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Am I a Systemic Iniquity Interrupter? Understanding The Influence of Critical Race Educating Through the Narratives of Alternative Ed. Black Educators

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AM I A SYSTEMIC INIQUITY INTERRUPTER?

UNDERSTANDING THE INFLUENCE OF CRITICAL RACE EDUCATING THROUGH

THE NARRATIVES OF ALTERNATIVE ED. BLACK EDUCATORS.

A Dissertation
in Education with a concentration in Educational Leadership

by

Ayanna L. Gore

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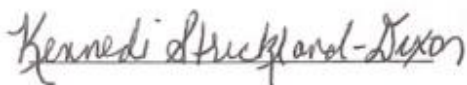
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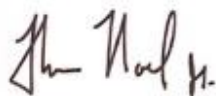
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Abstract

This research aims to illuminate the *Critical Influence* Black educators from an alternative education certifying program (which will be labeled with the fictional name *Lead On* throughout this research) through their personal narratives on the successes, struggles, and benefits of teaching Black students. Using CRT methodology (tenant 1 & 2: counter-storytelling and the permanence of racism) to hear and analyze the narratives of Black educators experience around working to have a Critical Influence on their students. Taking an Emic approach, three in-depth story-telling sessions were conducted for each participant. All participants are alum of the alternative certifying education program and have continued working in education beyond their 2-year commitment (ranging 4-11 years of experience). Findings reveal how participants' personal educational and school environment has supported their development as critical influencers in the classrooms while they strive to disrupt inequitable systems within education. Findings also show that their program experiences had a gap in their preparation to internalize how their racial identity will continue to be developed while teaching in the classroom. Conclusions illuminate the need for critical racial identity work to occur before entering and during the teaching process to ensure Black educators are equipped to live out their critical influence and remain in education. Recommendations encourage development of racial identity development for Black teachers within the program, aligned racial identity awareness selection questions, and the implementation of ongoing affinity groups for Black educators. Further research is suggested around the social-emotional experience and development for Black educators that participate in alternative certifying programs.

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I. Introduction

Bigger Than I Imagined- A Personal Narrative

In 2008, over 500 newly inducted members of an Alt. Ed certification program (Lead On) filled a lecture hall in downtown of a large urban city. The Executive Director of the program stepped to the podium as the phrase "Diversity Statement" flashed across the projector screen behind him. He read, "At our organization, while our most effective educators come from all backgrounds, we've seen that teachers who share the backgrounds of their students have the potential to be critical influencers for their students around disrupting systems of inequality in education." The room went silent; He asked everyone to share their reflections about this statement with the people around them. My group consisted of two white women and a white man who were recent college graduates and one Latina woman who identified as a career changer. Then, there was me: A Black female, recent college- graduate, and the only native of this city in the group. The Latina woman begins to share how inspired she felt by this statement. Everyone else in our circle nodded their heads in agreement. She went on to share the impact others have had on her life, as well as the reason she decided to change careers and join Lead On. Suddenly, the Executive Director brought the whole group back together and asked for volunteers to share out their reflections. That's when everything changed.

A young woman raises her hand and says, "I am very troubled by this statement. It makes it seem as if I will not have a great impact in the classroom because I am white." Immediately, I exchange looks with the Latina woman in my group. The entire room filled with murmurs of agreement about her statement. Another person of color in the room raised his hand and shares, "The statement did not say that you will not have an impact, but that those that look like their students have an opportunity to impact their students even further." She quickly proclaimed,

"But that is just wrong!" The mood in the room shifts. We get beyond raising hands as the conversation continues to go back and forth. "I can have an impact just as great!" She continued to share.

Other new inductees murmured in agreement, some start blurting out in support, and some simply sat in silence as the tension began to grow. The Executive Director stood at the podium and tried to provide rationale behind the diversity statement and the research that the organization has conducted around it. I turned to my group and share my own experience: I was impacted by my white male science teacher in high school so much that I went to college to study Biology, but it was my Black English teacher, Ms. Persons, that showed me what it looked like to become a powerful Black woman. At this point, so many people were talking back and forth about the issue that the executive director stops the conversation. He shared that, "This is how Lead On is committed to diversity as an organization and it is a continuous learning process. This doesn't take away the leadership of anyone in particular, but does highlight the need for diverse classrooms." Then, he moves on to another portion of the program.

There were mixed emotions running through me. It wasn't until this very moment that I realized I've signed up for something far more important than I imagined. I felt excited about the challenge to have a Critical Influence on my students, but simultaneously I had a lot of questions: What have I gotten myself into? (A. Gore, Personal Narrative, 2019).

Rationale and Topic

   This research explores the narratives of Black educators from an alternative education certifying program (which is labeled with the fictional name *Lead On* throughout this

research) on the successes, struggles, and benefits of teaching Black students. This research defines Black as those with African ancestry raised in the United States. These narratives will help illuminate the perceived meaning and systems that are at play when these teachers have a *Critical Influence (CI)* [1]within the classroom. This impact is due to how their identity can positively impact the dynamics and outcomes within the classroom.

Teachers of Color represent only 18 percent of the teaching population in the U.S. with Black teachers only being 7 percent (Bell-Ellwanger et al. 2016) and Black males make up 2% of the teaching force (Whitfield, 2019). Though more than half of its teachers are White, Lead On notes that it is the largest source of Black and Latin teachers in America (Lead On editorial team, 2018).

The Black/White achievement gap has barely changed throughout the years in "Equality of Education Opportunity," also known as the Coleman Report, mandated by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which tasked the Department of Education with examining the inequality of educational opportunities in elementary and secondary education across the U.S (Camera, 2016). Camera (2016) states:

One of the report findings was that in both math and reading the average Black student in grade 12 placed in the 13th percentile of the score distribution, meaning that 87 percent of white students in grade 12 scored ahead of the average Black 12th grader…. 50 years later, that gap has barely narrowed. "The average 12th grade Black student, according to data from the 2013

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1. CHA[1] Critical Influence- This phrase, coined by Lead On, is based on a concept that recognizes individuals who belong to targeted groups (e.g., women, people of color, people with disabilities, etc.) and how they are uniquely positioned to (1) understand the effects of and systems causing oppression, (2) act to mobilize and organize others to dismantle oppression; and when they choose to leverage this opportunity, can have a critical influence towards creating positive social change. (Unknown, 2012)

National Assessment for Educational Progress, placed only in the 19th percentile. In reading, the achievement gap has improved slightly more than in math, but after a half century, the average Black student scores at just the 22nd percentile. (p. 2).

The fact remains that educating students of color and low-income students is a perpetual conversation within political platforms and educational spaces throughout our nation (Griner et al., 2012; Kopp, 2011). Some of these stakeholders might suggest that it is the myth of meritocracy that drives society to believe that students of color have an equal chance at success in our nation due to education (Delgado, 1989). "This celebration of an existing contradiction (the belief in the possibility of equality within a vastly unequal society) permeates the American psyche. (Bridgeman et al., 2011, p. 12).

Since the success rate of students is the educator is held accountable, it is crucial for us to continue to dissect the knowledge, skills, and mindsets needed to produce strong educators. The movement around understanding what and how educators are being developed in order to combat systemic issues of oppression with their classrooms has continued to increase as the world of education challenges and pushes ways to innovate (Bezrukova, 2012).

The burden of meeting the needs of Black and Latinx students ultimately falls on the shoulders of the individual instructor (Amatea, 2012; Chambers, 2012). While digging through the literature on how educators are to respond and operate successfully within "racially minority" classrooms, there substantial focus on the buzzwords: culturally relevant pedagogy and implementing culturally relevant/responsive within their practice (Bezrukova, 2012; Chambers, 2012; Gay, 2002; Klotz, 2006; Kumar & Hamer, 2013; Miller, 2010; Sleeter, 2001).

Even with low recruitment numbers, the problem is not just around the ability to recruit Black educators, but also the ability to retain Black educators. The turnover rate for Black teachers is 22% in comparison to 15% for White teacher peers (Barnum, 2018). Given the small number that already exist for Black teachers the turnover is alarming. What is even more unique is that a big portion of Black educators come from alternative teaching programs 77% to be exact. (Barnum, 2018). This is why my research into Black educators within an alternative teaching prep organization is so crucial.

If meeting the needs of Black students falls on the shoulders of the educator, how then are Black instructors in Lead On rising to the challenge of having this Critical Influence, given the already harsh complexities of educating children of color while being novice educators? Based on a recent discussion at a conference I attended for Lead On members and alum of color, when asked for their thoughts around when they first heard the term (CI), there was a trend of pride within the reflections. Though the alum may have joined Lead On in very different regions and times, they all shared a sense of pride, opportunity, and legacy within their work. Alongside each narrative was the story of struggle; within the classroom to see CI fulfilled and the struggle outside the classroom with some of their white counterparts challenging the theory.

CI is a phrase that began to be tossed around in 2007 and really took definition in 2010 when the organization, Lead On, re-defined their core values. It is a description of the social phenomena a teacher can have on their students of color lives. CI speaks to when educators from similar racial and economic backgrounds of their students are able to influence and impact their students additionally beyond academics through their own identities. The definition of CI, noted on a Lead On's professional development session artifact states:

While Critical Influence is a core concept in our diversity statement, it is based on a

concept that appears in many contexts and throughout history; the recognition that

individuals who themselves belong to the targeted groups (e.g. women, people of color,

people with disabilities, etc.) are uniquely positioned to (1) understand the effects of and

systems causing oppression, (2) act to mobilize and organize others to dismantle

oppression, (3) act to interrupt the oppression, and (4) help others heal from the harms of

the oppression; and when they choose to leverage this opportunity, can have a profound

additional influence toward creating positive social change." (Unknown, 2012).

Overall, CI speaks to when educators from similar cultural and/or economic

backgrounds as their students are able to influence and impact their students additionally through

their own identities by building a deep and meaningful relationship with students and their

families, and creating ongoing conversations about short- and long-term goals that leverage

student talents and strengthens their areas of growth This work is largely about race.

Lisa Delpit (2014) shared,

"As a result of this "racism smog," many of our children have internalized all of the negative

stereotypes inherent in our society's views of black people. A student teacher at Southern

University told me that she didn't know what to say when an African American eighth-grade boy

came up to her and said, "They made us the slaves because we were dumb, right, Ms.

Summers?" Working with a middle schooler on her math, a tutor was admonished, "Why you

trying to teach me to multiply, Ms. L.? Black people don't multiply; black people just add and

subtract. White people multiply. (p. 14).

This is so embedded in many of these students' psyche that a teacher who is trying to have a Critical Influence has to be ready at all times to address them when they show up. The counter narrative that the participants supply is built into what they say, what they teach, and the systems that are foundations of their classrooms or schools.

Since 2010, the core values have been updated and most recently (in 2017) the diversity statement was formed into a *Building Blocks* document that speaks to how diversity is at the center of their mission. Lead On has continued to battle with the belief that it is an organization filled with inexperienced, white, recent college students that go into low income school stay for a bit and leave (Bryant, 2015). The organizations new core tenants and diversity foundation address these concerns and call out the need for educators of color to be at the forefront of this work. While making it clear that racial, social, and/or cultural identities are not a predictor of success or failure within the classroom, Lead On notes within their diversity Building Blocks document that those directly impacted by the inequalities currently present in education are uniquely positioned to be those impacted catalysts within this movement:

Realizing educational equity and excellence will take a broad and diverse coalition of people—of diverse races, ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, genders, sexual orientations, abilities, political views, and other aspects of identity and spheres of in sequence—united around a common purpose and shared values. We know that the change must be shaped by those of us who are most directly impacted by educational inequity. We also know that progress is only possible if each of us works effectively across lines of difference—with students, parents, partners, and each other—and if each of us understands and leverages the assets we bring to this work based on our identities and life experiences (Unknown, 2017).

Research literature acknowledges that educators of color (Black educators for this research) identity and culture does impact their work. A recent study, reported by National Public Radio (NPR), showed a correlation to feelings of success and aspirations after surveying more than 80,000 public school students (grades 4-6) around how well they believed their teacher led their classrooms (Boisrond, 2017). Boisrond shares, "These students also reported putting forth more effort in school and having higher college aspirations. When students had teachers who didn't look like them, the study found, they reported lower levels of these feelings and attitudes. These trends were most visible in Black students…" (2017, pg. 2,).

The Birth of Critical Influence

There is a clear connection between CI and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Culturally Relevant (CR) refers to a teaching pedagogy that empowers learners socially, mentally, and politically by utilizing cultural referents to transmit skills, knowledge, and attitudes (Ladson-Billings, 1994). When speaking about the ideas behind culturally relevant pedagogy and how it plays out within instruction, Genevieve Gay states:

"It (Culturally Relevant Pedagogy) is contingent on. . . seeing cultural differences as assets; creating caring learning communities where culturally different individuals and heritages are valued; using cultural knowledge of ethnically diverse cultures, families, and communities to guide curriculum development, classroom climates, instructional strategies, and relationships with students; challenging racial and cultural stereotypes, prejudices, racism, and other forms of intolerance, injustice, and oppression; being change agents for social justice and academic equity; mediating power imbalances in class- rooms...." (Gay, 2010, p. 31).

Gay (2010) highlights those foundational knowledge, skills, and archetypes needed to even have successfully implement Culturally Relevant pedagogy. When Lead On describes their commitment to diversity (within their Building Blocks document) and its value in supporting the ability to reach their vision of education equity, they share their program and classroom leadership "must be shaped by those most directly impacted by the injustice, and led by those with personal proximity to the problem and its complexity" (p. 5). The document doesn't delve deeply into the reasons behind this statement, or the skills that they believe those people possess, but they do share the questions they continue to ask themselves.

"We Constantly Ask Ourselves:

• How are individuals and groups experiencing multiple, intersecting forms of oppression

   simultaneously?

• Who remains powerless and excluded? Why?

• How does my background and experience influence and impact others?

• What can I learn from those who are different?

• How do I work in allyship?

• How can we make our classrooms a place where each student is valued, affirmed, empowered,

   and able to do their best work? Likewise, how can we do this for our organization?"

   (Unknown, 2017, p. 5)

      Those questions model what is needed to identify the levels of power and provide the notion that a clear understanding of one's own background and position is key. This shows a clear connection to the work that has been done already around Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

within the classroom. Brown and Cooper identify six principles that showcase the needed skills and mindsets in these classrooms. They name the ability to understand their true *identity*, develop expectation *support equity and excellence,* have knowledge of children *developmental appropriateness* (and use it to guide their planning), support academic and *social emotional learning,* build *strong relationships*, and the ability to manage student emotions while *addressing systemic systems of oppression* within the classroom (Brown & Cooper, 2011).

In research conducted by Durden, Tonia, Dooley, McMunn, and Truscott (2014), they state, "Findings suggest that teachers' racial identities shaped their constructions of CR theory and pedagogy. Implications for teacher education programs include considering how the development of CR pedagogues is influenced by teacher candidates' racial identities and experiences" (p.1). There is more to consider when preparing educators to live out the principles of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. This focus on the racial identity and experiences of the educator led me to dig deeper into the term CI which was coined by the Lead On organization around 2007. As stated earlier, it is clear that the theory behind CI is deeply connected to CR. As I listened to the narratives of the alum who were present in Lead On when CI was first introduced, the position of power, the stages of understanding self, and the challenges of using it to shape their curriculum was profound. It is exciting to dig further into this a decade after its introduction to see how CI shows up in Black corps members classrooms today.

Purpose of this Study

It is alarming to know that despite the growing percentage of people of color going into teaching, there is a high number (approx. 70%) of teachers of color leaving the profession

than any other teacher (Griffin & Tackie, 2016). Retaining good teachers of color will require a deep look into the perspectives of these educators. There is a lack of information on how differences between a teacher's ethnicity and those of his/her students affect the learning environment (Dee, 2004). Research literature acknowledges that educators of color (Black educators for this research) identity and culture do impact their work (bell hooks, 1994; Foster, 1993; Milner, 2006). A recent study, reported by National Public Radio (NPR), showed a correlation to feelings of success and aspirations after surveying more than 80,000 public school students (grades 4-6) around how well they believed their teacher led their classrooms (Boisrond, 2017). Boisrond shares, "These students also reported putting forth more effort in school and having higher college aspirations. When students had teachers, who didn't look like them, the study found, they reported lower levels of these feelings and attitudes. These trends were most visible in Black students…" (2017, pg. 2,). Little has been done to systematize the understandings, beliefs (pedagogical principles), and practice of such educators. The goal of this research is to dig into the narratives of these teachers and uncover if there are things to learn from these alternative certified educators that can provide guidance on supporting them.

This work explores Black teacher identity. How they perceive their identity as an educator and it listens to their reflections from their past and present. They share how they experience in within white majority spaces and how it is experienced when they are in Black majority spaces. The note the influence of their Black school leaders and reference connections to their family's multiple times. They reveal so much power and ownership they feel as Black educators. Most of the literature does acknowledge that there is something *special* within a Black teacher (especially for Black educators teaching students from their same racial background (Foster, 1993), but this

is often described with a certain *with-it-ness* or *expert labeling* about their practice (Foster, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1990; Madsen, 2000; Wilder. 2000). This something *special* seems tied to the individual's culture and how they make sense of their identity in relation to how they interact with their students and the expectations they set for them (Griner & Stewart, 2012). Beady and Hansell (1981) found that a teacher's race was strongly associated with his or her expectations for students' success in college. More specifically, Beady and Hansell (1981) found that African American teachers held higher expectations for their African American students than did White teachers. With this information, along with a need to continue to add more narratives to the literature to increase research within this area, I turn my focus towards listening to the modern day Black teacher on teaching. What can we learn from Black teachers that sheds light on more than just culturally relevant pedagogy or being culturally responsive that impacts the educational success of Black children?

