means that you’re working in the city, generally that would mean you would be working with a multiracial/multiethnic students at least from a teacher’s perspective.
Interviewer: Do you feel like you are being prepared to teach culturally diverse students in urban classrooms? Why or Why not?

Mr. Jesus: I can definitely say that … the majority of the classes that I’ve had here so far made me feel more prepared. [However], I don’t feel like I will ever completely be prepared. I don’t care if I was in school for 10 years. I don’t think I’ll ever be ready for the classroom until after I actually walk in the classroom. So I have a sister who is a teacher and has been a teacher in CPS for over 10 years now. And she says she’s only getting it now, feeling like she’s really comfortable, she’s really learned now the curriculum also the students well enough to feel like she is comfortable. So I feel like “prepared” is a tricky word for me. Cause I don’t know or think that’ll I’ll be completely prepared for the classroom. [Until] I’m actually in there and have some experience in the classroom as a teacher. But I think to your question, I think that [this institution] does a fairly good job in preparing you. There’s definitely the social cultural aspect, I think [this particular course] that I took with [instructor A... where you do talk about different socioeconomic social statuses, different genders, different ethnicities, and ways that you can reach your students from those different backgrounds. I can definitely say that there is a special education class that you have to take, that I think helps you be better prepared for the classroom. Bilingual education class, which is a requirement, which maybe not with Black and White students but maybe with Asian or Latino students helps you have a better idea of the kind of students that you will be working with. So obviously, in that regard, I feel like you’re better prepared for the kinds of students that you might see. Obviously, there’s no normal in terms of students but definitely it gives you an idea of the kinds of students you could see. And I think it’s more important for, and I don’t
want this to come off wrong, but I think it’s more important for White teachers who might have grown up in a more rural more white suburban upbringing where you might not have had interactions with people of color, different backgrounds, different languages that kind of thing. So [if] you grew up in a big city like [this one] and you got exposed or you have like Black friends and White friends and Black teachers and Asian teachers and you got exposed to all that then you may feel better prepared. But I feel like if especially grow up in a setting where that wasn’t the norm, then being exposed to that kind of learning about some of the statistics you know, Black boys are more likely to be placed in special education, you know Asian people are less likely to be diagnosed with autism, which is lower than the norm even for like White people. I think that kind of thing, I think it does give you a better window of the world, so I will say that. But I do think it is more important for White students who were not exposed to a diverse, diverse group of people.

Interviewer: What does cultural competency mean to you?

Mr. Jesus: a sense that you understood other cultures. I guess I can say that if I was culturally competent than I’ll feel comfortable talking to [a] Black person and feel like I wasn’t going to insult them in some way, whether directly or indirectly, or be insensitive to that person, and especially to a student….. So just being aware of the type of things you can say the things you can’t say or shouldn’t say. The competency for me says that it’s like the basic level like the most necessary level…. understanding better all those cultural differences. And understanding that just because you’re from Africa doesn’t mean that you speak Swahili, [nor] doesn’t [it] mean automatically that you grew up in the jungle…. So understanding those things and in that regard I think, I think maybe [this university] could do a better job in a multicultural education program. Because I feel
like for a liberal role of studies, you kind of have to take a history class, you have to take so many classes. But I think that especially if you are gonna teach [in urban settings] ...than maybe you should be able [to], [or] you should be required to take an [ethnic or cultural studies course]. I think that could be really beneficial so that you're not just stepping on people’s toes.

Interviewer: Do you feel that you are culturally competent?

Mr. Jesus: No. I would definitely say that I’m not. I don’t fit the typical Latino student. Even if I was not Catholic, which I think is generally tied to being Latino. And I can’t say that I understand Black culture more than like you know ...musically or I wouldn’t say that I understand Asian culture very well, even though I have a Korean girlfriend.

Interviewer: Do you feel that teacher education programs should be redesigned to include a more multicultural approach or cultural perspective? Why or why not?

Mr. Jesus: ...I think they should be especially now that were moving towards this you know it used to be that individual schools [obtained] teaching license and obviously you have to pass your content area certification. So [with] those two things, you’re allowed to be a certified teacher in whatever state...But I think now their moving towards this national system where you have to have your Ed TPA...etc...I think if it’s hard to implement on an individual school basis, whether it’s [this university] or [another university] or whether if it’s like you’re going to [this university] or you’re going to [that university] etc... So you got all these different kinds of schools from different regions and probably with very diverse and different students, who are going to become teachers. But I think if you’re going to normalize, and if you’re going to standardize the way that you
become a teacher, I think it is more important and [critical] that you set up a system for preparing teachers to teach a multicultural student body.