It is a fundamental principle of Critical Race Theorists, that there are systemic systems of oppression that plays out in education (Abrams & Moio 2009). The history of the segregation and desegregation of schools in the South has laid a lot of the ground work in the education system, structures, and practices that we see today. This institutionalized racism (social and political structures that were formed unintentionally or intentionally to be biased towards the dominant culture) has been the foundation to what many call the *opportunity gap* (Green, 2016). Closely related to achievement gap and learning gap, the term opportunity gap refers to the ways in which race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English proficiency, community wealth, familial situations, or other factors contribute to or perpetuate lower educational aspirations, achievement, and attainment for certain groups of students." (Hidden curriculum, 2014).

Though various research shows teachers from the same racial background have this *magical* effect on students of color (bell hooks, 1994; Foster, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Milner, 2006), CI pushes us not to look simply just at race, but at how shared cultural background can actually be the foundational factor that allows this *magical* experience to occur. In a recent KIPP supported study by Chandra Thomas Whitfiled, she shared,

Most education experts agree that all students benefit from regular exposure to black teachers, and when present in schools, they are also often perceived as more approachable and voted most popular among students from all backgrounds. Still, the exceptionally low number of black men in American classrooms is not about winning popularity contests; many education experts assert it's a matter of educational equity, or the lack thereof. It is well-documented that black students, who are regularly cited for lagging behind their white counterparts academically, actually perform better when taught by teachers of the same race (2019).

The additional influence that Black teachers have is realized when students are able to visualize success in society due to the teachers position, and are prepared to disrupt educational inequity by lowering their own opportunity gap through levels of cultural discussion, academic and personal goal setting, and obtaining their own student achievement (as seen through academic success, college access and completion). The literature acknowledges that a Black educator's identity and culture does impact their work, but little has been done to systematize the understandings, beliefs, and practice of such educators. The purpose of this study is to explore Critical Influence, what it means and how Black Lead On educators are attempting to live it out within their classroom/professional practices.

Research Questions

When considering CI and how it lives out in classrooms, I have two driving

questions:

1. How do Black Lead On educators who subscribe to CI describe what it looks, feels, and

    sounds like in their classrooms?

2. How do Black Lead On educators define classroom effectiveness based on Lead On's

    building blocks and mission (CI)?

I have analyzed the narratives of Black educators around prompts that allow them to describe

what it means to fully live out or practice living out "CI". To uncover this, I asked them to reflect

on the following:

1.   Do you think your Blackness reveals itself in your daily work?

2. Do you think your ethnicity helps and/or hinders your work as an educator?

3. What are some learned lessons from your career that you would share with other Black Lead

    on educator?

These questions provide a window to see how practices are actually being performed and

influenced in Black educators' classrooms, particularly from their own perspective. I examined

their narratives to ascertain how they navigate whatever challenges they face in the classroom.

Overview of the Methodology

In the book, *Critical Race Theory: Education and Ideology* it states, "Critical race

theorists give voice to the experiences and truths of those without power while simultaneously

asking citizens to question the master narratives we have come to believe." (Bridgeman et al.,

2011, p. 5). To drive towards understanding CI, I utilized CRT methodology that is focused on

tenant 1 (Counter-storytelling) and tenant 2 (the permanence of racism) to analyze the narratives of Black educators and learn from their experience around the successes and hardships in their work while attempting to have a Critical Influence on their students. Utilizing an Emic approach, through in-depth interviews that will zoom in on what the educators describe what it means to live out CI in the classroom an *Emic view* is ultimately a perspective focus on the intrinsic cultural distinctions that are meaningful to the members of a given society, often considered to be an 'insider's' perspective (Evans, 2019). I believe taking an Emic approach will bring the culturally rich information needed to bring the CRT tenants to life and full understanding. Using a CRT lens, race will play a critical element in analyzing the narratives in terms of how race plays out in relation to their identity as Lead On members and also in relation to their role in the classroom. Does what is shared within their philosophies and innate actions for supporting their students towards academic and social success align with their role to produce CI within the organization as a whole? This approach could allow for more systematizing within the analyzation of the practices they share about their classroom (and is observed) while the narratives also illuminate how they navigate the challenges they face and what is helping or hindering the impact (as defined by the educator in relation to Lead On's mission) they have in the classroom.

   In chapter two, the literature review will explore the history of Lead On and its philosophy surrounding achieving its mission. This philosophy takes a clear position around its impact on children of color and low-income within the education system. To dig into how this philosophy could systematically live out within the schools Lead On partners with, I explored Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the research around what has been deemed to be the "essential

elements" of cultural competency from other studies of educators. CRT "foregrounds race as the central construct for analyzing inequality, and it offers educators and students an alternative perspective in identifying more effective solutions to the challenges students of color face in school."(Bridgeman et al., 2011, p. 2). CRT will provide the lens by which to collect evidence and analyze what the term *influence* could possibly be describing within the Lead On term *Critical Influence* among Black educators. "One of the greatest contributions of CRT is its emphasis on narratives and counter stories told from the vantage point of the oppressed" (Bridgeman et al., 2011, p. 5). Critical race theorists work through narratives from a minority perspective. This is done in hopes of exposing the contradictions that underlie the dominant race storyline that typically leaves out a true and rounded rationale of the needs/views of people of color (Bridgeman et al., 2011). Since history is usually always told from the perspective of the dominant group, gathering the perspective from educators of color in the form of narratives, testimonies, or storytelling challenge the dominant group's accepted truths about what it means to make a Critical Influence on students of color. Providing narrative can be viewed as a cultural and personal process. These stories often share a significant event or experience in an individual's life and/or history (Bridgeman et al., 2011).

Through CRT, personal stories become counter-narratives that emerge from the vantage point of those who have been historically marginalized. In the context of this research, those marginalized are the Black educators who might find themselves in spaces of resistance against traditional domination. These are voices from the margins, telling their stories and experiences that take place in the margins but speak to empowerment and agency when working with Black youth.

Chapter 3 will explain the research design with an emic approach and analytical CRT lens. Emic research takes a look at one cultural group and provides an insider perspective from that group. Due to my own native understanding of the topic, and the process of collecting narratives in this study support the utilization of facilitating this research with an emic approach. "The emic approach investigates how local people think". This approach allows for deep insight into how the group being studied perceives and categorizes the world, their rules for behavior, what has meaning for them, and how they imagine and explain things. (Kottak, 2006). This approach will drive the investigation of the narratives to capture the essence and criteria from the insider perspectives of what it means, what it will take, and the strengths and drawbacks of achieving a Critical Influence as a Lead On teacher.

According to sociologist Agger (1991), CRT falls into two broad categories: methodological, in that it influences the ways in which people write (produce knowledge from data) and read (interpret data), and substantive, reflecting the theories and subject matter of the researcher (e.g., the interactions between Black teachers and their Black students.CRT, in this research, centers on the impact of race within the classroom and how it is a fabric to the interactions occurring within the classroom.

It's Not That Many of Us- A Personal Narrative

"Whose house…D House!" is the chant you heard down the stairwell from the school's library. This was one of the first chants taught to the group of 80 Lead On teachers who were selected to work at Dorsey High School in Los Angeles, California for their summer teacher training. We were crowded in the school's library as we got introduced to the Lead On staff and

to the school's background. Dorsey High is one of the few predominantly African-American high schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District, with 55 percent of the student body identifying as African American and 45 percent as Latino. I was selected to teach summer school biology along with my collaborative; it was comprised of four corps members who split up the teaching time.

After being introduced to the Lead On staff that would train us, I found out that one of the only two Black staff members had a connection to me. He was our curriculum specialist and he was responsible for teaching us everything we needed to know about being an educator. It was refreshing to see a man of color in a critical position. In the middle of one of his lessons, he began to share about his background. I quickly realized that we went to the same high school and that he was the commencement speaker at my graduation; it felt like fate. I was excited to see the impact someone that came from where I came from, but it felt weird to acknowledge this connection publicly. As I looked around, I realized out of the 80 teachers, I was the only Black teacher that would teach at that high school for the summer.

Before the commencement of our training, I never once questioned my ability to become a great educator. It wasn't until I experienced the intense schedule, workload, and gaps of my students that I realized that this was going to be challenging work. I felt pressured even more, by my own standards, of making an impact given that I was the only Black teacher that summer. Being in this type of space was not new to me. As a Black biology student at Loyola University, I had sat in many lecture halls where those that look like me were scarce...but to have hundreds of peers, students, and parents look at this pushed my drive to work hard and ensure my students were offered nothing but the best. (A. Gore, Personal Narrative, 2019).

A couple of students sitting in my room during lunch mentioned to me how much they enjoy my class (and a few of my fellow colleagues' classrooms who were also Back). I asked them to tell me more about what they meant and they replied that I just "Get it". This was not the first time I had heard this or even felt this way myself, but yet, never truly took the time to make sense of it. My role within this research is to listen and experience what this "magical understanding" is along with connecting how my own experiences are deeply intertwined. I hope the findings of this research will push my own growth philosophically and allow me to apply it within my own practice as a Black leader, mother, and educator.

I do believe that all teachers of color can have an additional transformational impact on their students' lives. I also believe any teacher with a shared experience with their student whether that be class, culture, religion, or race can have CI. I do believe and as research shows, the voices of Black educators are often muddled. I am aware that my own narrative of the teacher who had a Critical Influence on me can guide what I may look for within the narratives and observations, and so within this research I avoid making a "Spectrum" of which teachers are doing this well or not based on what looks similar to my own experiences. I utilize the Emic approach to guide my research to pull from the inside of this group of Black Lead On members. Sharing the same experiences will help me to bond, relate, and even push the participants to dig deeper into their narratives, but I want to ensure that participants (or myself) don't assume that I know their story. This research is more of understanding their narratives and the trends among them to help understand CI on a deeper level.

II. Literature Review

Description

Race is one aspect of culture that is often explored and is the most seen part of someone's identity. Understanding culture and the social construction of it is an important lens to hold. The epistemology of social construction brings to life the fact that reality is socially constructed. Basic understandings we hold, meanings that are developed, problems that exist, and so on are all present due to the coordination of human beings reacting to and with other human beings. There is no objective reality, but rather that reality is socially constructed (Hall, 2005). Drawing on this, guides us to view the classroom and the relationship between educator and students as an example of a social construction.

There are many educational programs that have been developed throughout the years to address quality educators in urban schools. Many alternative programs were implemented because of the changing laws around teacher regulations. One program in particular, which will be the focus of this research, is Lead On. Lead On began in 1987 after its founder published a controversial article around the research on academic outcomes for low income students in the United States and issues in public schooling. The work found that decades after desegregation, public schools remained examples of inequity for children of color. It showed that the state of the academic system was a result of years of systems that perpetuate racism. The founder constructed a theory that said if leaders wanted to fix the educational system, they had to make it their life's work, and would need to be grounded in the issues at the classroom level. The article included recruiting high-performing college graduates to teach being the root to producing great change with this theory. At this time, it was an innovative idea. This is an example of the kind of innovation that proponents of deregulation were looking for. As stated on the Lead On's website,

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in February 1987, the founder gathered 100 part-time student recruiters from 100 universities to begin Lead On's first recruiting season.

Since this research surrounds the impact of Lead On Black Educators, from alternative certifying organizations, this literature review focuses on what has been studied already around the challenges faced and what it will take for an educator to be successful in the urban classroom and how race affects classroom dynamics in urban schools. A look into how educators are developed to be urban educators and the systems and programs that regulate this support is crucial to understand. In the United States, 80% of public-school teachers are White, 9% are Latino, 7% are Black, 2% is Asian, and 0.5% is American Indian/Alaska Native, in contrast to a 51% public school minority student population – these statistics become more significant in the case of urban schools ("The Condition of Education", 2019). In high poverty schools (those in which more than 75% of students are eligible for the National School Lunch Program), 63% of teachers are White, with Black and Hispanic students comprising the largest percentages of student attendance – 47% and 52%, respectively (Aud, Fox, & Kewalramani, 2010, p. 36, Table 7.5a). Since the teachers of interest within my research are Black teachers who were a part of an alternative certifying organization, it is important to understand the deregulation and regulation of teaching. What impact has it had on the schooling system, and in particular children of color?

Deregulation Versus the Professionalism of Teaching

Waiting for Superman (2010) is a movie about education crusaders Geoffrey Canada and Michelle Rhee, a Lead On alum, vying against teachers' union leader Randi Weingarten over the educational future of low-income, urban children of color (Bryant, 2015). This movie was

central in shaping the narrative and debate around public education policy. Questions around the quality of education and cries for modern educational reform became a major part of conversation in the 1980s with the release of A Nation at Risk, which explored Ronald Reagan's efforts to eliminate the United States Department of Education (Miller, 2002). "Schools and teachers are simultaneously seen as a national disgrace and as a primary source for national salvation" (Weis, 1989, p. 10).

The movement around understanding what and how educators are being developed to combat systemic issues of oppression within their classrooms is increasing (Bezrukova, 2012). The deregulation of teacher certification and critical research on traditional teaching programs at colleges and universities has created a growing debate. Proponents of deregulation do not suggest getting rid of all regulations and policies but suggest that some regulations are detrimental to producing positive student academic results. "To sum it up, the governors are ready to do some old-fashioned horse-trading. We'll regulate less if schools and school districts will produce better results" (National Governors' Association, 1986). Before becoming U.S. Secretary of Education (1991-1993) Lamar Alexander, with those words, set the tone on how crucial it was for education to become deregulated. These words appear to be the cause of a major thrust by states to improve the quality of public education-deregulation (Zeichner, 2016).

Over time, alternative certification programs and business modeled teacher prep organizations have emerged. Programs such as Match Teacher Residency, Chicago Teaching Fellows, Urban Teachers, Relay Graduate School of Education, and Teach For America are a few to note (Arnett, 2016). The argument for deregulation explores a perceived need for innovation, options in teacher quality, and sustainability for teachers in shortage areas. There is

an intense focus on the outputs of education, underlying the argument that "mediocre teachers" have not produced the results needed (Ball, 2011). Ball states, "A Nation at Risk (1983), in particular, sounded the alarm for America's educational failures, not only reenergizing the emphasis on outputs, but also narrowing input attention to teacher quality (2011, p.45)." This rhetoric drove politicians to continue to push education reform as a part of their agenda. At this time, Manno describes America as:

The nation's states became hotbeds of education reform. Elected officials (such as governors, legislators, and mayors) and lay people (such as business leaders and newspaper editors) set out to wrest control of education for the educational experts (school superintendents, school boards, and other members of the education establishment). These "civilians" began to demand that the "educational experts" make themselves accountable to the public (1994, p.3).

The argument for deregulation proclaims the need to open up the teacher workforce to allow the creation of new educators that specialize in their content, in efforts to increase student mastery and achievement. The output of student achievement is the primary focus. Those that argue for the professionalization of teaching point out the lack of focus on teacher quality (background, experience, practice). The argument becomes one of the abilities to innovate vs. prioritizing teacher development (Arnett, 2017). President Trump signed a bill in April 2017 to stop the new regulations on teacher preparation programs that were instituted under the Obama administration. Trump's administration shared the goal was to create new innovative programs to bring quality teachers to schools. One side provides argument for why regulation helps innovation and the other states it hinders innovation. When the Obama administration put new

regulations in place for teacher preparation programs, Wendy Kopp, founder and CEO of Teach For America stated:

Identifying and learning from top-performing teacher-preparation programs is an important strategy to further the teaching profession in our country. It is critically important to analyze regularly the effectiveness of our teacher-preparation pathways, and that analysis should include an objective and rigorous examination of the average learning gains of students. States that annually conduct such analyses, such as Louisiana and Tennessee, are providing valuable feedback to teacher-preparation programs, including Teach For America, and helping to inform school and district hiring decisions. (U.S. Dept. Of Education, 2011, para.5)

Overall, the movement to deregulate education involves two major issues, one practical and one philosophical. The practical concern lies in the constant change in government administration and the ability for states to maintain a clear vision on the priorities within teacher preparation. On a philosophical level, some are concerned that deregulation hinders the ability to keep high metrics of expectation within low income schools (Brown, 2017). After reviewing both sides of this debate, it is clear that not all regulations are barriers to innovation. On way hand, many regulations provide protections to a student's human rights, as well as structure to school systems. On the other hand, if our nation wants to maintain flexibility and innovative practices as society changes, there must be some opportunity to operate outside of regulatory lines. It is this balance that is constantly called into question.

Pros and Cons of Lead On/Lead On History
The pros and cons of Lead On, are frequently discussed, researched, and written about among multiple educational stakeholders. Some major areas that are often shared as pros and

cons from both its critics and its advocates is around its lack of preparedness versus the high-quality instructional pool the program attracts. A major con of the program is the unprepared nature of its members after their boot camp style training. Lead On teachers teach summer school at a school in the local community during the day and then attend teacher education seminars in the afternoon. After a six week intensive training program they enter the school year as full time teachers, while taking education classes at a grad school at night. This *build the boat while sailing* approach is often criticized as producing teachers who burn out quickly and have less skills to handle the population of students that Lead On supports (Heilig, 2014). Advocates of the organization stress how the lack of quality teachers going to these schools is a nationwide problem. In most cases, if it were not for a Lead On corps member, many teaching positions in these schools would be left unfilled (Chen, 2017).

A pro that is often shared by both groups is around the applicants that are selected by Lead On. Mark Tappan, Director of Education at Colby College stated, "Lead On has made teaching appealing ('sexy') for graduates of elite colleges and universities" (Hoffman, 2014 para. 15). If you look at the historical applicant data and pool, it should be noted that the organization grew at rapid speed. Majority of the applications coming in were from the top tier schools in the United States ("Our History" para. 5). Simultaneously, this pro is the foundation of the biggest critique that Lead On receives: novice teachers who only stay for a two-year stint and then leave the classroom. Being able to attract young and highly educated people to the education force is impressive, but often the schools they serve lack veteran teachers due to frequent turnover (Hoffman, 2014 para. 16).

Lead On has faced other criticism around their lack of diversity, low commitment time of 2 years (Chen, 2017). Lead On began to intentional try to reshaped their organization to combat these criticisms. Between 1990 and 1993, Lead On grew to approximately 500 teachers in six different regions of the United States. Teach For America became a part of AmeriCorps and Lead On established their first core values: Focused, Growth, Results, Clarity, Truth, Well Rounded, and Thoughtfulness. Between 1994 and 1999, Lead On nearly doubled in size, expanding to serve 14 different regions. According to an in-house survey, at this time 95% of teachers were ranked as "excellent" or "good" by school leaders where Lead On teachers were placed. From 2000 until 2008, a heavy focus was put on recruitment and consequently a little over 3000 applicants were accepted out of 18,000 applicants in one year. The core values were changed in 2004 to: Results Oriented, Hopeful Hearts, Critical Thought, Others Before Self, and Honesty.

Lead On began to form their philosophy of critical change on how to create teacher leaders. In 2012, a major change in the core values occurred. The new core values: Deepening Change, Legacy, Culturally Responsive, Others Before Self, and Power In Numbers led to many new initiatives within the organization. With the addition of a culturally responsive core value, The Pack, Lead On's alumni of color group, was established along with a recruitment strategy of adding more teachers of color to the organization. At this point, the organization has now expanded into 40 regions and averages over 46,000 applicants for recruitment. Soon after, the founder stepped down as the CEO to work on other organization. A 1999 alum and person of color now serves as the organization's CEO.

Lead On Building Blocks

Having corps members that can have a Critical Influence in the classroom is a vital piece for accomplishing the mission. This is the narrative shared within Teach For America's Foundations document. This document reviews the organization vision, problem statement, theory of systemic change, and their approach to accomplishing their vision. A big section within this document is titled Understanding and Acting On Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusiveness. This section states, "We recruit and retain a corps and staff that reflects the inclusive coalition we need representing our nation. Simultaneously, we ensure those of us who have faced educational inequity shape our direction." ("Foundations" p. 4, 2017). This statement infers that the organization believes that those who face inequity (teachers of color/low income) have to be a part of leading this mission and work. What I am still left wondering is the reasons behind this statement. Why is it important to have teachers of color as a big piece of leading this charge? What is the evidence around the impact/transformational change they have had on the mission? This is the goal of this research to uncover what that impact looks like.

To be clear, the organization does not believe that racial identity can be a predictor of success in the classroom. It is an opportunity than can support the transformational change needed to disrupt systems of inequality in education. Transformational change is used to convey the importance of creating change that is long lasting versus a change that only occurs for a moment. As stated in the introduction, it is often eluded to those educators from the same racial background as their students can have a Critical Influence on their students when trying to create this type of transformational change in student lives (Beady & Hansell, 1981; Foster, 1993; Kopp, 2011; Ladsen-Billings, 1990; Madsen, 2000; Wilder. 2000).

Due to the charge around teachers of color being able to impact those students that look like them, some of the regional Lead On offices have adopted programs such as the Community Based Hiring Pilot. In this pilot, Corps Members are selected to interview with schools that are located in the neighborhood they grew up in or with schools where an aspect of their identity compels them to teach in that specific community (On-boarding, 2018). There has not been any data reported around the impacts of this pilot since it began in 2015, but it continues to be a highly supported piece of their hiring and on-boarding process from the organization and their outside school partners. Lead On staff members of color share pride within this portion of their work. They share that being able to place their members of color in schools where they could have the most additional impact, but it is a process that they are fine tuning every year. Staff members have to warn potential Black Corps Members, that even though the goal is to support them getting into a community they connect with, due to school demands and subject area needs, it may not always be possible. Overall, the organization places strong emphasis on the need to impact learning for Black and Brown students in their Foundations document by acknowledging the need to have educators who have faced the inequalities within education at the forefront of this work. The issue seems to be how to get the right people in the right seats.

Beyond Lead On is a National Issue…

The fact remains that educating students of color and low-income students is a perpetual conversation and concern among every stakeholder within our nation (Griner et al., 2012; Kopp, 2011). Critical Race Theorist would suggest that it is the myth of Meritocracy that drives society to believe that students of color have an equal chance at success in the nation due to education

(Delgado, 1989). "This celebration of an existing contradiction (the belief in the possibility of equality within a vastly unequal society) permeates the American psyche. (Bridgeman et al., 2011, p. 12).

The movement around understanding what and how educators are being developed to combat systemic issues of oppression with their classrooms is increasing (Bezrukova, 2012). There are schools that focus on standards, assessments, and other content based support (Benson, 2008). On the other side of things, there are also schools that focus on mentorship, guiding, and developing all students to be functional adults through a cultural approach (Chambers, 2012; Klotz, 2006). Most work, when speaking of a "cultural approach" in the classroom, refers to the educators' ability/skill to take the time to understand their student's background, interest, habits, and role models to inspire and motivate them to be successful (Klutz, 2006). Mary Beth Klutz states, "They recognize how student outcomes can be improved by incorporating racial and ethnic minority contributions in curriculum and diversifying pedagogical practices. They see cultural competence as both a moral and ethical responsibility to create a welcoming environment for students to succeed" (Klutz, 2006). Scholars that take a critical lens towards cultural competence assert it often leaves the scholars unequipped to deal with institutionalized racism (Abrams, Moio 2009).

What would it take to see an increase in students of color not only getting into college, but successfully graduating? What is it that they need to know, see, hear, and feel throughout their academic career? Despite a focus on trying to equalize education, equity issues have yet to be solved and there has been an agenda to look into teacher quality and preparation (Trumbull, 2005). College enrollment did see an increase for all racial backgrounds between 2000 and

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2017. "In fall 2017, total undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions was 16.8 million students, an increase of 27 percent from 2000, when enrollment was 13.2 million students." ("The Condition of Education, 2019). It is possible to attribute the increase in enrollment into higher education due to the focus of teacher quality around closing the college enrollment gap, but there has been a decrease of Black student enrollment between 2010 and 2017 (19 percent) and with on only 45.9 percent graduation within six years, there is still a piece missing (Bridges, 2019).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

The literature around urban education is grounded within the theory and research around Culturally Relevant pedagogy and educators. Even within that research, majority of the studies provide support, theory, and guidance for the training of White educators in urban settings (Bell, 2007; Duncan, 2007; Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1992). When I researched how teachers are being developed and educated around what it means to be successful in racially minority classrooms, there is focus on educators being understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy and implementing culturally responsive practices (Bezrukova,2012; Chambers, 2012; Gay, 2002; Klotz, 2006; Kumar & Hamer, 2013; Miller, 2010; Sleeter, 2001). I want to dig deeper into what it means to support the Black educator that is teaching across similar lines of cultural backgrounds. What more can be learned if educators were provided with the narratives and understanding around how Black educators approach educating Black children vs. providing a majority lens for white educators in urban education?

There is ample amount of literature on teaching in urban classrooms that hones in on the White teacher impact. The current research out there supplies the buckets of mindsets and

skills White teachers (or any teacher) would need when working within these spaces. This provides some good insight when comparing counter stories to the white experience. Genevieve Gay states:

Culturally responsive teaching is the behavioral expressions of knowledge, beliefs, and values that recognize the importance of racial and cultural diversity in learning. It is contingent on. . . seeing cultural differences as assets; creating caring learning communities where culturally different individuals and heritages are valued; using cultural knowledge of ethnically diverse cultures, families, and communities to guide curriculum development, classroom climates, instructional strategies, and relationships with students; challenging racial and cultural stereotypes, prejudices, racism, and other forms of intolerance, injustice, and oppression; being change agents for social justice and academic equity; mediating power imbalances in class-rooms based on race, culture, ethnicity, and class; and accepting cultural responsiveness as endemic to educational effectiveness in all areas of learning for students from all ethnic groups. (Gay, 2010, p. 31).

These ideas segue into the notion around how educators are prepared for classrooms filled with Black and Brown students in general. The literature identified six categories of Culturally Relevant practices look like within the classroom. Through the various practices suggested in the literature, they all seem to follow the Principles of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (based on the research from Brown and Cooper, 2011):

1 Identity Development: Good teaching comes from those who are true to their identity (including genetic, socioeconomic, educational and cultural influences) and integrity (self-acceptance). Teachers who are comfortable with their own background (racially and

culturally) and teach within their identity and integrity are able to make student connections and bring subjects alive (Brown et al, 2011).

   2   Equity and Excellence: The integration of excellence and equity in CRP is predicated upon establishing a curriculum that is inclusive of students' cultural experiences, and setting high expectations for the students to reach (Brown et al, 2011).

   3   Developmental Appropriateness: Several concepts collectively define Developmental Appropriateness within the context of CRP. These concepts include, "...learning styles, teaching styles, and cultural variation in psychological needs (motivation, morale, engagement, collaboration)." The goal is to assess student's cognitive development progress and incorporate learning activities within the lesson plan that are challenging and culturally relevant (Brown et al, 2011).

   4   Teaching the Whole Child: When teaching a child wholly, educators must be cognizant of the socio-cultural influences that have attributed to the learning progress of that child even before they enter the classroom. These outside influences must naturally be accounted for when designing a culturally relevant curriculum (Brown et al, 2011).

   5   Student Teacher Relationships: Educators must combine the willingness to bond with their students with the desire to grow that relationship into one vested in personal care and professional vigilance. Students must feel that the teacher has their best interest at heart to succeed in implementing CRP (Brown et al, 2011).

   6   Manage Student Emotions: Educators must be prepared to manage students that may have strong emotional experiences to culturally diverse readings. Positive emotions may

enhance the learning experience, whereas negative emotions may cause discourse and prevent students from engaging (Brown et al, 2011).

When viewing these principles, it pushes me to consider how much of the success within this varies on the educator's skill set and background experiences. In the research perform by Durden et al., their findings suggest that teachers' racial identities (and the understanding of it) is deeply tied to a teacher's interpretation on Cultural Relevant Pedagogy. They further suggest that teacher development needs to consider the culture background of the teacher being developed (2014). One report suggests that, compared to their peers, teachers of color are more likely to:

1) Have higher expectations for students of color.

2) Comfortability with dealing with issues of racism with students.

3) Serve as advocates.

4) Developing more trusting relationships.

This serve as a representation of the culturally knowledge held by the Black educator that positions them to make a greater impact on their students than their peers (Milner, 2006).

There is more to understand and consider when preparing educators to live out the principles of culturally relevant pedagogy. Overall, CI speaks to when educators from similar cultural and/or economic backgrounds as their students are able to influence and impact their students additionally through their own identities by building a deep and meaningful relationship with students and their families, and creating ongoing conversations about short- and long-term goals that leverage student talents and strengthens their areas of growth. Yet, the organization

has yet to put out any literature around how they develop teachers to ensure CI is realized in the classroom.

Race Plays a Pivotal Role Educating the Black Student

Taking the six categories of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy above, it is clear that educating Black children takes more than simply knowing the current hip hop songs or popular movies. It is about actively correcting systemic practices that have broken down the identity development, addressing emotional trauma, and building strong relationships with Black students. Not social status, sexuality, religion, or wealth, but it is race that is the main factor when looking at educational gaps within the US school system. Susan Berfield shared, in a 2015 study of Evanston, IL school system, the researchers finding state that white students were drastically moving ahead of their Black students when it came to college readiness. The study share that this gap exists among white and Black students even when the Black students came from privilege. They stated, "Almost 80 percent of black students come from low-income households. But in Evanston, an achievement gap exists among higher-income black and white students, too. The inescapable conclusion of the report: "Race has an effect on student outcomes in District 65 separate from income." (Berfield, 2015 p. 1)

To connect an additional layer to the effects of race on student academic success is the issue that comes from the many shades within Blackness. Colorism is a pervasive experience that occurs globally (Knight, 2015). While students are working through their own identities, educators are often finding themselves addressing comments and mindsets around light-skinned and dark-skinned Blacks (Moore, 2016). Even as you get to know some of the participants, you will see that colorism shows up in their own childhood development and shows up in the

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classroom. In society, in the media, and within government, there are many clear examples of how light skinned Black receive more favoritism, accolades, and success (Knight, 2015). These things translate into a false narrative that is painted for Black students around the world.

It is clear that race has created a lack of opportunity for Black students and in turn this has caused trauma to the Black student. There is research that shows that racism and the effects of it has caused social-emotional strains and mental health issues for Black people (Jernigan-Noesi, 2019). Black students are left feeling alienating in many ways. Whether it's through school systems that cause physical alienation (i.e. high suspension rates for Black students) or psychological alienations (i.e. lack of representation in curriculum and in teaching staff). These things, result in feelings of disconnectedness, dissociation, and disengagement from school (Henderson, 2017). These are examples of the systemic emotional realities' teachers are often faced with when working with Black students. Historical trauma is carried through the Black community which in turn impacts students along with the continued racial trauma that is experienced in their day to day (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2017).

Having a Black teacher seems to have a *Talented Tenth* type of impact that greatly increases the chances of students navigating through this trauma and closing academic and opportunity gaps that are statically seen. The Talented Tenth is a phrase coined by W.E.B Dubois that conveys how the top ten percent of the race would need to guide the rest and support the achievement of the entire race (1903). A recent study, published by the National Bureau of Economic Research:

Shows that having just one black teacher not only lowers black students' high school dropout rates and increases their desire to go to college, but also can make them more

likely to enroll in college. According to the results, black students who have just one

black teacher in elementary school are 13 percent more likely to enroll in college than

their peers who didn't have any black teachers. Students who have two black teachers are

32 percent more likely to go to college. (Aina, 2019, p.1).

This research goes on to describe how the influence of Black teachers reaches further than they

initially thought. Initially, the researchers focused on the effects on the retention of Black

students in school after having Black teachers, but this research highlights that Black teachers

provide something tangible to Black students that stays with them until adult hood. There are

researchers looking at this *Role Model Effect* or as Lead On puts it having a *Critical Influence* on

students (Will, 2018). Other research goes on to even explore how early this Critical Influence is

needed. Stating the need is as early as Kindergartener. "The findings are based on data from a

class size reduction experiment in Tennessee, which began in 1986 and randomly assigned low-

income kindergarteners to various sized classrooms. Researchers found that black students who

were matched with a black teacher in kindergarten were as much as 18 percent more likely than

their peers to enroll in college." (Camera 2018). It is clear that Black teachers matter when it

comes to educating the Black student (Jones, 2018), but there is history behind why they are

lacking in our school systems (Foster, 1993).

The Evolution of the Black Educator
Black Teacher Effect-A Personal Narrative
I entered into public schooling my freshmen year of high school where out of the 32 teachers I

had in my four years of high school, 4 were Black. Before then, I had the opportunity to attend a

small private, Christian school on the Southside of Chicago. For 7 out of the 9 years of my K-8

education, 100% of my academic experience derived from Black educators. In 9 years, I had 7

Black teachers and 2 of them were Black Males. My elementary education was filled with weekly morning rituals where we recited the "Black Pledge", Friday afternoons where you would hear ringing through the chapel "Hey Black Child…do you know who you are?", and math, spelling, and reading competitions where students were able to reference historical Black figures that made an impact in all of these areas. (A. Gore, Personal Narrative, 2019).

There are many Black children that can count the number of Black teachers they have had on one hand. This reality is the current product of historical systems of oppression that date back to 1954 (or even earlier). There has been research around the hidden cost of the Brown vs. The Board of Education case (Foster, 1993). On July 24, 1953, former President Dwight D. Eisenhower wrote in his diary: "I do not believe that prejudices, even palpably unjustifiable prejudices, will succumb to compulsion. Consequently, I believe that Federal law imposed upon our States...would set back the cause of race relations a long, long time." (Payne, 2004, p. 88). Eisenhower's statements from 1953 seem to reflect a summary of the today's outcomes around segregation's impact on educating Black children. While Brown attempted to open doors for all children, not matter the race or background, to have equal opportunity and access in education, poor integration, implementation policies and widespread systemic racism presented problems for many black students and teachers.