Interviewer: Do you have any suggestions to improve your teacher preparation program in order to become a more prepared and effective teacher for youth of color?

Mr. Jesus: I think that [the university] specifically has a diverse faculty, which I think is very helpful…. I [also] think that the university itself does a good job of hiring or providing professors who have come from a different cultural background or a different ethnic background. So I think in that regard, that’s good. Where I don’t know if that’s the case at all universities or you know sometimes it’s not up to the university itself as to who applies for a job…. I think [its] important to try to have a diverse faculty... For college students, not only because I think it’s good to see people who look like you if you are multicultural teacher, if you’re an ethnic teacher I think it’s good to see someone who looks like you. Sometimes it’s good to see somebody that doesn’t look like you, and recognize that there are other teachers than White females, or White males or whatever...depending upon where you’ve might have gone to school previously. But I think it’s also important in terms of the background they (the professors) bring to that position. Because I think that some teachers... you know there’s a curriculum that needs to be taught, and I think they teach that curriculum. [However], I also think that [some] teach it through their own perspective [at] the same time. You might have a professor like... my special education teacher [that] just happens to be a White woman. I thought that she taught the class more from a curriculum focused way. Where I think somebody like [instructor A] teaches more from a where he incorporates more of his own perspective from his own experiences. So I think it’s important to get both of those ideas.
Not to say that one way of teaching is better than another, but I think getting both, or getting a good balance, or getting a mixture might be the best way of saying it, of those ideologies might help you in your teaching style.

Interviewer: Do you think that the field placement experience should be extended?

Mr. Jesus: So that one’s tough to say... it is good that it [has] minimums. I think from a student perspective, [depending] on what else you have going on. [It’s] harder to get that [extended] experience if you have 18 credit hours, versus 12 credit hours. I think then it’s easier to fit in more field experience [with a lesser course load]. I think more field experience is always better because I think that [is] ultimately what you are preparing yourself for.... all the theories are great, I think they’ll help you to become a teacher. I think without actually realizing what that looks like classroom, it’s hard to be an effective teacher... You can talk a theory all day... But if you don’t know how it gets implemented in the classroom, if you don’t understand when it’s appropriate to use this or when it’s appropriate to use that or what it looks like, then (I don’t want to say it’s pointless), but I think it is less effective in your teaching, and it doesn’t reinforce, the stuff that you’re reading in the book doesn’t enforce the stuff that you are looking at when you get into the classroom. So it would be helpful and I am glad there are minimums. But I will say from a student perspective, if you have a large course load it could be tougher to get that. But I will say that field experience should be required at different kinds of schools. [If] you’re gonna have 15 hours, I think you should have five hours of public school, you should get five hours at a private school, you should get five hours you know maybe at a magnet school, versus a low achieving school....So I think being able to see
when it’s appropriate, when it is not appropriate. Obviously, you would love to incorporate a free, you know where you are teaching with all of the modalities, and students are free to understand how the curriculum plays out in the community ... [A]ll that stuff is great, but if you don’t just see what it looks like in the real world, how it can be implemented, and then I think it’s not irrelevant but it’s close to irrelevant.

Dr. Stewart’s Interview

Interviewer: What does it mean to be an urban educator?

Dr. Stewart: An urban educator needs to understand the urban context and what that means in terms of the issues related to poverty and how that affects families and students and student learning. Urban context also includes all the benefits some positive aspects of being in a large city. So that it’s not all negative but understanding that children of poverty in urban settings often don’t have access to those entire positive benefits that a large city offers. How does the teacher and the school provide access to those resources that the city has [or] pretends to have those resources for middle-class families much for children of color [and] to our children of poverty? An urban educator needs to understand the diversity of the duty of children of color, but also depending on the urban situation you are thinking about there are a lot of children of poverty that are white in the United States, and they tend to be in the rural areas also in urban areas. So, how does that work for children that are not children of color, but children of poverty? An urban educator especially in [this city] needs to understand all the nuances regarding to me the most critical aspect of poverty. An urban educator in United States is going to have to deal with linguistic diversity, linguistic diversity also includes African-American
vernacular that even African American teachers and other teachers don’t really quite understand or recognize as a language.

Interviewer: Do you feel like you are preparing preservice teachers for culturally diverse students in urban classrooms? Why or Why not?