There are obvious losses—black teachers were fired and demoted. Wonderful black principals were put in charge of running school buses. They were humiliated because they had once been leaders in their communities. Some of them had to relocate and move north. But there are costs that we forget—like losing control over what black children learned. (Anderson, 2018, para. 7).

Many Black educators lost their jobs after desegregation, from which Black educators have never recovered. For example, before *Brown* Black Male teachers made up 49% of the Black teaching force (Fultz, 2009) and currently they only make up 2% (Whitfiled, 2019). As I stated earlier, 80 percent of the education teaching force is White. According to this literature review, the ability to recruit Black educators and retain them is alarming. The turnover rate for Black teachers is 22% in comparison to 15% for White teacher peers (Barnum, 2018). Given the small number that already exist for Black teachers the turnover is alarming. What is even more unique is that a big portion of Black educators come from alternative teaching programs 77 percent to be exact. (Barnum, 2018). As the population of White educators increased, Black students began to decline academically and this is believed to be due to the lack of Black teachers that not only cared for their academic success but cared for their success as a human being (Lutz, 2017). This history is a crucial piece in to understanding why Black success because such a major celebration for the community as a whole. Due to some many historical systems that have kept Black people from succeed. One success because a support for many. This notion is explored further within the *Talented Tenth* theory explored earlier under *Race Plays a Pivotal Role* section on page 35.

Lead On's Black Educator Evolution

The rise of Lead On continued to increase sinse its inception in the 1990s due to the high demand to fill teacher positions in critical areas (Gross & Loeb, 2010). Lead On demographics, in many of its regions, reflects this national reality. Nationally, 3500 applicants were accepted in 2017. Out of that amount, 17% identified as Black. (Unknown, 2017). This has grown substantially since its founding year in 1990. Though more than half of its corps is White, Lead On notes that it is the largest source of African American and Hispanic teachers in America

(Unknown, 2018). They contribute this impact is due to national organization, and with a few regions, devoting initiatives around how to attract more candidates of color and retain them in the classroom beyond their two-year commitment. For example, in a recent Black History Month special article in its newsletter, Lead On recognized one of it's alum in Charlotte that is leading a Black Male Educator initiative (Unknown, 2018). Also, the Chicago region has devoted time to a pilot that focus on placing corps members of color into schools with similar racial and economic backgrounds of the teacher. Results of this pilot have yet to be shared.

Overall, this history, the history of the Black educator, is rich in many counter stories. Critical Race Theorist want to continue to illuminate these stories when considering work within the urban school setting. It is through these narratives we are able to use an emic lens to learn from the work and impact education is having on Black children. In 1997, a White woman by the name of Michelle Foster wrote a book titled, Black teachers on Teaching. This work took an emic approach and shared the narratives of Black teachers who were a part of the desegregation of schools. The work is a powerful piece that allows us to see, feel, and hear what impact of this change meant to those directly affected. My goal is to explore what it could look like to mirror this type of work with a similar CRT methodology and explore the narratives of Black Lead On teachers and their understanding of the Critical Influence, which was noted heavily between 2010-2015, that Lead On shared was their organizational belief of the impact corps members of color could have in the classroom. "We recruit from specific communities' individuals who are uniquely poised to make a profound impact in the classroom. Together with students and families, we're striving to create justice and opportunity for all people." (Lead On website, n.d.).

Methodology

This is a qualitative research that has been narrowed to focus on the narratives of Black educators that were or are a part of Lead On. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is used to focus the structure, approach, and support analyzing this research. CRT recognizes the effects of systemic racism on people of color in general (Black students within this research). The education system is pervasive of racism that continues to keep Black students lower than whites when it comes to academic success (Fitzgerald, 2017). CRT methodology explores not on that fact that racism is embedded within the systems at play in our world but also how it is experienced and responded to. This also for my work to uncover how race interacts within the classroom as perceived by the Black teacher participants.

By utilizing an emic approach (stemming from Cultural anthropology) inside of our CRT methodology, focuses on the voice of those that are impacted most by the system racism. Emic approach investigates how an individual think, perceives, describes, and experience their culture from their viewpoint (Kottak, 2006). There is a classroom culture that is created by both teacher and student. Having an emic perspective is crucial in supporting the need to provide descriptive, in-depth, clear narratives coming directly from the participants about how they *(the insider)* makes sense of their classroom culture and understand their rituals that has led to the *Critical Influence* they have on their students. (Shultz, 2009). This research examines an individual's racial identity and experience within Lead On along with the intersectionality of their membership to their career as an educator. CRT will spotlight the importance of understanding the socio-cultural pressures that shape how we perceive, experience, and respond to race within the classroom (Bell, 1995). To drive towards understanding *Critical Influence*, I

utilized CRT methodology that is focused on tenant 1 (Counter-storytelling) and tenant 2 (the

permanence of racism) to analyze the narratives of Black educators and learn from their

experience around the successes and hardships in their work while attempting to have a *Critical

Influence* on their students.

Methods

       Participants in the study included six alumni from *Lead On* that currently work in public

(traditional and charter) school settings as teachers and school leaders. The participants work in

schools are located in the same major urban US city with a population of Black students that is

90% or higher. There is plenty of controversy surrounding programs like Lead On, which place

mostly upper-class White students from elite universities into our neediest schools. However,

there is a small percentage (approximately 17 percent of the Lead on organization) of Black

educators who do participate in this teacher alternative program whose experience warrants

careful examination. By hearing their narratives and applying an Emic framework to the research

and analysis of the stories I have examined the existing power structures within their own

training and understanding to the extent which they have applied their knowledge to the

classroom. CRT acknowledges that racism is engrained in the fabric and system of the American

society (Delgado et al., 2001). Critical race theorists use storytelling to illustrate and underscore

broad legal principles regarding race and racial/social justice (Lynn & Dixson, 2013).

       The use of Narrative Inquiry in this study allows the researcher to connect with the

participants' experiences on an intimate level. CRT uses counter storytelling to document how

racial/discriminatory experiences shape historically marginalized groups, introducing their stories

to raise critical consciousness about racial injustice (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). The narrative

approach captures the emotions of the moment described, rendering the event active rather than passive, infused with the latent meaning being communicated by the teller (Smith, 2000). Two concepts are thus tied to narrative storytelling: memory and notions of time. These provide the nuances around time as found in the past and time as re-lived in the present (Bruner, 1991). Therefore, narrative analysis is used to acquire a deeper understanding of the ways in which a few individuals organize and derive meaning from events. It is particularly useful for studying the impact of social structures on an individual and how that relates to identity, intimate relationships, and family (Polkinghorne, 1995). Since we are studying the social interactions between educator and student, this type of narrative inquiry (and its analysis) will assist in painting a picture of how social interaction is perceived by within education. Creswell et al. states:

A story in narrative research is a first-person oral telling or retelling of events related to the personal or social experiences of an individual.   Often these stories have a beginning, middle, and an end. Similar to basic elements found in good novels, these aspects involve a predicament, conflict, or struggle; a protagonist or character; and a sequence with implied causality (i.e., a plot) during which the predicament is resolved in some fashion (Carter, 1993). In a more general sense, the story might include the elements typically found in novels, such as time, place, plot, and scene (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). In this process, researchers narrate the story and often identify themes or categories that emerge from the story. Thus, the qualitative data analysis may be both descriptions of the story and themes that emerge from it (2002, p. 204).

Counter storytelling is powerful because it:

1. Builds community – It reminds the marginalized that they do not navigate through the educational system alone. Counter storytelling cultivates empathy.

2. Challenges the standard beliefs of those at society's center – Authentic stories from oppressed groups question the master narrative and transform normalized belief systems.

3. Nurtures cultural wealth, memory and resistance – These stories can challenge and dismantle racism and restore the legacies of resistance and empowerment movements.

4. Transforms education – "Because counter stories embed critical conceptual and theoretical content within an accessible story format, they can serve as pedagogical tools" (Yosso, 2006, p. 15).

5. Prompts Action. These stories should also motivate oppressed groups to change the sociopolitical context in which they live.

With the definition of CI in mind, my methods, participant selection, and analysis must further the understanding of the impact Black educators have on their students through their identities (Beard 2014) with consideration of the development educators received through the Lead On program. To deeply understand the alternative education programs that serve primarily poor students of color, we must examine the insights and experiences of Black educators. I researched Lead On's CI theory from the perspectives of Black alumni, using in-depth interviews and an emic approach to determine these two research questions the study:

1. How do Black Lead On educators who subscribe to CI describe what it looks, feels, and sounds like in their classrooms?

2. How do Black Lead On educators define classroom effectiveness based on Lead On's building blocks and mission (CI)?

Criteria

        The participants (described in the next chapter) shared the same racial background as their students. They did not have to be a classroom teacher at the time of the study but must be working within a school building in some educational capacity. The school must have at least 70% of its student population to be Black. Participants were sent a survey *(see appendix 2)* to see if they meet the criteria. I narrowed the participants to six teachers based on timing, coordination, and participant interest. The interviews took place via ZOOM online video meeting (which was recorded).

Working with The Participants

        After the participants and I confirmed their consent to share their narratives, I held an initial meeting to review the research questions and gain insight into their personal story, their understanding of race, identity, and background, and how it has formed their experiences with students and teachers. I held three follow-up interviews *(see appendix 4)* through Zoom Web Conferencing that achieved the following goals:

1. Educational Narrative. The participants shared stories on events, teachers, and memories that shaped their identity, culture, and achievement.

2. Definition of CI and Lead On. The participants explained their understanding of CI and how Lead On shaped that understanding. The participant reflected on support and struggles in their daily work.

3. Daily Practice. The participants described the connection of CI within their daily practice.

To triangulate the data, participants shared reflections in between sessions. Their practice of journaling supported my understanding of the social construction of culture being created within their classrooms.

Analyzing the Data

I used a thematic analysis to build themes and patterns through the emic framework. Thematic analyses illuminate the themes and content that hold within or across stories. To aide in this analysis, works from researchers such as Beverly Tatum (2017) and Brown &Cooper (2011) provided the framing to structure the thematic format of the narratives. These works lend certain language and themes around this topic that assist in coding and sense making of the narratives. Thick description was used when providing data so the complexities in each individual story are highlighted and one can make meaning out of cultural contexts, patterns, and differences. Pseudonyms were provided for all names, cities, other descriptors and personal information. Only the needed racial, cultural, school statistical information remained intact

Quality

I shared with each participant the definition of *Critical Influence* prior to their first story-telling session. This was to ensure all participants were in alignment around what was meant by the phrase. To ensure the validity and essence of the narratives remain intact, participants reviewed the theme at the end. The beauty of the narrative can often fall short of the critical next step of critique and problematizing. A few questions I asked myself when analyzing the narratives were (Ritchie and Wilson, 2000):

1. What is the context in which the story is told?

2. Where are the gaps, silences, the tensions, the omissions?

3. Who is privileged by these narratives?

4. What positions and relationships do they reinforce?

Using triangulation and multiple data collection points, teachers were able to journal down thoughts around their narratives throughout the research processes. The goal was not to share findings necessarily, but to help push their reflective capacities around their own understanding of CI and the dynamics occurring in their classroom. Participants could check the data frequently to ensure the narratives and trends pulled out from their narratives accurately described what they were conveying.

A few of the prompts they considered prior to sharing their stories are as follows:

Background/Identity

1) What did your early childhood schooling look like (elementary and high school)? FOLLOW UP: What did it look like? Describe the community, school, type?

2) Describe a teacher who you feel impacted your life. FOLLOW UP: Is there a teacher that motivated you beyond comparison to your other teachers? Describe the teacher and methods they used to help you feel this way.

3) Tell me about a moment you knew you wanted to become an educator. FOLLOW UP: Who was involved in the process?

Current Practices

1) Do you think your Blackness reveals itself in your daily work?

2) Do you think your ethnicity helps and/or hinders your work as an educator?

3) Do you feel your teaching methods/style manifests in the classroom?

4) Does your race/ethnicity play a role in what you experience as an educator?

5) Describe an event that occurred in class that really represents your teaching philosophy

Personal Growth

1) Share a moment that prepared you to be the teacher that you are today.

2) What sets you apart from other teachers from similar economic or racial backgrounds as you?

3) What in your training prepared you to have a CI? What may have hindered you?

4) What do you identify were/are your current strengths as an educator? What in your training would you contribute to building these strengths?

5) What do you identify as your current gaps as an educator? What would you change in your training to support these?

My Impact on Quality

I also had to consider my social positioning due to race and cultural background throughout these interviews. Teachers may tend to be more open to discuss this topic with me because I also come from the same background and have the potential to connect with them on an even deeper, personal level (Tatum, 2003). I established myself with the participants as a learner so I

could deeply understand their experiences individually before analyzing them for trends. I took

the time to get to know my participants and understand their educational philosophy. This

increased the quality of the research by ensuring that an analysis could occur through their lens

(emic approach) without me trying to fill in gaps with my own experiences.

Ethical Consideration

Data protection and human rights were important considerations to ensure safety

throughout this study. No student, teacher, or school names are involved. Description of the

racial, class (free or reduced lunch percentage), body size, school level, and academic rating will

be shared as it is information currently published on each school's website. No student was

videotaped or recorded throughout this process and all names and information were provided

pseudonyms. Information about other stakeholders will be kept confidential if used within a

narrative and analyzed for impact not the role they played.

The most common risks to social behavioral research are breaches of confidentiality (e.g.,

someone outside the research gaining access to the data, if data are collected and stored in an

identifiable manner), and feeling uncomfortable or being upset, particularly if questions are

sensitive or the topic is one that could provoke strong feelings or emotions (psychological

harms). It took the vulnerability, reflectiveness, and willingness for their work to be explored

within those involved for me to analyze what CI means. None of this was possible without caring

for and protecting their narratives. Participants were asked to describe their experiences as a

student and as an educator. It is possible (50% chance that they either have or have not) that

someone could have had a negative experience within either of these times of their life. A

potential risk could be some negative emotions are resurfaced for a participant. The probability

and magnitude of this was low, given that the pool of participants is composed of alum within a program that often provides reflection around personal educational experiences.

I posted a social media recruitment request on Facebook Lead On alumni group (which I am a member of) as this group is often used to promote opportunities for research, professional development, and networking between alum. No permission is needed for me to post here as I have access and membership to post for myself. In the recruitment email and Facebook message, I asked for those that are interested to individually reach out to me via email. The email response after allowed for me to share the screening survey and have the participant schedule our initial call. During the first call I shared the informed consent via email and reviewed it together, answered any questions and began the first audio recording.

To keep all in information private, all audio and transcriptions were stored on a locked computer. Through all stages of data collection, storage, sharing, and analysis, privacy and confidentiality was protected *(see appendix 3).* Every precaution was taken to minimize the risk of a break into the system that stores information. Audio recordings of interviews were for transcription purposes. Analyzing CI takes an immense amount of vulnerability, reflectiveness, and willingness of those who participated for their work to be explored none of this would have been possible without caring for and protecting their narratives.

Limitations

This research has been narrowed to focus on the narratives of Black educators that were or are a part of Lead On. Recruitment of participants was a bit limited. I had hoped for a size of eight participants (both male and female) but I was able to recruit six qualifying participants. All the participants are women. This was not greatly surprising given the fact that

only 2% of educators are Black Men (Whitfield, 2019). The Regional Vice President of Lead On informed me that the pool for Black male educators in Lead On currently is 10% (personal communication, May 3, 2020) . This connects to the fact that alternative ed programs are a big producer of Black educators, but this pool is still small. Given that my research was limited to one major city in the Midwest, I was unable to tap into the Black Lead on educator pools that they have in southern states. The smaller pool size to find Black educator Lead On alum coupled with participants demanding work schedules was tough. The participants consisted of current corps members and alum dating back to 2006. Narratives from teachers with more tenure may have had more opportunities to connect with CI (since Lead On has moved away from that language and began using foundations). This qualitative study was not a longitudinal one. Participants had to recall on experiences from their own childhood and from when they were within the Lead On program. Depending on the length of their experience and how far out they had been from their alternative certifying experience, could lead to some participants providing more descriptors that others. The fact that no attempt has been made to label the number of emergent themes (count how many times a certain theme appears within the different narratives collectively) within the narratives to any other common themes or trends that have been identified in the data can be viewed as a limitation. Rare phenomena/ emerging themes alone can hold the same amount of attention as more frequent phenomena.

Though these limitations exist, the end resulting goal of this qualitative analysis is a complete, detailed description of Black educators. These rich stories and their findings are what the contributing goal is for this research. The stories and narratives of these educators' matter. The thick description, unique stories, values and beliefs that is provided because the qualitive

research allows for open-ended inquiry is why I selected it. I have been privy to some sensitive, personal, and expansive material. I have chosen this method to illuminate and often silenced voice and care for it wisely

Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic shared in the introduction to their third edition

of *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, "Our social world, with its rules, practices, and

assignments of prestige and power, is not fixed; rather, we construct with its words, stories and

silence. But we need not acquiesce in arrangements that are unfair and one-sided. By writing and

speaking against them, we may hope to contribute to a better, fairer world" (2013). As CRT

scholars, Delgado and Stefancic are highlighting the power of the counter story. Below are the

profiles of the participants in this research. In alignment with CRT goals, their reflections around

their experience as a Black student, and their learnings as they explored their identities as a

Black person and educator are highlighted.

Meet Brenda Brown
Educational Background

 Brenda grew up in a major urban city located a few hours away from the city where she teaches.

She went to both public and private schools as a child. She attended schools where her peers

were predominately white. A descendant of educators, she describes her mother's sorority

sisters, grandmother and aunts as very Afro-centric personalities within her life. She was

exposed to critical facts about Black history growing up and notes one white educator that

actually had a big influence on her. When thinking about teachers that she felt she academically

challenged, she reflected on her 6th grade history teacher. He was a white male that was married

to a Black woman "and all the students knew it" *(*B. Brown, personal communication, September

17, 2019).When Brenda reflects on this teacher, she smiles. She recalls this teacher being an

advocate for her in a space where many didn't look like her. She often compares her own

teaching to his teachings. She studied Art education in college and found it hard to find work. She did other roles within corporate America for a few years before joining Lead On.

Lead On Experience

Brenda was a part of Lead On from 2009 until 2011. She entered Lead On as a "non-traditional" participant. This means she did not join right out of college and was older than most of the members that joined with her. She completed her two-year commitment to the organization and then worked for them supporting their summer training programs while continuing to teach. She eventually applied to work with Lead On full time and only did this for one year before returning to a school building into a school building. She reflects on her time there being tough on her identity and mind frame. She appreciates the knowledge and opportunities she gained throughout her experience, but found herself committed to this work due to the support given at her school site. She is currently still teaching at the school where she worked during her Lead On commitment.

Thoughts on Race and How It Shows Up in the Classroom

"I'm Black". Yet, I also realize that like not every Black person is the same and I learned that going to an HBCU, that not every Black person is the same. And so, my blackness, from my city blackness is not the same as the blackness where I teach now. It's just not the same. My parochial school blackness is just not the same as a public-school blackness. There're just different layers of blackness. And so, I had to navigate that, being in a different city and having a different

background than my students. I didn't necessarily feel that I always identified with them. *(B. Brown, personal communication, September 17, 2019).*

Overall Thoughts on Critical Influence

Closing the achievement gap has taken an emotional toll on me, but I am managing it. I know that the weight of institutional racism often falls on the shoulders of educators who teach in marginalized communities. That is a lot for anyone to carry. But we, especially, take it home with us, go to church with it, sit up in bed with it, watch the news with it, eat with it. We know the realities of food deserts, lack of prenatal education and care, drug and alcohol abuse, lack of adequate sex education, domestic violence, stigmas around mental illness, and generational poverty. We breathe it. We often internalize it. So, without support, including mental health support, our teachers won't survive without the job itself doing damage to that educator mentally and emotionally. *(B. Brown, email communication, October 6, 2019).*

Meet Danielle Jackson
Educational Background

Danielle grew up in a two-parent home on the southeast side of a major urban city. She is the second oldest of 5 siblings. She went to neighboring public elementary and high schools while growing up. During this time, she developed strong networking skills. She reached out to people for resources, connections, and work. She went off to an HBCU for her undergrad and represents it proudly. Her accomplishments have seemed to become a pillar for her family. She is the only sibling to have graduated from college and she is a support system for them.

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Lead On Experience

Danielle joined Lead On in 2017 and stayed in her school placement until 2019. She continued to teach and is looked upon as a staple within her school community among colleagues. Danielle was brought to my attention by one of her (anonymous) colleagues who shared that "If you are looking for someone with Critical Influence, she is one to speak to". My experience at Lead On was an influential opportunity! I was able to network with so many people (D. Jackson, personal communication, September 19, 2019). It was a stepping stone to help her get to her goals within education. She was not clear what she wanted to go into in school. She studied business and communications. She now knows she wants to be in the work for years and potentially seek to be a school leader someday.

Thoughts on Race and How It Shows Up in the Classroom

There's the feeling of the fact that these are my babies. There's the feeling of how you don't want them to be another statistic. I also tend to look at students and visualize where they will be in 10 years and I have seen it over and over where someone is, to use the old term, on skid row, and wonder where, what, what happened that put them in that position and you try your best to prevent those kinds of soft skill deficits from keeping your students back. Whether its discipline, study habits, time management. self-control, responsibility, all of those things, those soft skills that aren't not on standardized test. Sometimes, I see those things in my students and I just cringe at the thought of them in 10 years, not being able to Be self-sufficient, productive scholars on their way to college. That scares me. (D. Jackson, personal communication, October 18, 2019).

Overall Thoughts on Critical Influence

Danielle says it's about being herself. She carries her mother, her grandmother, and aunts within her in each iteration with a student and their families. "I think they believe I have a Critical Influence because I have really great relationships with kids. I am not doing anything special. I am just being me. Being real." (D. Jackson, personal communication, September 19, 2019).

Meet Tiffany Connell
Educational Background

Tiffany is a bi-racial lesbian woman that shares narratives of an unstable upbringing. She was raised in the suburbs of a major urban city that she currently teaches in. She was raised by a white mother who had been raped by a Black man. She often felt isolated when it came to her identity within the private Christian school settings she attended. She shared that often people would ask if she was from a Latinx background. Tiffany shared a lot in her narratives around the influence of colorism *(as discussed in the literature review)* has had on her life. In high school, she expressed she did not have many connections to teachers. She had to "fight" her way to be accepted into AP courses and she often felt her teachers looked down on her. Tiffany states, "When I finally made it into the honors program, I was like, literally the only person of color in my classes, even though my high school was majority people of color." (T. Connell, personal communication, September 21, 2019). She did note that she had a counselor that was supportive of her, but due to the fact that the majority of people in her school were white, she never really felt connected to anyone. After coming out to her mother, she was kicked out of her home and lived with her grandparents. She took care of herself from then on.

Lead On Experience

Tiffany entered into Lead On in 2013 a little reluctantly and served her two-year commitment until 2015. She was volunteering at a public-school system through a program at her college. She had heard a ton of negative talk about the program at the school she was working at, but her university counselor shared that she should consider Lead On as it was very mission aligned to her own goals. She applied and was accepted during their first deadline. She thought she was going to go into music education but Lead On did not place teachers into those fields. She was placed into middle school and has taught at her placement school for the past seven years. When she first came to Lead On, they placed her in a summer training class to teach Spanish. This is where she had to have the tough conversation around the fact that she was a Black woman and not Latina. She describes herself as an outspoken member of the organization. She was placed with a Black woman mentor within the program and shares this is what helped her as she entered this career. She often felt appreciated because the organization would seek out her feedback around its diversity trainings. She eventually began to work for their summer programs to deliver diversity trainings. This abruptly ended last summer when they did not make an offer for her to come back. She explains she still has not been informed why she was not offered to come back (even though her White wife was offered a position). She shares she is currently disappointed in them right now. She feels a lot of work was put in to grow the identity work in the program that now is being lost.

Thoughts on Race and How It Shows Up in the Classroom

I can empathize with the shared experience of the community. And that's not necessarily anything different than any other black people. I want to name this not every black educator has the shared experience of the African American experience. I'll give you an example, during my Lead On training there was an incident that took place. One of the core members who was with us, he wanted to kind of be a voice, kinda like that go-between. He was of African ancestry, but he was not African American in that respect. He was born in America, but his parents were immigrants were like West African immigrants. And so, he did not have the African American experience. He was black, he was African, he was in America, but he did not have the African American experience. He did not relate to what the other African American coworkers were saying. He felt very uncomfortable and, and was very much unable to speak to what we were seeing and saying because I wouldn't say he was assimilated, but maybe that would be the best way to, to use it. Because, you know, unfortunately when we have people from different parts of the diaspora were coming into the African American community or into our space or seeing the things that we're going through, they see it from a different, more global perspective, which unfortunately is, is heavily the dominant culture, the, the more colonial colonialist mindset as opposed to the, you know, um, the, the, the mindset of, of a group of oppressed people. And so, he didn't really see his experience, his mindset, everything that he saw was from the perspective of the oppressor. He was the safe Negro...and so I don't want to assume that all African American teachers or all black teachers have the same type of shared community experience, because he certainly didn't. The Black experience that I have, that I bring to my teaching, I think it's pretty much the same as most African Americans. For the most of us, even if we don't share

the exact same socioeconomic background as our students, there is a cleared history. You know, there's some facts that we know there is a shared fear in America. There's a shared, sense of achievement when we cross certain thresholds and in our academic careers, there's all these things that come with being black in America and I just bring all of that, all of that I bring to it, there's a joy. (T. Connell, personal communication, October 20, 2019).

Overall Thoughts on Critical Influence

Tiffany shared that the Critical Influence she has is only possible because of the one her colleagues have had on her.

I feel like I'm in like the Renaissance of my teaching right now and I just, I, you know, and I'm seven years in, so I'm thinking about people who are, you started being an admin in year three or your fourth. I don't know how. I mean, I'm just like, you know, you just don't know until you know, and you have to live to know you. Like you have to experience so many things and, and I'm still a baby teacher at my school compared to the rest of the staff. And that's another thing that we could talk about too because I was, I'm very blessed with, with the group of people that I have raised me as a teacher, like have surrounded me as a teacher and, and I don't think that a lot of core members get that. But eh, the same time I did things that made that happen for me that I don't see other members do…I'm not sure if I would have had that kind of impact if I were in a different school. Like where I would be the only like black person. I don't know. I think that where I am, the fact that they see I'm a black female principal, they see, you know, African American teachers all over, like most of the schools, African American teachers, you know, even for the specials classes and excuse me, really all over. As a school we're having a Critical

Influence because there are so many of us, as an individual teacher, I think that I am, even if it's just a drop in the bucket, you know, the Bible says that one plant, the seed, another one waters, the God gives the increase. And so, I feel like even if I'm just planting a seed, then maybe another African American teacher waters the seeds, you know, that ultimately there will be an increase in that child's life. It's a collective effort of those of us working in this, in this field and in this particular school and community. (T. Connell, personal communication, October 20, 2019).

Meet Aisha Griffin
Educational Background

Aisha and her little sister were raised by a single Black mother. She grew up in a rural area. There were only a few schools that kids went to where she grew up. She shared how her mother worked hard all throughout her childhood. She had a hard time recalling school earlier than fourth grade. She noted that she remembered not enjoying reading and for some reason Spanish and Art class stood out in her memory. It wasn't until fourth grade that she met a teacher that instilled a new love for learning. She switched schools a few times as things were bad at home. She recalls that her school did not have too many students that looked like her. She encountered more students of color when she entered middle school. During this time, She felt that she found support with math and reading from her teachers. She was placed into honors classes by the time she got into 7th grade. Aisha shares that it was her 8th grade teacher, the first Black teacher she had, that motivated her. Aisha shares,

But uh, she was the first [Black] teacher I had and it was an English class, which is my favorite and she would make us do a lot. When you got done early with her work, she always had stuff on

the like walls or like this is what you do if you get finished early and one of the options for if you got finished early, I remember, it was like you could journal, you could write a note, you could like read a book. It was the first teacher I ever knew of that allowed us to write notes to people. You know what I mean? Like normally it would be like do this, do that. But I think because it was like writing too, she would just be like, write a note to your friend. I remember getting so excited to do this. (A. Griffin, personal communication, October 12, 2019).

 This teacher supported Aisha in her high school process. Aisha was selected to participate in a program where the students would be tracked from their freshman year through senior year. She took all honors courses and was in a program that prepared high school students who were interested in going into education. She shared that this program opened up doors for her that others in her community did not have.

Lead On Experience

Aisha went to college for education and while in school she worked as a campus supporter for the Lead On program. During her junior and senior year in college, she supported getting other students to come and hear about the program from their recruiters. She eventually applied and joined Lead On herself in 2009. After her two years, she continued to teach and worked for Lead On during the summers teaching their summer curriculum. She eventually applied to work for the organization full time and was initially turned down. She continued to support the organization as they reached out for her to work their summer programs as a diversity leader and eventually a summer school leader. She now is a school leader in one of the

toughest neighborhoods of her city. She has enjoyed her time at Lead On and continues to support developing their diversity curriculum on a regular basis

Thoughts on Race and How It Shows Up in the Classroom

My background and lived experience have allowed me to connected with students and their families that have lasted for years. When I work with my students, I share my story with them. They have learned about my struggles in college, insights I have learned growing up, and have a clear understanding about why I feel I have grown into a magical Black woman. Understanding my journey, listening to theirs, and making connections is the power in my room (A. Griffin, personal communication, October 23, 2019)

Overall Thoughts on Critical Influence

Aisha struggled to answer the question, how does she know she is having a Critical Influence. She would go back and forth around how this is such a tough question and how that is hard to define. She ultimately landed on it being the fact that students that she has had throughout the years come back to her and tell her the impact she had on their lives. She mentions that she frequently sees former students who are now in their own careers, have their own families, and they tell her that her stories, her no-nonsense attitude, and her love meant a lot to them. "My students are the living proof of the Critical Influence I have had. My work is not nearly done, and it is so hard, but each moment I have to see living proof of that influence motivates me to continue. I have a *Critical Influence* because I am still here." (A. Griffin, personal communication, October 23, 2019)

Meet Aniya Crawford
Educational Background

Aniya is a young, Black, woman that grew up in one of the toughest neighborhoods in a major urban city. This is the same neighborhood that she currently teaches in. She was raised by her grandmother and often describes herself growing up as a trouble maker. She was attending public schools in her areas and that didn't change until 8th grade, when in 8th grade, a Black, male teacher reached out to her and her grandmother and asked her if they would be interested in a program called Tigers. This program partnered students with a mentor throughout high school. Alongside the mentor, they had mandatory weekend sessions where they tutored students, discussed college, took them on field trips, and developed strong life habits within them. The program was also big on uplifting culture. It was open to Black students in need. Students accepted into the program had to go to a private high school. Aniya got put into the private school and instantly revolted.

> I would get in a lot of trouble and felt like I would never see any of her friends. A few other Black students that went to my school were never in the honor and AP classes I was in. I convinced my grandmother to transfer me to another neighboring school that a lot of my friends went to. When I got there, I noticed a big gap in education between the two schools, but never said anything. It wasn't until the Tigers program noticed and forced me to go back to the private school. I worked hard to go to an extremely selective university despite the lack of support from my school counselors. Who told me to look at other schools. (A. Crawford personal communication, November 16, 2019).

She gives a lot of credit to the person she is today to her mentor and to the teacher that introduced her to this program.

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Lead On Experience

Aniya joined Lead On in 2015 and served her two-year commitment until 2017. She has continued to work in her placement school. When she is asked what her next steps are she seems unsure. She is not sure if she wants to continue teaching, move into leadership, or do something aligned with her collegiate studies (law). She shares that she continues to stay in this work because of her students. "I have no clue where I will be in five years, but I enter each day refreshed. There is a lot that goes on within my school, but they [the students] keep me in this work. I think about how someone was there…has been there for me. I am in this for them" (A. Crawford personal communication, November 16, 2019).

Thoughts on Race and How It Shows Up in the Classroom

I think a lot of it is the ability to keep it real. Black teachers always kept it real with me and I try to do that for my students. I am not sugar coating anything. I am pushing them to the highest of heights and I am assuring them about the greatness they come from and the pressures in the world that will be against them. Let me be clear, I do this in a direct and loving way, but I think it is important for them to learn where it will be hard alongside the fact how they come from such a powerful line of ancestors. (A. Crawford personal communication, November 16, 2019)

Overall Thoughts on Critical Influence

Aniya believes critical influence is shown through her students' success. When students come to her and share their collegiate goals, or when families tell her that their students have made a change in behavior since being in her class she calls this a win.

I WAS my students. It took someone to care for me, push me, and not give up on me to see an impact. I view my work the same. I know I am having a Critical Influence when those hopes and desires change within my students. They are a part of me. Their success is my success. (A. Crawford personal communication, November 16, 2019)

Meet Lindsey Woodard
Educational Background

Lindsey was raised in an upper middle class two-parent household in the suburb of the same major urban city she works in. Her parents stressed to her the importance of a quality education and what that means as a Black woman. She went to top tier schools in her community and often was one of few Black friends in her circles. Her family was very close to their extended family. Even when she did not have a lot of people that look like her in her school or community, she spent a lot of time "down south" with family. She shares she was taught how to take pride in who she is and fight for what is right in every space that she is in. She went to schools and often felt that she could accomplish anything. She grew up dreaming that one day she could even run the world.

Lead On Experience

Lindsey joined Lead On in 2006 and served her two-year commitment until 2008. Within her narratives, she was a part of the organization while it was still developing its identity and diversity work for all of its members. She has utilized its resources to become the educational leader she is today. She worked with the organization for many summers on their training programs. She was placed in a charter network when she initially joined in 2006 and continues to

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work within that network as a school leader. She has supported multiple schools within her network. She keeps close ties with the organization by participating and attending events that they hold. She spends most of her time supporting and working within her own network.