Dr. Stewart: I do... preservice teachers that we deal with have a minor in ESL and bilingual education. So they have seven or eight classes that will speak to all of this, a minor is an elective so we had 40 minors, many undergraduates we serve, but maybe 10% not all of the students they choose too, some of the students choose because they’re interested in talking about it, but I know others choose because ESL and ELL endorsement gives you more opportunities for employment. For the graduate students, which maybe a 1/3 or so preservice teachers doing a Masters in bilingual education so there getting all of it. But again, they choose a minor to do the program.

Interviewer: What does cultural competency mean to you?

Dr. Stewart: Cultural competence...I don’t know it’s a tricky question because what is culture? Culture is a huge umbrella for many different things. So typically, we think of culture as sort of the norms, the traditions, and the celebrations of the more superficial things. The heroes on holidays kind of stuff, but cultures also like I belong to a culture of teachers, right? So, I belong to a culture of I don’t know, Spanish speakers. So what does that mean, culture? So cultural competency I would call it “cross cultural competency” or “transcultural competency” because to me cultural competency is just about understanding others, versus “transcultural” ... “cross cultural” is about understanding others. And my culture and other people’s cultures and how they both interact rather than viewing something over there, that has nothing to do with me, and
what I bring. So an understanding how other different cultures interact. So that term cultural competency is very messy and very complex. So I don’t really have an answer, I think most things that you find about cultural competence tend to be sort of superficial understanding others and their norms and values. But what does that mean, to others? Right?

Interviewer: Do you feel that you are culturally competent?

Dr. Stewart: In comparison to many others, yes. I’m culturally competent with certain Latino areas: Chicanos. But if you asked me questions about Columbia’s and the Colombian culture I wouldn’t. And this why I meant that this cultural competency thing is kind of misleading. I think I’m competent to a certain degree in African-American, Asian culture if we are talking about culture in terms of ethnicity. I think I’m more aware than others, but I don’t know about competent in all the cultures, and all the variations within a culture. And I can use it about American culture because I know Chicago culture. Do I know Southside, African American culture? A little bit but not much. Do I know Southern Illinois rural culture? No. So that’s why I mean that this cultural competency, I think it’s hard to define.

Interviewer: Is culturally competency an essential tool to learn/teach in teacher education programs? Why or why not?

Dr. Stewart: Yes, I think the only danger is that I don’t know if you ever seen these [alternative teacher certification programs] they come from the business world. Where they come in and they teach, they give workshops on the being culturally sensitive, and there are a whole lot of stereotypes. Latinos are this, and Blacks are that and Asians are whatever. And to me it’s very dangerous to analyze culture in that way. And they sort of
train people to be culturally sensitive, [but they are] just like promoting the stereotypes even more. So it’s important to have cultural competency on a deep, deep level to understand that cultural competency is very nuanced, it’s very complex…culture itself is not one thing, culture changes…What does that all mean? And then you know issues: for example, the difficult issues like embracing all cultural aspects are not always a good idea. For example, in many parts of the world female circumcision is part of the culture and I don’t agree with that you and I will never be tolerant that. So, I bring in my own bias towards certain things that I don’t think are social justice oriented. Even though their culturally relevant to that particular society. So it will set this notion that we accept and embrace everybody’s culture. I think this is sort of like superficial and general yes but their negative things about everybody’s culture including the U.S. culture. So I think it’s a tricky thing that needs to be included in the curriculum of people who know: otherwise, we fall into that and in the danger of saying inappropriate or stereotypical things that just promote more negative assumptions about people and groups of people.

Interviewer: Do you feel your college adequately prepares future educators to teach urban students of color? Why or why not?

Dr. Stewart: I think we make an effort to do that. I think the foundations department is very, very adept and every single teacher prep student takes at least two courses. So human development is taught by the foundations department and intro to education, I think they do that two courses taught by people who are experts in the field, sort of the cultural and social justice [issues] regarding students color and urban students. In terms of the rest of the courses, I’m not sure. I think there is may be different levels. I think the big scheme in comparison to other universities is that we try to cover that because we are
in an urban context, we are in a context of know what is it now 90% of [this particular city’s public schools] students are minority and increasing minority students in the surrounding areas of [this city], and also [this state] is now a minority majority state. 51% of [this state’s] pre-K-12 students are minority students. So that’s the reality. So I think that we make an effort to do that...can we do more? Yes!

Interviewer: Do you feel that teacher education programs should be redesigned to include a more multicultural approach or cultural perspective? Why or why not?