Thoughts on Race and How It Shows Up in the Classroom

There is so much history that plays into this. Students experience a distrust for white people. This can be due to things they have heard from their parents and family, things they have experienced themselves, TV and the news, and more. So this comes into play in the classroom. As a Black educator, I may not have to work as hard as a white educator to build trust this my students. Please note, this is not an automatic trust, it just doesn't take as long or as hard. There are some white teachers that talk and act just like our students have seen in the world. They are individualist and its hard to connect with them. I tap into my community and I am hear for them. ((L. Woodard, personal communication, December 14, 2019).

Overall Thoughts on Critical Influence

She is committed to supporting Black and Brown students. Lindsey's narrative informs me that she feels "called" to do this work. She often describes her work as her ministry. In particular she feels called to motivate and inspire young Black and Brown ladies. She shared her stories and struggles around self-love and care as a young girl of color. She wants to ensure not only is she pushing academic success for her students, but her Critical Influence is shown through the social emotional supports that she gives.

V. Findings
Black Teacher Identity- A Personal Counter Narrative

   In my first year of teaching, I experienced an important, public, identity-affirming

moment.   I decided to cut my hair and go natural. As a Black woman, hair has always been an

area of insecurity and I knew this would be something that many of my students, particularly the

young ladies, would have a hard time understanding. Despite all this, I walked through the door

of my school the next day and still remember the faces of the people who saw me first. Students,

their eyes shifting from my hair to my face, exclaimed "Why did you cut off all of your hair!?"

"OMG, I can't believe you would cut off that 'good hair'!" Students that I didn't even teach

took a peek through my classroom door just to see what I had done. My initial responses were

"Because I wanted to," or "I have always wanted to grow dreadlocks". Later, that day, a co-

worker pulled me into her room and began to share the history of locs. She challenged me to

move away from the term dreads, because "Black hair isn't dreadful." She explained to me what

it meant to have locs and affirmed my choice to embrace an aspect of my identity that I had

internalized growing up as something to be anxious over. She gave me language to share with

my students about this process. I felt like she had welcomed me home. I left her room and felt

the weight of my history in this decision. It was the first time where I had fully realized that

pieces of my identity were actually teachable moments for my students. From that day forward,

my history. My identity. My story became lessons. *(Gore, Personal Narrative, 2019)*

Findings Description

   The purpose of this study was to explore Critical Influence, what it means and how Black

Lead On educators are attempting to live it out within their classroom/professional practices.

Narratives were the most appropriate avenue to gain knowledge about these areas. One of the

central tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT) is to gain understanding from the experiential knowledge of people of color. Black teachers in this work are integral to analyzing racial inequities in education. Due to the reality that the voice of Black teachers is often left out of the conversation of education (Foster, 1997) and the alarming low numbers of Black teacher retention and recruitment, this work aims to amplify the narratives of Black teachers that went through an alternative certifying program. The literature review shared that 77% of Black Educators in the U.S. have gone through an alternative certifying program (Barnum, 2018). This chapter presents the key findings obtained from three in-depth "story telling sessions" from *Lead On* Black educators that are still working within public K-12 education. CRT helped shape the methodology on how the research obtained the narratives (through an emic approach). This in turn illuminates how the theory of Critical Influence is perceived and realized within the work. This has been analyzed through the Cultural Relevant Pedagogy framework.

At this time, it is important to consider that analysis involves interpretation. Because the data are analyzed to build an understanding of the meanings our participants give in relation to the events, their background, and experiences within their own stories, analysis and interpretation must work in conjunction with each other (Atieno, 2009). When reflecting on Critical Influence, five major themes emerge from the narratives. These themes were analyzed and coded through the lens of the Principles of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (based on the research from Brown and Cooper) that is listed on page 32.

1. **Identity Development:** Participants describe their journey of becoming educators in a cyclical fashion that resembles Beverly Tatum's *Stages of Identity (*1992)—to be discussed

below. As they are working to support their students, they are experiencing their own development and what it means to be a Black educator.

2. **Equity and Excellence:** Inside their own experience as a student, an opportunity occurred that was "door opening". This is viewed as a defining moment that empowered them as a Black student, fuels them as an educator, and provides their moral purpose.

3. **Teaching the Whole Child/ Manage Student Emotions/ Developmental Appropriateness:** Participants spent time explaining how they incorporate social emotional and habit development within their curriculum. Their narratives focus on the development of pride and hope occurring often and early in their classrooms.

4. **Student Teacher Relationships:** In a system that makes it hard to implement restorative practices in the classroom, these Black educators have been successful because of the relationships they have built.

5. **Commitment:** Participants have committed to this work and note the relationships of their students, fellow Black staff members, and their Black school leader as a contributor of this commitment.

Following is a description of the above findings with specifics that expounds on each finding. Utilizing "thick description" allows for documentation that includes the context, detail, and emotion in order to better understand the reality of each research participant (Ponterotto, 2006). In an effort to capture and provide a platform for the voice of the Black educator, quotations taken from the narratives will demonstrate all of the participant's experiences. When needed, descriptive details and information about individual narratives have been provided to further triangulate the data.

FINDING 1: IDENITY DEVELOPMENT- All of the participants describe their journey of becoming educators in a cyclical fashion that resembles Beverly Tatum's Stages of Identity (1992) for people of color.

The cycle of personal identity development and (re)commitment to educating Black children was evidence within each participant during their onboarding and journey as an educator. Though their journeys as students differed, they shared similarities in what racial identity experiences occurred while becoming and sustaining as educators. I interviewed six Black women whose experiences in education ranged from 5-14 years. These women shared their stories from the comfort of their homes. They all came from different hometowns, taught different grade levels, had different family structures growing up, and had different motivations around what brought them to this work. Yet, their paths diverged when it came to identity development within their work.

Beverly Tatum discusses, in *Why are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?": and Other Conversations about Race*, five stages of racial identity people of color go through (2017). She lists them as: Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion, Internalization, and Commitment [1]. Given the level of hyper segregation that now occurs in today's schools and communities, these participants shared the cycles of racial development they have gone through as they entered *Lead on* and feeling a pressing need to serve students that look like them. The story telling session began with a description of their own childhood., The participants often compared their own learning experiences to what they try to recreate or avoid creating for their students, and/or connected it to their own purpose within this work. It was clear that their childhood experiences are tightly woven within their identity as an educator.

Participants described their journey of becoming educators in a cyclical fashion that resembles Beverly Tatum's *Stages of Identity (*1992). Their experience was unique because it happened alongside the development of their students. Entering into a majority white workforce but servicing majority Black students creates an environment where the participants spend time thinking about their own identities and impact within the classroom. The teachers shared their reflections from the moment they began within the alternative program, the different stages of identity development as Black educators, and the challenges that arise while also trying to develop identities of their Black students. Experts acknowledge race identity is circular not linear. Middle-adulthood may be the most difficult time to struggle with racial identity because of one's increased responsibilities and increased potential for opportunities (Tatum, 2017).

Brenda Identity and Self Awareness Journey

Brenda sat on her bed as she told her children that she would be busy for a little bit. I heard a door shut and she looked at me and immediately shared how passionate she was about this topic. Critical Influence was an important topic of discussion among herself and her colleagues as she focused on how to have the biggest impact on students and families within this work. Throughout Brenda's decade long tenure, she has seen a lot of schoolwide priorities come and go, but impacting her students is what she cares about most. It was obvious when asked about her students.

Yeah, I mean I was thinking, I was definitely thinking about the Critical Influence I am trying to have on my students. I was thinking about how my teaching has affected me, how it's changed me, what kind of person I've become, what kind of support that I've needed since I've started

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teaching and there's a lot that has changed since I became a teacher. There's a lot of self-awareness that I've experienced and I'm kind of still on that journey now...So I kind of try to make them [students] aware of the perception of African-Americans in the world at large, but I also don't want them to feel stigmatized by their ways. I've often had conversations with them where ... When I was teaching third grade, I remember sometimes they would say to each other in a derogatory manner ... They would say stuff like, "Oh, you Black. You Black", and stuff like that. And I was like, "Well thank you." I told them if somebody calls you Black, tell them thank you, because that's a compliment. And quite honestly, we're all Black, so just say thank you and let's move on with our lives because it is absolutely nothing wrong with being Black. I said, "I'm Black". Yet, I also realize that like not every Black person is the same and I learned that going to an HBCU, that not every Black person is the same. And so, my blackness, from my city blackness is not the same as the blackness where I teach now. It's just not the same. My parochial school blackness is just not the same as a public-school blackness. There're just different layers of blackness. And so I had to navigate that, being in a different city and having a different background than my students. I didn't necessarily feel that I always identified with them. *(*B. Brown, personal communication, September 17, 2019).

Danielle's Shapes her Identity Through Authentic Voice

Danielle is in her third year of teaching. She came highly recommended by a colleague as someone who is in this work to have a Critical Influence. Danielle sat on her coach with a Spelman hoodie on. The African sculptures and artwork looming behind her showcased the value she places on her heritage. In our second story telling session together, Danielle opened up about

her identity at school. She began to describe her approach to culture in the classroom as balancing "her authentic voice" with the initiatives of her school administration. Danielle shared,

I see so much of my grandmother in me, but a lot is different too. Even though my grandmother wasn't necessarily like that in terms of her teaching ... She was an educator too, but my grandmother... She did not code switch or anything like that. She was very old school, very prim and proper. I do take my cues from more of a matriarchal style of teaching like her, while trying to adopt a style my school is pushing for which is called the No-Nonsense Nurturer. I am trying, but still hold on to my own philosophy and identity as a teacher because, I don't fully buy into the No-Nonsense Nurturing model because it's got a very rigid approach to it. And I feel like our kids are far too complex to, to be pigeonholed into a rigid model of teaching. I ascribe to it when my coaches are in my classroom or when my administrators are in my classroom, but when they're gone Mama Johnson comes out and I have those "Come to Jesus" moments with my kids. (D. Jackson, personal communication, September 19, 2019)

Tiffany Constantly Has to Define Her identity

I was initially perplexed when I saw Tiffany's photo pop up on my screen as a response to my recruitment post. The fair-skinned, red haired woman smiling in her photo must have mistaken the requirement for Black educators. But when she sat in her all white home office room, her freckled covered face looking at me from the computer screen, I could immediately tell this was a black woman. As we spoke longer, I learned she is a Black woman with seven years of experience in education, two years as a volunteer in college, with a very unique perspective on Critical Influence. Tiffany explained,

Well first of all being like white passing, I think it's like inherently difficult. And then being a situation like Lead On where you're wearing your identity on your sleeve the whole time, you're going through all of these experiences with people that have leveling understandings of like race. You know, there were a lot of members of the organization that I think saw me automatically like, 'Oh she's just a white girl' and didn't understand my identity or downplayed my blackness because I have light-skin. And so, it was kind of a challenge. (T. Connell, personal communication, September 21, 2019).

Critical Race Theory highlights the need to understand the counter narrative of how race is perceived and experienced of those directly impacted by racism. These narratives reflect the identity development that the participants have gone and continue to go through. As I reflect on identity development in Black educators, and the narratives of our participants, I pondered on the following questions:

- **How are Black educators being supported in identity work as they are being trained to become educators?**

Beverly Tatum shared that identity development is continual which is confirmed through the responses of my participants.

"…And that's another thing that we could talk about too because I was, I'm very blessed with them, with the group of people that have raised me as a teacher and like my coworkers and admin surrounded me as a teacher and, and I don't think that a lot of other Lead On members get that, but at the same time I did things that made that happen for me that I don't see other Lead On members do." (T. Connell, personal communication, September 21, 2019).

- **How does trauma (individual and experienced through their students) play into the identity development process?**

I didn't start taking care of myself, my mental health, until my seventh year in education…So, this goes into self-care. This is the journey that I'm on, full disclosure, the journey that I'm on. After I joined Lead On ... When I was at Lead On, I realized that there were some gaps in the way that I was able to perform as a mentor to other teachers, and I was trying to figure out why were those gaps there when I was a high-achieving person. I'm a high-achieving person by nature and I couldn't figure out why I had these gaps in my performance as a mentor to others…I'm teaching, I was very unorganized. I was very tired. Then I was pregnant, so that didn't make it and better. I was very easy to flip and snap, so I ended up having some mental health diagnoses. Eventually after I had my son, I decided, you know what, enough is enough. Let me talk to someone. It was so much impacting me. I had students murdered in front of my school. This is one major experience that I know impacted me. It wasn't until I went to get the support I needed to deal with the depression I was facing that I was able to improve in my work as well. (B. Brown, personal communication, October 6, 2019).

My research suggests that the identity work they experienced as children plays into how they approach it as teachers. Whether they fought to understand their identity or were given it at home. They all can recall a person in their educational history that added to the development of who they were as a Black person. These moments have stayed with them as they try to replicate it for their own students. This suggests that there is more work that could be done to support the Black educators that enter into this program around their own identity work. They seem to feel like they enter the space as voices for their students, representatives for families, and monitors of

the misinform. Yet, outside of a conference or two that periodically, there isn't much that is

shared around their continual identity work within their coaching and development. A question I

will reflect on at the end of this is around which areas that are not being addressed within identity

development for teachers that are not moving into a commitment stage and leaving education?

FINDING 2: 100% of participants share that within their own educational experience as a student, an opportunity that occurred that was "door opening". This was viewed as a defining moment that empowered them as a Black student, fuels them as an educator, and provides them moral purpose.

When reflecting on Critical Influence, all of the participants share a narrative around their

childhood that uncovered this catalytic moment and/or person within their academic career. This

moment involved an opportunity or awareness that they were "defying the odds" given their

racial background. The participants speak to their own level of excellence in an equitable system

that now fuels how they push their own students to reach a high bar. This phenomenon is

typically described as an Encounter or Immersion stage within their racial development. When

participants are sharing a narrative where they are "encountering" the harsh realities of growing

up Black, they have an academic moment that provides success and feelings of hope. There is

even a sense that being selected into the alternative program positioned them to be someone who

has "made" it. Being accepted marked another moment where they received an opportunity not

common to those that look like them. When participants are sharing moments of being *immersed*

within their culture, they describe similar feelings of hope and success. These moments are what

wrapped their hearts within this work and provides fuel for them to make a critical influence on

their students as referenced frequently in their stories. This supports the bar of excellence in

education that Black educators often hold for their Black students.

Equity and Excellence

In every teacher's educational experience as a student, there was an opportunity that was *door opening*. This empowered them as a Black student and now fuels them as an educator. . Multiple recent studies have shown a significant difference in the academic impact of teachers that identify as people of color on students of color.

Teachers of color tend to have more positive perceptions of students of color—both academically and behaviorally—than other teachers do. A recent study found that African American teachers are less likely than white teachers to perceive African American students' behavior as disruptive. Likewise, when a black student has both a nonblack teacher and a black teacher, the black teacher tends to have a much higher estimation of the student's academic abilities than the nonblack teacher. (Partelow, Spong, Brown, & Johnson, 2017, para.8). This highlights some of the benefits that occurs when Black students have Black teachers. The narratives collected in this research suggest that these teachers expect excellence from their students because they experienced excellence themselves. The integration of excellence and equity in CRP is predicated upon establishing a curriculum that is inclusive of students' cultural experiences and setting high expectations for the students to reach (Brown et al, 2011).

Aisha Felt Chosen

Aisha is in her 11th year in education. She is a classroom instructor turned school leader. In her narratives, she reflects a ton of the opportunities she experienced that she felt others within her community did not.

Her name was Ms. Swanson. Like I love Ms. Swanson now as an adult. We're like friends on Facebook and everything. Ms. Swanson was representative of me. To me that like something else was possible. So, my mom was working, you know, 70, at least 70 hours a weekend, you know, fast food, restaurant management, all this stuff. And things were like really tough. My mom always told me I was to go to college, I'm supposed to do all these things, but I hadn't seen it. And so, Ms. Swanson for me was just representative of all the things people believed I could do that like somebody had done them...But what I did know was that something was wrong with the fact that all the school, the kids in my neighborhood, when I came to school, I ain't see them all day. (A. Griffin, personal communication, October 12, 2019).

An Opportunity That Changed Me

Aniya is in her fifth year working in education. She works in the very neighborhood she grew up in. She sat on her couch with her Pomona University crew shirt on. She seemed so young, energetic, and on fire for the work that she does. Aniya began telling me about her family structure. She was raised by her grandmother in one of the poorest neighborhoods of her city. She shares her story with pride,

I was picked to be in a program, Lions, in 8th grade where you are given a mentor and they pay for you to go to a private high school in the city. My 8th grade teacher told me about it because he and his wife were mentors in the program. It was for Black kids and all of the mentors were Black. This program changed my life even though I fought against it initially. I took the bus from my very urban low-income neighborhood to this private school. The few Black friends that were going to the school never had any classes with me. I was ALWAYS in trouble my first year

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there. Because of Lions help and guidance, I was in all honors and AP courses, but I didn't like the school. During my sophomore year, I told my grandmother I wanted to transfer. She took me out and I went to a neighboring high school where my friends were. I could tell they were behind. All of the material we were doing I had already done. When Lions found out that I had transferred, my mentor worked to get me back into the private school. I didn't feel like any of the teachers there cared about me. I was number 4 in my class and yet my counselor suggested that I look at other schools when I told him I wanted to apply to Ivy Leagues. My mentor from Lions pushed me to do it anyway. I got into every Ivy League school I applied to. (A. Crawford personal communication, November 6, 2019).