Dr. Stewart: Yes (pauses). I think that the teacher education courses outside of the foundation courses tend to be from based on research that has been done on, white middle-class students. So, I’m making an assumption ... But I think there could be more included in the curriculum and particularly because the majority of teachers and teacher prep candidates are White. So I think one of the things is to attract more teacher candidates of color, and support them and hear their voices into what things do they think is missing in the in the teacher prep courses from the perspective of a minority teacher candidate going through the program. What are they not hearing? What are they not reading? And maybe they don’t know. That may be interesting to interview a couple of teacher prep minority students and ask them.

Interviewer: Do you have any suggestions for improving your teacher preparation program in order to become a more prepared and effective teacher for youth of color?

Dr. Stewart: Attract more faculty of color. Faculty of color who have different experiences and from different ethnicities and races I think that would be very helpful the problem is that there isn’t a great pool in the United States of people, faculty of color in teacher education. I think that curriculum could be revised to update to do this in
2015...we don’t really talk about Latinos in teacher prep, or I don’t know to what extent we do. And certainly we don’t talk about English language learners (ELL) from a cultural perspective, rather more from a... we have to fix them because they don’t know English kind of perspective. So I think in [this state] there is 51% minority, and [in this city], but outside of [this city] is that reflected in the curriculum? For example, the kind of books we’re reading to kids that reflected the types of assessments we give to kids that may not be culturally relevant or they maybe culturally inappropriate. So, I don’t know if we’ve done that in teacher prep programs to really look at the curriculum to look at the specifics about what is taught and how it’s taught and the discussions we have with mostly white teacher candidate about what to expect and how they have to deal with and how to be more... how to have a better understanding.... I think teachers should learn from their kids. You got to learn from your kids. So I think we at the teacher preparation level need to bring those things to light that when the teacher candidate is going to the schools they have a better understanding about those issues, and try to do something about it or help the school community to, to bridge all the different cultures, languages, practices, beliefs, religions, it’s very complicated.

Interviewer: Do you think that the field placement experience should be extended?

Dr. Stewart: DePaul have [about] 100 clinical experience hours. Students have to go in and interact, so I think that’s a good thing. The bad thing is that we are in quarters so the student teaching experience is very short, so that’s an issue. It would be nice to look at, but I don’t know how to resolve that problem.

Additional Questions

Interviewer: Do you think it should be extended for like maybe a year two?
Dr. Stewart: Two... at least a year, it’s difficult because it’s nonpaid. So now, they are talking at the [state level] and nationally about paid internships... so student teaching could be like an internship that pays money. I don’t know a one-year [paid] student teaching [internship]... but the teacher candidates could get paid. Yeah, I think it’s hard to not to get paid for a whole year. I think that would be hard.

Dr. Connie’s Interview

Interviewer: What does it mean to be an urban educator?

Dr. Connie: Let’s see an urban educator, well I’m hesitating because of course urban is a loaded term. I mean I think often it means teaching marginalized communities, often it means teaching students of color, often it means teaching students who live in poverty. It doesn’t always mean those things but it can mean a lot of those things. I think it’s often used to be synonymous with those things. So, what does it mean to be an urban educator, I mean I think it could mean a lot of different things, but what I would want it to mean would be tapping into students’ backgrounds and life experiences and capitalizing on what they bring to the table in their education. Which I think is often what hasn’t happened in a lot of quote, “urban education”. I mean I think being an urban educator is recognizing the incredible social inequalities in society, and understanding that often in an urban context you are likely to be working with some of the most disenfranchised young people in society and its I think it is an urban educator’s role to work towards eradicating those social inequalities.... So, I guess than to be an urban teacher educator is to try to prepare educators to do those things that I just said...

Interviewer: Do you feel like you are preparing preservice teachers for culturally diverse students in urban classrooms? Why or Why not?

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Dr. Connie: I like to think that I am, it is my aim to do that I think it would be I hope to do research of my own at some point actually to really track the effects of what I’m doing, but I would say that I am very intentional about it…. I think a lot of, so what I do is I teach secondary preservice social studies teachers… a lot of what I talk about in my classes and what I try to model and what I try to give resources and provide resources and strategies for my preservice teachers is offering them multiple perspectives. So, in the social studies, history around helping them as preservice teachers see that often we only got one side of history and that there are many stories within history. I try to get my preservice teachers not only that certain broad sense but also specific strategies that they can use with their students. So like for tonight were doing a strategy called: “opening up the textbook”, which is what they would ultimately do with their students, you we read a textbook passage talk about like what’s the main gist of this story. What’s its saying about like who the leaders of the civil rights moment were…whatever. But then they bring in another source to their students that offers another perspective. Maybe like if we are talking about the civil rights movement is not just about Rosa Parks, which is usually the textbook is Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, and it turns out there were some other folks involved. And so, I asked my preservice teachers to do that in their classrooms…juxtaposed that textbook passage with other sources that show the complexity and diversity of other people who were involved. So that’s kind of one example….So I think by trying to give them strategies that both tap into their students’ knowledge and experiences, I think that I attempt to do that.

Interviewer: What does cultural competency mean to you?
Dr. Connie: I guess my understanding of that term would be somebody who first recognizes that different students in this case are going to be bringing different cultural strengths to the classroom, and to their learning in general. So part of it is just a general recognition that not all students have had the same experiences. For instance, if a student grows up living in poverty, that does not mean that, that student doesn’t bring something really valuable to their school experience or strengths. But I think so is a general recognition but then it’s also a willingness and maybe the skill to find out more about students’ lives, and figure out what cultural perspectives they bring to the table, what family perspectives they bring to the table, having or being willing to find out sort of on an individual level from students. But also being willing to read and research sort of I guess gaining a broader understanding of the particular community in which you teach....So I think cultural competency it’s hard to sort of capture it because it means something different in those different contexts. It’s also had that general inclination to want to find out more about sort of where both individual students are from sort to speak, but also to, to be willing to look into more broadly...so having an interest in sort of trying to understand those students cultural heritage; as well as, if you’re working in a predominately African American community trying to gain a better understanding of African American history, and how that might shape your students’ experiences in today’s classroom.

Interviewer: Do you feel that you are culturally competent?

Dr. Connie: Somewhat, depending on who my students are, but I'm always learning and always need to learn more.
Interviewer: Is culturally competency an essential tool to learn/teach in teacher education programs? Why or why not?

Dr. Connie: Yes!... I think it’s absolutely essential because I mean part of it is just recognizing that the context in which you teach matters a lot. I mean I think there’s sort of a [way that] you have to go back and forth between the classroom contexts and understanding the particular students and trying to gain an understanding of particular students and that’s essential. But then also understanding them in the larger social contexts, and you know the difference between teaching [in] the ... incredibly privileged communities versus teaching in really disenfranchised communities, and how that connects to our larger social structure.

Interviewer: Do you feel your college adequately prepares future educators to teach urban students of color? Why or why not?

Dr. Connie: I think that many of us work hard at that goal. I mean, I think the jury is out, we really need to do more systematic study to find out, and this is sort of a the bigger teacher ed. issue, is really tracking our graduates into the context in which they ultimately teach and really finding out, what did they gain from our program and what does that look like in the classrooms that their teaching in now. So I think there, there are a lot of us here who work hard towards those kinds of goals that I have articulated. I don’t think everyone would articulate these goals. I don’t think everyone in these hallways would articulate these goals quite in the same way that I would, and some probably wouldn’t. I would say half of us would maybe have a political a stance on it, I think that is part of the problem.
Interviewer: Do you feel that teacher education programs should be redesigned to include a more multicultural approach or cultural perspective? Why or why not?

Dr. Connie: I think it’s hard to talk in big strokes like that because I think there are some programs that work really hard and do some really interesting things ...with those goals....I think there are places that work really hard to do those kinds of things. I don’t think that is universal, by any stretch. “YES,” there probably a lot I’m sure we can, I know that we can continue working on that. I wish that I was doing or knew how to do more of the things I just described. I sort of knowhow at some level, but I’ve been in [in this city] for five years now, and I find it incredibly complex to navigate, and building those kinds of relationships takes a lot of time and energy and investment and hard conversations and a zillion other things. So “YES” we should keep working towards improving...and yes!

Interviewer: Do you have any suggestions for improving your teacher preparation program in order to become a more prepared and effective teacher for youth of color?

Dr. Connie: I do have suggestions....I think I would love for our secondary program to do more where we had maybe more intimate connections with particular communities. So that we could help students do those kinds of you know learning about communities in deeper ways, and I think I get sort of lost in it because of the magnitude of [of this city] and just the complexity of, of trying to work with schools....I think we have a lot of competing demands on us that pull us in different directions.... But I would like to see us do and it also requires faculty to work closely together...I think as I’ve sort of worked more in teacher ed, I see that there are a lot of institutional and external constraints...I mean just like in classroom teaching, there all of these different policies and demands
that pull you away from some of the things that are most important. I think that if we could build some more meaningful closer connections, [and] part of it is helping our preservice teachers understand [to understand the significance of these relationships/connections]. I mean it’s really valuable for our students to see young people in out of school contexts, so that they gain a better understanding of students in school contexts. I think we can do that in a more coherent structured way. But again, there are a lot of things that also make it hard for us to do...