I made my opportunity because I Demanded Excellence

My high school was pretty diverse, very diverse school I loved going to high school there. It was like very fun. I was a three-sport athlete. I did orchestra and band and I was just very like involved. Okay. But my sophomore year when we took, I think it was called like the PSAT or something. I took that test and I scored in the 89th percentile for math and reading. But in order to be eligible for honors at my high school, you had to score in the 90th percentile, because they only offered one honors section. And so, I like had my mom come and talk with my teachers and they weren't willing to plug me into honors reading because they said I wasn't high enough. After she kept arguing for it, they agreed to put me in honors math. So, I got into an honors class and then I like had to fight to be an honor the rest of high school. They would always put me in the gen ed classes, and I'd be like, 'I want to take AP' I'm pretty smart. I know I can do this. When I finally made it into the honors program, I was like literally the only person of color in my classes, even though my high school was majority people of color. Like there might've been like

one other person of color in those classes with me. I mean when I think who graduated from my high school, like we're the only people of color who made it. (T. Connell, personal communication, October 13, 2019).

I Was in An Elite Group

When I got accepted into the program I felt like a part of an elite group. There were people who applied with me and did not get in. I was so motivated and driven to do something great for my community. I just didn't realize how much my race was going to be crucial to my work. I think I took it for granted until I was forced to address it daily in not only my personal life, but now my work life as well (B. Brown, personal communication, October 6, 2019).

These Black teachers who have felt that a bar was held high for them now holds the bar high for their students. There is a level of "no opt out" narrative that is shared among these teachers. The narratives leave me wondering what is needed to help teachers internalize and reflect on the bar of excellence they have and how they are seeing that live out in the classroom. It seems that this is where a big part of where *Critical Influence* lives. I am curious to learn what is needed within equity in excellence to see this translate to all Black Educators?

FINDING 3: When sharing their narratives, curriculum held big piece of social emotional support. Participants spent time explaining how they incorporate social emotional and habit development within their curriculum. Their narratives focus on the development of pride and hope occurring often and early in their classrooms.

As participants shared about lessons and curriculum they never described how they approach planning, grading, or the strongest curriculum. The research around social emotional learning (SEL) curriculum shares that "Relationships and emotional processes affect how and

what we learn." (Vega, 2017). The participants in this research share similar value alignment to this statement around the influence of SEL in the classroom. The participants noted how the mechanics of lesson planning were big pieces of their alternative training, but what they developed on their own was how to be identity affirming within their classrooms. Their narratives go beyond introducing their students to Black notables and history, but it is grounded in mindset shifting. Shifting their students thought patterns on what it means to be Black and how to revel within that.

Teaching the Whole Child/ Manage Student Emotions/Developmental Appropriateness.

Participants spend less time discussing the exact curriculum in their narratives but share a focus on the development of pride and hope occurring often and early. When teaching a child wholly, educators must be cognizant of the socio-cultural influences that have attributed to the learning progress of that child even before they enter the classroom. These outside influences must naturally be accounted for when designing a culturally relevant curriculum (Brown et al, 2011). Black teachers who are making a *Critical Influence,* walk into the classroom understanding how their culture can and should influence their practice. Several concepts collectively define Developmental Appropriateness within the context of CRP. These concepts include learning styles, teaching styles, and cultural variation in psychological needs (motivation, morale, engagement, collaboration (Brown et al, 2011).The goal is to assess student's cognitive development progress and incorporate learning activities within the lesson plan that are challenging and culturally relevant (Brown et al, 2011). These teachers share narratives that are

filled with expressions of how the work within their work illuminates the greatness within their Black students.

You Are Royalty

So, when I taught third grade I ... and it's more of a session, like a series of lessons that I did. This was when we were having a conversation about blackness, but I had created a whole PowerPoint and lesson and worksheets and stuff on the African American experience for primary grade. We talked about like Africans before America. We talked about Queen Tiye, Amenhotep, Nefertiti and Mansa Musa and we would talk about them and talk about their contributions to government and to language and to the arts and to science (smiles). And so, I saw more awe from them. There were questions, but more awe from them, and then that's when we really got into the conversation about, when people call you Black as a put down, you don't want to take it as a put down because look at all of these things that people who look just like me and you do or did, hundreds of years ago (B. Brown, personal communication, October 26, 2019).

Aisha's Identity Affirming Philosophy

So, it was kind of more of a series of lessons that I identify with as an educator. In fact, my handle on Instagram is about being a Black cultural educator because I want to impact students' identity at a young age. I want them to see education as an identity-affirming experience at a young age and I'm actively looking towards how I can really apply identity-affirming pedagogy into my STEM teaching, because I'm a STEM teacher. So, I'm going to be really working

towards that this year with this group of kids (A. Crawford personal communication, November 10, 2019).

Being Black is something negative

…And it's hard because these are primary. This is like first grade. So, it's probably easier when you get into middle school and high school to have all kinds of conversations, but in first grade, (long pause) this is when they're slowly starting to identify as Black or identify as a person of color. And so, I think that these years are so formative (sighs). These are so important. So, I really want to encourage them along those lines (T. Connell, personal communication, October 27, 2019).

When sharing their narratives around the topics they feel they must address with their students, it can be traced back to knowledge they gain within their own education narratives. The moments when they learned more about their cultural backgrounds inspired them to recreate experiences they felt impacted themselves.

They Will "Get It"

When I was a kid, I remember learning about the LA riots while it was happening. My mom would sit me down and discuss what it meant and why people were so upset. One day I went to school and I asked a white boy his thoughts on it and he shrugged his shoulders. (Chuckles) I just wanted to know what he was going to say. I will never forget thinking, "He has no clue what is even going on". I want to make sure my kids understand what is going on. Even though they are

young…they are not stupid. They see these things every day (D. Jackson, personal communication, September 28, 2019).

There is so much history within the steps these teachers are taking by providing counter narratives to their students to aide in affirming their identity. There is research that concluded that SEL within the classroom and school can promote academic success and increase positive behavior, such as, reducing classroom misconduct, substance abuse, and emotional distress for. This effectiveness is even greater when family relationships are strong and curriculum is culturally and linguistically sensitive (Dusenbury & Weissberg, 2017). From ancestral history, to disrupting the influence of colorism on their student mindsets, they strive to make every moment a learning moment. After hearing the varied topics each educator felt was crucial to cover with their students, I am left wondering: How does a Black educator continue to develop themselves around these topics? What levels of support does an educator need to have these conversations? It appears to be so natural within their descriptions of this work. Yet, the emotions, pauses, and sighs allow it to also appear as if some of these conversations can be taxing on the spirit.

FINDING 4: In a system that finds it hard to implement restorative practices in the classrooms for Black students, these Black educators have been able to be more successful because of the relationships they have built.

Student Teacher Relationship

Culturally responsive practices naturally lend themselves to a discussion regarding restorative practices in the classroom. This is a practice that is dependent on building strong relationships in the classroom to address discipline and build culture (Lott, 2018). It emphasizes

accountability, making amends and it is often viewed as challenging to accomplish within a school as it attempts to disrupt inequitable discipline practices within education (Sutton, 2020). One of the many challenges of implementing restorative practices is that it can be draining on the teacher to implement. (Sutton, 2020). There are so many relationships to build, trauma to address, and mindsets to shift within students, families, and colleagues. "As its goal, RP seeks to interrupt and halt the school- to-prison pipeline while helping students overcome and cope with trauma. To do this, RP relies on developing relationships with students which enables them to reflect on and repair the harm they have caused" (Sutton, 2020, para.1). These narratives have illuminated the success Black teachers have had building relationships with students. They attribute their success in the classroom to the familial relationships they have built with their students.

Working in a system that has many obstacles for restorative practices, these Black educators have been more successful because of the relationships they have built. "Students must feel that the teacher has their best interest at heart to succeed in implementing CRP" (Brown et al, 2011). For years literature on education and research studies have shared that relationships can be critically important if leveraged right within the life of a student (Sparks, 2019). The narratives I have collected reveal that these Black educators are very aware of this dynamic and use their relationships in intentional ways. From the cultural nuances and collectivist approach (Carson, 2009) to community building within the classroom, Black educators bring a ton with them when it comes to classroom culture and management (Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008).

Respect

I was saying credibility, but I think that that's like a two-edged sword because on one hand, they think that the only people who are smart and go to college and have money are white. And on the other hand, though, they don't respect their white teachers all the time. So, I think it was kind of like a two-edged sword. Like on one hand, they may have respected me because they saw me more as a mother or an auntie type figure in their lives... But on the other hand, because they saw me more of an auntie or mother type figure, they did not see me as having achieved beyond eighth grade or beyond high school. They didn't give me that kind of living the life kind of credibility that they ultimately would aspire to (B. Brown, personal communication, October 26, 2019).

Would I Leave the Classroom?

I have no clue where I will be in five years, but I enter each day refreshed. There is a lot that goes on within my school, but they [the students] keep me in this work. I think about how someone was there…has been there for me. I am in this for them (A. Crawford personal communication, November 16, 2019).

How Do I sustain?

We take on a lot for our students. I am often asked to support with the discipline of the Black children in my school. The others don't know how to *deal* with them. When at the end of the day, all I do is treat them as if they were my own. I am very vocal and I connect with families. Each student is addressed as a case by case basis for me. My connection to them is unique. (A. Griffin, personal communication, October 23, 2019).

When describing areas that are draining for them in this work, it's not grading, not their colleagues, not misbehaviors, but it connects to the experience of repeated trauma (when their students experience trauma or the stress of operating within a school system that was not created to support Black student success. After hearing Brenda's story and how all of the participants are deeply connected to the families and the collectivist environment that thrives in their classrooms, other questions began to emerge. Thinking through the level of trauma that Black students (especially in low income areas) face, I wonder if Black teachers more affected by the trauma that occurs to Black students because they look like them. Given the fact that Black teachers have such a high turn-over rate, I also wonder how many teachers would say they left education because of student trauma related purposes?

FINDING 5: The "Commitment phase" of their work involved having a strong relationship with their school leader of color, colleagues and students.

The retention rates of Black teachers are troubling. Even when I consider the fact that it was hard to recruit Black male teachers in my selected region. Whenever I was connected with a potential Black male participant, I found out they were no longer teaching or working within the selected region for this research. This is why Critical Race Theorist stress the importance or understanding racial identity and collecting counter stories to gain that understanding. Therefore, when the participants were asked about their growth and development since their training began with *Lead On,* it was important to hear the narratives around what keeps them committed to this work. Upon reflection on systemic issues such as figuring out how to support students coming to them with low skill, maintaining drive/hope within the work, and/or thinking what will keep them in this work for years to come, they share it is those around them that sustain them. It

unintentionally happened that all of the participants selected for this research also have Black

school leaders they work for. Within these narratives are trends that show the connections made

with their Black colleagues, Black school leaders, and their students have kept them in this work.

Commitment

　　Participants have committed to this work and note the relationships of their students,

fellow Black colleagues, and their Black school leader as a contributor of this commitment.

Beverly Tatum describes this as, "a personal sense of blackness is translated into a plan of action

or a general sense of commitment to the concerns of blacks as a group, which is sustained over

time" (1992). The teachers involved in this study have outlasted the average retention rate

of Black educators today. "This Black-White teacher retention gap can largely be explained by

Black teachers' experience and education and the challenging school and community contexts in

which these teachers worked. Compared with White teachers who had similar professional

attributes and worked in similar school settings, Black teachers were more likely to stay in

schools serving a larger proportion of Black students and to move to a school that served a

higher proportion of Black students. The marginal probability of Black teachers' retention

received an additional boost with an increase in teachers' observational ratings and math value-

added scores. Stronger school leadership and higher-quality professional development predict a

higher retention rate of more effective Black teachers" (Sun, 2018). The literature, along with

the narratives within this research, suggest that in schools where teachers feel connected, valued,

and part of a greater team that is aligned to a similar mission retains them at higher rates.

Lindsey's School is Her Rock

Lindsey has been in education for 14 years. She is a teacher in the same charter network where she began her high school English teaching career. She addressed what has kept her so long in the work.

The other staff members at my school ... I have a close relationship with other staff members, and I feel very tight with them, even though some of them have left and a lot of faculty have stayed. And the ones who stayed I bonded with. So, I think the reason why I stayed at this particular school is because of my peers and also because we have a lot of support around just being a better teacher. We have a lot more instructional support than I'm sure a lot of schools. And so, I really enjoy that about the school. I probably would not be the kind of educator that I am if it wasn't for the teaching at this school. It's really a diamond in the rough (L. Woodard, personal communication, December 2, 2019).

I Still Have Work to Do

I just don't think that, like, I feel like I'm in like the Renaissance of my teaching right now. And then I just, I, you know, I'm seven years in, so I'm thinking about people who are, who started being an admin in year three or year four. I don't know how, I mean it just like, you know, you just don't know until you know that to live, to know you, like you have to experience so many things and, and I'm still a baby teacher at my school, parents, the staff. And that's another thing that we could talk about too because I was, I'm very blessed with them, with the group of people that have raised me as a teacher and like X surrounded me as a teacher and, and I don't think that a lot of teachers from *Lead On* get that, but at the same time I did things that made that happen

for me that I don't see other teachers from *Lead On* do ((T. Connell, personal communication, October 20, 2019).

I have to be a learner

A lot of people were like, when I was in my first two years they were like, how are you doing all of this? Cause I never doubted myself. I was never like, I can't do this or I'm not capable. They have a lot of sessions about like self-care you know, find the things that, you know, make you feel warm and fuzzy at night and blah, blah, and don't take on too much. They do a lot of that. Like kind of like, I dunno, it's very, um, well it's like, you know, it's made for white people. Yeah. Cool. Let's nurture you, blah, blah, blah. My whole thing is like, okay, no, no, I can do more. Like what you know, like if you know that you're resilient and you can accomplish more and you can say yes to this, first of all, know your limits. But second of all, if you can do it and you feel confident about it, then do it. You can call me cocky. I don't care. I'd rather walk in with the behavior of like, I'm the best teacher here than you know, I can't do this every day. Yeah. I don't, you know, I don't know what I'm doing. Okay. None of us knew what we were doing when we came into the classroom, but I'm not going to pretend like I don't, I'm not gonna. I'm not going to walk around like I don't know what I'm doing. I'm going to walk around like I'm going to learn. I'm going to reach out to my peers. Learn from the veterans in my building. Learn from my parents. I'm going to ask questions. I'm going to lean in hard. (D. Jackson, personal communication, October 18, 2019).

When these teachers share stories about their colleagues and school leadership, they paint pictures of a family, a team on a mission, and a group of people that are highly respected.

Participants shared the impact their colleagues had on their skill development. Some even noted that they felt more growth from colleagues than they did from their alt program. There is some research that now points out lower retention for Black educators specifically due to lack of support, growth, and connection. The research suggests this is largely in part because they are one of a few educators of color in their building (DeRuy, 2016). DeRuy argues,

Ultimately, teachers of all races and ethnicities quit because they don't feel appreciated [as educators generally]. For black teachers, there's often the sense of an added layer of disrespect that is specifically tied to race. "The issues that stifle the development and empowerment of black teachers are so deep seated that it will take honest and critical examinations of school cultures and systemic processes in order for school and district leaders to develop the trust, support, and collegial working environments needed to recruit and retain teachers of color (2016, para.14).

Connecting back to Beverly Tatum's work, the commitment phase is when an "individual has found ways to translate a personal sense of racial identity into ongoing action expressing a sense of commitment to the concerns of Blacks as a group. Prepared to transcend race." (2017). These teachers have to merge their identity personally with their professional work on a daily basis. This takes mental and emotional stretches that can be both challenging and rewarding all at once. The level of commitment that these teachers have made, even when they come from and organization often criticized for low commitment (Hanson, 2016) is phenomenal. CRT legitimizes the experiences of these teachers as critical pieces to understanding the racial inequities that exist. When Black teachers share their stories around what encourages them to stay within this work and what causes them to leave, we must take note. The ability for these

teachers to transcend their work and acknowledge what they attribute this commitment to, the

team of other Black educators that surrounds them. As some of the teachers were reflecting on

how their Black school leaders have made an impact within their work, I wondered if Black

school leaders were providing a Critical Influence on their staff.

VI. Interpretation of Research Question Answers

Participants in the study included six alumni from *Lead On* that currently work in public (traditional and charter) school settings as teachers and school leaders. The schools are located in the same major urban US city with a population of Black students that is 90% or higher. Stories and narratives that shape our lives tend to be written by a small group of people who typically do not represent the subjects within those stories (Registre, 2017). In response, the use of CRT provides a look into counter storytelling to document and introduce stories that raise critical consciousness about the work of Black educators working in a system-built counter to equitable learning for all students. It is important to ground myself with appreciation of the narratives that were placed in my hands. By digging into the narratives, their stories can illuminate, inform, and transform educational practices that support Black Educators. Which, in turn, could develop a system to increase the academic success of Black students (Griffin & Tackie, 2016).