**Additional Question(s)**

Interviewer: Do you think that the field placement experience should be extended?

Dr. Connie: *I don’t know if longer is always the answer, to me the quality is [what counts] ...I think having quality, depth, and sustain relationships altogether. Because we actually have students out in schools a fair amount [of time], but I’m not always convinced in the most meaningful ways. So I yeah I think if we were able to create higher-quality opportunities then maybe I’d talk more about the length. To be sure, the practical experience is really valuable, but I think something I always struggle is...and part of what’s really complicated about building relationships is: navigating between the kind of practice that we want to see the practice that we often see in classrooms. And sort of getting a sense of like what is the reality in a lot of schools, and what are the possibilities in a lot of schools, if that makes sense.*

**Race-Related Conversations With Students**

Questions concerning race-related topics were posed to Dr. Connie as she holds a unique position as a teacher educator and faculty member in the college of education program.
being examined. Dr. Connie teaches preservice students who are in most cases predominately white in their varied courses.

Dr. Connie (a white female teacher educator) teaches a diverse group of students social studies; as well as, strategies to teach students who maybe students of color the harsh realities of what books provide as their history. For this reason, they were asked the following question(s) listed below:

Interviewer: Do you find it difficult or challenging to talk about race or issues around race? Do you feel like your students have a certain disconnectedness or connectedness? What was your experience like or have been like with that?

Dr. Connie: I think many white people often think that it’s difficult to talk about race. I think it’s important to do, and I bring it up often in my class, and throughout the years that I’ve been teaching preservice teachers I do lots of different things that have to do with race. I often share my own story of sort of my own challenges and sort of thinking when I was a high school student. I was really culturally aware, I knew how to talk about difficult issues and I was good. But then realizing in college that I learned some new things, and that maybe I hadn’t learned it all in high school, but then I was good and you know on and on, and they finally getting to the point where I recognize that it’s always going to be a process of learning and humility attempted humility for me. And trying to recognize what it means for me to be a white woman in society and trying to help my students understand their particular social locations, and how that relates to their students particular social locations. And yeah, so I do try to talk about that in different ways with my preservice teachers.
Follow-up Question(s)

Interviewer: Have they had, or do they have any challenges when they talk about it? Is it that their very engaged or is there some type of tension or really don’t want to talk about this and ask why is everything centered around race?

Dr. Connie: *I think I have often at many points found that they do resist.* Many students will say you know we have done this before, we already had that class, and I think over the years as I have had more experience working with preservice teachers and sort of getting [an] increased understanding of what preservice teachers often bring to my class. I have approached it differently. Actually some of my research I’ve sort of wrestled with these ideas, and tried to think about how do I work with mostly white, mostly middle-class preservice teachers who often have really limited experiences with students who don’t share their experiences. So I tried to sort of approach them by saying you know this may be hard, it may make you feel sad, it may make you feel angry, but were going to wrestle with us together we got these problems that we have to address. We have major social inequalities, we have achievement gaps, like we have problems that need fixing. And so I try to engage with them on a human level, and it’s interesting.

Dr. Howard’s Interview

Interviewer: What does it mean to be an urban educator?

Dr. Howard: *Urban is an out “loaded” term. Does it displace the people that are actually consumed…. I am not too sure what “urban” means anymore. Yeah, I mean so: Are White people urban? Are Black people urban? Are Latinos urban? As it appears to be, it used to sort of designate a particular population of people. At the same time, there are other people that are urban. Who not a part of that population? Yeah, I guess… I*
think more towards a liberating education. I mean in relationship to the particular populations that we are talking about...

Interviewer: Do you feel like you are preparing preservice teachers for culturally diverse students in urban classrooms? Why or Why not?

Dr. Howard: I do, but I also feel that much of the curriculum is from a White perspective with regards too particular communities. There are White Liberal perspectives that actually need paternal eyes. Its paternalistic.... So, a part of my course is trying to, trying as much as I can to have students who are mostly, mainly white students sort of situate themselves. What does it mean to teach Black children? What does it mean to teach Latino children? Who are you? Which is often a difficult question....for them to deal with.... When you ask White students: WHO ARE YOU? It’s very difficult to make connections between and they usually turn into themselves: I am such and such, and I like such and such, not [in the] context [of] relationships...

Interviewer: What does cultural competency mean to you?

Dr. Howard: See that’s another term that I have a hard time with. I don’t know what is meant by cultural competency. You know I prefer to think about the notion of accompaniment. If you’re a student or teacher, how do you accompany? What does it mean to “accompany” others? Accompany means walking with... Aright, and most students ...date each other in a broader curriculum in the colleges and in general. From White perspective about what it means to care and so there isn’t really a walking with. Usually “competency” gets translated into what they think others, other people need.

Interviewer: Do you feel that you are culturally competent?
Dr. Howard: I don’t know what that means. You know? I’m not exactly sure of what that means. I know the broader view of it means. You know, competent, to be competent reduces people to little factoids (an assumption or speculation that is reported and repeated so often that it becomes accepted is fact) (Google, 2016). So if I have or know more information about you, or have more facts about you, than I know about you...than you, then me.... So I am just trying to give the word or put something else at the end and a...Am I culturally reflexive? Do I reflect on my relationship to others, and others to me? In my relation to others in the world? I would say “YES,” but I would reframe it as being culturally reflexive. The other way doesn’t have you situate yourself and think about yourself in relation to others. I mean why is it that the notation about Black or Blackness is always being interpreted as something negative. Right? Because there is something that causes them to construct them to who they are. Right? So, I think I would be culturally reflexive. I mean that subjugated communities, and people and faculty have to be more reflexive because they have to figure out how to negotiate. Right? All the relationship and spaces, so they have to constantly be reflexive. In positions of power, and domination you don’t have to reflect about anything. You just have to know, think you know something about others in order to manage them...cultural competencies, are really about “managing people’’. ‘’It’s about managing, it’s about managing...it’s about limiting the possibilities of who they are and who they want to become as communities. So you manage their subjectivities, you manage their sense of “self” both individually and collectively....because the whole aim is for them to be like YOU! Right? So yeah competency is like almost a factoid supposedly about some population. If you remember then you can figure out how to manage and manipulate them.
Interviewer: Is culturally competency an essential tool to learn/teach in teacher education programs? Why or why not?

Dr. Howard: *I think colleges and schools of education that define themselves as “urban”...will grant themselves as “urban”...love the notion of ‘cultural competency’. I mean I think it’s part of the knowledge system of teacher formation. We talked/learn a great deal about cultural competency...you know there are others who reject it because they’re not really interested, you know they are not gonna sort of cover it up, that they are really about making others look like oneself; they just straight out and say it, you know? And then there are others, I feel being a little sarcastic, and then there are others that are a little hard, that you know adopt the term, you know because they wanna care. Maybe we need to examine what they are “caring” about and What does it mean for them to “care?” Or Whose perspective are they “caring” about? But it’s all from a particular perspective, it’s from Liberal White people perspective... I would throw out the whole notion of ‘cultural competency’ and come up with something a little different. You know, people being “culturally reflexive” or reflexive throughout their locations and relationship with others. I don’t think “culturally competency” does that from what I have understood and seen. “Cultural competency” comes out of the period of multiculturalism, and multiculturalism defines each group as a sort of a discreet separate culture. And if you can know about each discreet separate culture and the facts about them then you are “cultural competent.” I don’t think that does anything.*

**Probing Questions to Dr. Howard**

Interviewer: So in using your word being “culturally reflexive”: Do you think (as it relates to this question)...do you think that is important to teach in teach ed. programs?
Dr. Howard: Yeah... Because I think it's important for students who are going to be teachers, and in this case, phenomenally in most cases predominantly are white, female, and young they don’t have a clue about other people. You know? I mean I’m not gonna say that they don’t care, but they don’t have a clue. And because the world is so situated from their perspective that's the norm. And “cultural reflexive” curriculum would require them to unravel themselves as the norm....To critically investigate how, who they are, you know the communities they come from, how did they become the “norm”, from which to care for each child. So, I want them to do that...

Interviewer: Why do you think that’s important?

Dr. Howard: Well, I’ll borrow a phrase from Delpit (Lisa Delpit) because their teaching “other people’s children”. I wonder... can they really...look at the whole culture, Black Lives Matter emerged and people say WOW...White Lives Matter...Blue Lives Matter...and it’s all about erasing Black people’s lives, and their history, and their particular history of struggle/resistance. And so, I don’t think that young teachers and faculty are liberal enough [and] really understands what it means to talk about liberating education in context of black communities. I don’t think they have a clue.

Interviewer: Do you feel your college adequately prepares future educators to teach urban students of color? Why or why not?

Dr. Howard: “NO, because...the college is from a White perspective. It’s a caring perspective, but a caring perspective from that perspective.

Interviewer: Do you feel that teacher education programs should be redesigned to include a more multicultural approach or cultural perspective? Why or why not?
Dr. Howard: *I would not probably call it “multicultural”, I would call it plural aversive or intracultural*... plural aversive means “coexisting with different communities” [and] Intracultural means somewhat the same thing, but there’s sharing Multiculturalism is really about knowing or having these sort of factoids about each group and trying to eventually make them like you. So it’s like just making “multiculturalism” the main theme and the main them is: White people, White culture, and White perspective, and White ways of being in the world, White ways of seeing and thinking. White ways of living.

Interviewer: Do you have any suggestions for improving your teacher preparation program in order to become a more prepared and effective teacher for youth of color?

Dr. Howard: *I think it needs to be reflexive about the ways in which the school is. Be honest about its current perspective, as a White perspective, about what it means to care.* And I put those together, so people can’t say “Oh we don’t care?”. No, you care but from what perspective are you caring from? You can care from any perspective, but it can be pretty lethal to other people. Well, caring to me would be attentive, being called by the particular suffering of the “other”. Which means that caring has to be from the perspective of the communities that are experiencing oppression.

**Additional Question**

Interviewer: Do you think that the field placement experience should be extended?

Dr. Howard: *Yes, but you have to have a curriculum that match that because if you don’t then you have White students who then go to Black communities or Latino communities, and simply reproduce their own stereotypes....So you know if you have a curriculum and it’s based on the “norm” and they say, “I care for you”, you can command that to be*
Having Difficult Race-Related Conversations With Students

As mentioned in the previous interview with Dr. Connie, questions concerning the topic of race were addressed specifically to Dr. Howard as well. I asked Dr. Howard questions concerning addressing race in his classroom as he along with Dr. Connie (mentioned previously) hold a unique position as teacher educators and/or as faculty in the College of Education. In addition, he also encounters and teaches preservice students in who are in most cases are predominately white.

Dr. Howard (a minority male faculty) teaches preservice students he comes in contact with, the historical perspective of how education was thought of and formulated challenging (preservice teachers) to push beyond what is common and traditional and fight for equity in education for all children. For this reason he was asked the following question(s) listed below:

Interviewer: As a faculty of color, do you find it difficult having these conversations with White students?

The purpose for asking the question above is due to Dr. Howard’s racial ethnicity as a minority male, and also the type of courses he teaches for this program (i.e. Philosophy of education…etc.), and the type of students he encounters (mostly white) at this particular university.

Dr. Howard: Well, I have to reshift the curriculum. You know I use, I have used explicitly you know literature. I teach Philosophy of Education, so yet one time I used literature like Frantz Fanon— Black Skin, White Mask (book by the above mentioned author), but that didn’t do too well. It went well, but it was difficult. So, I use sort of canonical texts

pretty deadly…pretty lethal to that person’s sense of self and their relationships to their communities.
and I rework the whole canonical texts, like Plato. Just ways of reworking you know or Dewey and so when we watch other movies and have other people come in...so that sense of giving wanting them to think about the implications of the western tradition of education.

Follow-Up Questions

Interviewer: Do you find that some of them have sense of guilt? Or Do they or do some of them feel like irritated like: Why are we talking about race all of the time?

Dr. Howard: Well, I think complacent, I think students care BUT “caring” can mean a lot of things. You know what I’m saying? I mean “caring” if it’s from the a perspective if its personalistic, and it’s from a perspective of making every one of the individuals like you...then caring can have serious implications. So, I would say that they “care”, BUT their caring is from their perspective. It’s from their vantage point of what it means to “care”.

Interviewer: Have you had students challenge you in regards to these conversations? Or Say: “Hey, Dr. Howard has an AGENDA?”

Dr. Howard: Well, I’ve had students who have called me a racist.

Interviewer: Do you find that difficult to digest, or do you just kind [of] let it roll off?

Dr. Howard: Well, I mean I point out the reason why you a calling me a racist is because you have a colorblind view of the world. And you really are not addressing the question of : Race, Power, and Privilege. But yeah they are sort of ignoring that...
APPENDIX D

Visual Depiction of Themes

Field placement Immersion

Urban

Cultural Competency

Inclusion of a more multicultural approach in teacher education programs