The data was coded, analyzed, and then organized by participants and categorized by using Beverly Tatum's stages of racial identity and Principles of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (based on the research from Brown and Cooper). A thematic analysis was prepared for each finding in the previous chapter and organized to pull out common themes aligned to the Principles of Culturally Relevant pedagogy. Alongside the information from the stories, participants journaled down thoughts around their narratives in between storytelling sessions. This information provided for a thicker description inside of the narratives and clear themes were illuminated between the participants narratives. The questions I asked myself while analyzing the narratives are (Ritchie and Wilson, 2000):

1. What is the context in which the story is told?
2. Where are the gaps, silences, the tensions, the omissions?

3. Who is privileged by these narratives?

4. What positions and relationships do they reinforce?

Based on the findings within the previous chapter, the purpose of this chapter is to share interpretative insights into the data by analyzing each research question. The discussion within these areas uses a CRT lens to deduce the takeaways from each narrative.

Research Question 1: How do Black Lead On educators who subscribe to CI describe what it looks, feels, and sounds like in their classrooms?

When describing what CI looks like within their classrooms and school, the participants often describe a family atmosphere. Within the findings the themes around Equity and Excellence, Student Teacher Relationship, and Teaching the Whole Child represent the patterns that are shared to answer this first research question. According to the trends within the narratives in this research, Black educators that tap into their critical influence do the following things below.

- They easily hold a high bar for their students because they are in tune with how a high bar was held for them. They often use this experience as a jumping point to connect with their students, provide rationale to their students, and use it as their own motivation inside this work.

The following are excerpts from narratives that address this interpretation of the finding:

I speak to them in a way that is very similar to the way like a mom or a grandparent might talk to them. I address them. I even address behaviors and I tell them, look, when people come and visit the classroom, they're seeing little brown kids and they may not think that you all can behave, but we're going to show them that you can behave properly and that you are eager to learn. (B. Brown, personal communication, October 26, 2019).

Even if we [Black educators and students] don't share the exact same socioeconomic background as our students, there is a cleared history. You know, there's some facts that we know there is a shared fear in America. There's a shared, you know, sense of achievement when we, cross certain thresholds and in our academic careers. There's all these things that come with being black in America and I just, I bring all of that, all of that I bring to it, you know, there's a joy. (T. Connell, personal communication, October 27, 2019).

Like I had counselors [in my community] who took [sat] me down to talk about my goals and I had a teacher who would call my momma. And that's not something you really did back then. Like they, you had to be a big deal, you know, but who would call my mom and be like, listen, she got this D like, that's unacceptable. Um, or a teacher who drove me and two other, two or three other kids in their personal car, like down to Vanderbilt. So, we could see Vandy because they thought we could go there. Everybody didn't get that. And so, I was aware of the fact that people got left behind just because they had teachers who did not think they were dope. (A. Griffin, personal communication, October 12, 2019).

There are often descriptions within the narratives where the participants share how they model high expectations for their students and compare it to the high expectations they received from their own family members or past instructors. There is a strong sense of ownership around how the outside world views their students. Their student success is their success both academically and socially. As the narratives describe this excellence bar, the stories paint a trend of participants describing their Critical Influence as the ability to pass on the excellence they achieve to their students. There are multiple pieces of research that share how Black teachers (the literature talks about Black teachers and teachers of color in a broader sense) have greater academic outcomes on Black students due to their perceptions and goals for their students (Partelow, 2017). Partelow States,

 …when a Black student has both a nonblack teacher and a Black teacher, the Black teacher tends to have a much higher estimation of the student's academic abilities that the nonblack teacher…while these mindsets may be unintentional., their prevalence greatly affects students' performance and behavior. Known in education research literature as the 'Pygmalion effect,' a teacher's higher or lower expectations of a student are significantly predictive of the student's future academic outcomes. (2017, para.10).

I recently had the opportunity to sit in on a meeting in Black Ville (meeting area located in within the city I live in). The meeting was discussing an opportunity to build a school for Black students ran by Black educators. A community member in the meeting shared "we are the only race that allows our children to be taught by other people. When you look at families with Asian descent they educate their own. You look at our native brothers, they strive to keep their own. We just allow any ole' body come and teach our kids. It is about time we go back to teaching our

own." (Anonymous, personal communication, September 15, 2019). Conversations like these highlight the need for Black educators because of the bar they hold for kids. These narratives not only contribute to this evidence, but further explain how when the Black educator experiences this high bar for themselves, they tend to return this experience to their own students.

- They are positioned to build strong relationships with their students that resembles a family structure in the classroom. Black teachers that are in tune with their identity and often find it easy to connect with their students use that to their advantage when supporting their students.

The following are excerpts from narratives that address this interpretation of the finding:

"Well, I have more street cred now that I'm seeing little brothers and little sisters of kids that I've had for years. So now I think that they know me, and I know a lot of my parents because I've had their kids before, so I have more credibility from that end. So, I don't have peers who are looking at me like, oh, she's new, she's wet behind the ears. This is her first-year teaching. She doesn't know how to handle a classroom. I don't really have those issues anymore. So, I feel like that's kind of been nipped in the bud and that's one of the reasons why I stay at this school too, in this community, because I can drive down and I'm heading out of the Gardens and I have kids who are literally waiting for me to pull out of the parking lot and wave at me. So, I think I have credibility mostly now." (D. Jackson, personal communication, October 18, 2019).

"And I feel like that the one thing that I've always been consistent with is like if I'm at school and I'm in front of my kids, I'm like with them. Like my mind is not wandering. I'm not doing other things. I'm just in the room with those kids at that moment. And I feel like that presence has

always been like really important for me. So, like maintain and I feel like he modeled that really well. I never felt like he was looking for something else or doing something else or thinking about something else other than what we were doing at the time." (A. Crawford personal communication, November 10, 2019).

The participants thrive on their relationships with their students. You can tell by the smiles on their faces, the laughter, and the heartache shared in the narratives. Here, participants see as much of themselves within their students as their students probably see in them. Supportive research titled, Through Our Eyes: Perceptions and Reflections From Black Teachers, they gathered narratives from Black educators and shared that the relationships that Black teachers make with their Black students is often one of the most crucial pieces of student success. . This research shares, "Teachers of color bring benefits to classrooms beyond content knowledge and pedagogy. As role models, parental figures, and advocates, they can build relationships with students of color that help those students feel connected to their schools." (Griffin & Tackie, 2016). Through these narratives, being Black involves being a member of such a relational culture. Being black defines and affirms their mission as educators. Griffin and Tackie's research explain how the relationships that are built provide an avenue for students to be motivated and driven to succeed because of a strong sense of connection to the school (because their teachers represent what the "school" is for them). In a similar fashion, I see that my research highlights how these same relationships have connected teachers to their work and supports teacher retention.

- They hold themselves responsible for providing identity affirming curriculum and hold tough conversations about race frequently.

The following are excerpts from narratives that address this interpretation of the finding:

I feel like I'm pushing their thinking, you know, more than anything. I want them to see that they don't have, so I'm, I'm going against the comments of black images that they're used to like rappers and that's not to say all athletes are uneducated. I'm not saying that at all, but that they are one-sided possibly. You know, I'm going against the view that African Americans are only rappers and athletes, you know, and that we can be educated, that we can be, um, that we can do anything. And so that we can speak English, that we can write English, that we can think critically, you know. And so, I speak, you know, sometimes when I'm not code switching, I speak differently… (A. Crawford personal communication, November 10, 2019).

He like had us do a lot of like cultural activities and things like, um, like he taught us Tai Chi and like once a week we would go to the multipurpose room and do Tai-Chi or like we spent, we had a clicker fist come in and like do calligraphy with us. And like just all of that just made me think about the world in a different way and like wonder what things are like other places. And I feel like that's kind of how I teach. Like I want my kids to question things. I wouldn't want my kids to like expose themselves to stuff that they have never learned about. Like I spent a lot of time talking to my kids about traveling because I think that traveling is like a really important thing and I travel a lot and I like seriously my first day of school this year I was like, okay, so when everyone turns 18, the first thing you're gonna do, you're gonna vote. And the second thing you're going to do is get a passport. (T. Connell, personal communication, September 21, 2019).

These participants expressed high levels of excitement when discussing race with students and their student's families. Their eyes light up when they run through the conversations they have had with students regarding Black history. They are motivated by the learning moments that occur when they correct a student's language around racial terms and disempowering language. The participants share what knowledge they focus on exposing their students to and convey how the counter narrative must live in their day to day actions. They appear very driven by creating a culturally relevant classroom on a daily basis. It connects back to the quote I made earlier within the introduction from Delpitt about the racism smog (2014) the teachers are trying their best to fight against that and enjoy creating moments of clarity for their students when they learn something new about their own race. It was clear as Delpitt shared these anecdotes how ingrained these narratives are within Black and Brown students. With this in mind, I think about Tiffany's counter narrative when she described the first day of school to me. In alignment to what CRT says about the benefits of counter stories, you can tell she was more than just proud to share this story with me…she was grateful.

We had 300 black men come to our school to greet our students and they were black men from the community. They were either fathers, grandfathers, cousins, uncles, and they came to greet our students and it's grown and grown over the years. Yeah, it was more than 300 black men. And then they, we, all come in for breakfast when they eat with the kids and then they stay. And some of our male teachers on staff, they have a little breakfast and they talk with them and talk about how important it is to have them in our lives. And yeah. So, appreciation. And when I tell you that after we started doing more work like that, when my principal (Black woman) took over. I have fathers lined up on the sidewalk all the way up and down the street from the corner

where the light is all the way to the far corner of our school to protect our kids. You know, I never have to worry because I feel, you know, our kids get to feel safe in the community. [What do you tell your students about why you all do this?] We talked to them about the why. It's very transparent. My principal, I mean you have to meet her, she just says it exactly how it is. She doesn't sugar coat anything. (T. Connell, personal communication, October 27, 2019).

The literature backs these narratives by sharing how important it is for Black students to learn their history. Dillard shares, "Educators help set the tone for how students view themselves and the world. Dismissive attitudes about black history can make a lasting impression on young minds. The key to teaching black history is to not only acknowledge the hard truths about history but also to help black students feel empowered about their identities." (2019) This charge and need to empower students by educating them around their own history has been expressed in Black culture for decades. "In his 1963 address *A Talk to Teachers,* novelist and social critic James Baldwin cautioned that one of the paradoxes of education was that "precisely at the point when you begin to develop a conscience, you must find yourself at war with your society." Educated individuals, he continued, then have a responsibility to make change" (Pitts, 2019). According to the educators who participated in this research, delivering education in a manner that empowers and educates Black students about themselves is a crucial piece to making a Critical Influence.

Research Question 2: How do Black Lead On educators define classroom effectiveness based on Lead On's building blocks and mission (CI)?

Connecting to Lead On's building blocks and mission, the participants share how their identity development and commitment are the keys to classroom effectiveness. Participants

shared their passion and connection towards this mission while remaining critical of how this mission is continuously being developed within the program.

- This has pushed them to define effectiveness by describing their own identity development.

The following are excerpts from narratives that address this interpretation of the finding:

And so, my blackness, my Midwest city raised blackness is not the same as another city raised blackness. It's just not the same. My parochial school blackness is just not the same as a public-school blackness. There are just different layers of blackness. And so, I had to navigate that, being in a different city and having a different background than my students. I didn't necessarily feel that I always identified with them. I had to figure out my own identity as well. The thing is, even with that, I was able to connect with my students and my families because they trusted me and trusted my experience. *(*B. Brown, personal communication, September 17, 2019).

So, it was like kind of a tough adjustment to me. Yeah. Especially not knowing anything about like the caliber of people I was going to be around. Um, it was like really hard cause like, being in a social justice school it's like completely different than being at one of the Ivy leagues or something. Like, yeah, I felt like an underdog when I got into the program. (A. Griffin, personal communication, October 12, 2019).

When she moved out of the classroom to become the director of instruction, they had somebody who was there for like that half of the year. But then they hired me to fill her spot. So, there was like an immense pressure there because she's like it was also like a really great opportunity

because I had somebody who was so, like, passionate and obsessive and like strong, and now she's my principal or you know, do that. Like over the past seven years I've seen her grow and it's kind of been cool cause I feel like we're kind of in a similar trajectory, which is really nice to be around, to have like a leader who is like willing to talk and like sit down with you and like set goals and, and all those things. So, yeah, she's awesome [Black woman]. (T. Connell, personal communication, October 27, 2019).

So that's going to be that, that's hard because I'm in an environment at my school where I love the people that I work with. And um, you know, they supported me, they got my back. Um, they've helped me. They've taught me a lot. Um, I've learned from them. You know, we share our joys, we commiserate, we do all that. Um, we, we, we take it, we hang, you know, so, um, I think that the atmosphere where the, a lot of African American teachers work, like the, the, the actual like their peers can have a lot to do with it. I would imagine if I were, I thought about, you know, teaching in the school district where my, um, where we live. And I was glad when I looked at their numbers and I saw that there was only like two African, two or three African Americans hired in the whole district, the whole district, um, among the teaching staff. (D. Jackson, personal communication, October 18, 2019).

- The participants express admiration for their school team.

When they discuss their growth as an educator so much is attributed to their school-based colleagues and school leaders. These participants have been at their schools between 5-10 years and appear to be committed to staying there for a few more. This is not the norm for Lead

On educators or for Black Educators in general. The amount of gratitude for their team was overwhelming among the participants. This appears to be a critical piece for the educators to remain committed and see success towards Lead On's mission. Though school placement is not determined by Lead On but by the school leaders, they work to partner with schools that are aligned to their mission and vision (On-boarding, 2018). Given these narratives, one could assume that the same racial barriers that exist in schools that keep Black students sitting together in the lunchroom also are in play among teachers. Needing to be in community with others that look like you are a key to teacher retention the unfortunate part is that it is nearly impossible to find others that look like you within this work given the low rates of Black teachers in schools. What we see within these narratives is that teachers are working in spaces where they are surrounded by multiple Black educators within their school. Just as Tatum shares her thoughts around the need for representation in *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria* (2017) teachers need this representation in their colleagues as well.

The following are excerpts from narratives that address this interpretation of the finding:
When she moved out of the classroom to become the director of instruction, they had somebody who was there for like that half of the year. But then they hired me to fill her spot. So, there was like an immense pressure there because she's like it was also like a really great opportunity because I had somebody who was so, like, passionate and obsessive and like strong, and now she's my principal or you know, do that. Like over the past seven years I've seen her grow and it's kind of been cool cause I feel like we're kind of in a similar trajectory, which is really nice to be around, to have like a leader who is like willing to talk and like sit down with you and like set

goals and, and all those things. So, yeah, she's awesome [Black woman]. (T. Connell, personal communication, October 27, 2019).

The other staff members at my school ... I have a close relationship with other staff members, and I feel very tight with them, even though some of them have left and a lot of them have stayed. And the ones who stayed I bonded with. So, I think the reason why I stayed at this particular school is because of my peers and also because we have a lot of support around just being a better teacher. We have a lot more instructional support than I'm sure a lot of schools. And so, I really enjoy that about the school. I probably would not be the kind of educator that I am if it wasn't for the teaching at this school. It's really a diamond in the rough." (L. Woodard, personal communication, December 14, 2019).

The narratives suggest community and a common mission are the cornerstones of success. They are on a journey together, with their colleagues, who are all there to support in this mission. Hearing the narratives reminds me of the first time I really read about the Montgomery bus boycott for myself. The partnership and movement of a people to work together, ensured that a law that was deeply rooted in years of hatred was changed…in only ONE YEAR. This is the true power of team and partnership. This power fuels commitment and success. It is key for continued Critical Influence.

Summary of Interpretation of Findings

This chapter shares counternarratives that reveal participants go through cycles of their own identity development throughout their careers as Lead On participants and educators.

Beverly Tatum shares, "Often a person moves from one stage to the next, only to revisit an earlier stage as the result of new encounter experiences" (1992, pg.12). Entering into a White-dominated profession where your work is deeply tied to your racial identity, culture, and purpose is challenging when there are few people that look like you. They connect with their students by leaning onto their student relationships and utilizing their peers.

The educators have to internalize what it means to accomplish this work within a system that has historically been ineffective at supporting them or their students to succeed. Their stories portray the feelings of being re-immersed in their culture while immersing their students into their culture. They build longevity within the work because, though the work may appear to be extremely challenging, they have others they can lock arms with to accomplish this work.

Knowing there could be potential biases involved, I have shared the themes with the participants to receive their input. Understanding that there are multiple stories that could have been told, this chapter is a presentation of how I have understood, made meaning, and made connections between the narratives.

VII. Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this study is to explore Critical Influence, what it means and how Black Lead On educators are attempting to live it out within their classroom/professional practices. The conclusions from this study use the findings to respond to the research questions. There are three conclusions drawn from this work: (a) Black educators feel the most influence when they come into this work having already internalized their identity; (b) Critical Influence is about relationships formed with students; (c) Black educators believe that Lead On was an accomplishment to get to their professional goals, but their ability to have a critical influence is due to their colleagues and school leaders.

Supporting Black teachers with the ability to have a Critical Influence should be important for any traditional certifying education program and alternative. The growing body of literature that has begun to note the positive effects of Black educators on student academic success is clear (Figlio 2017). Black teachers are needed if we want to see an increase in academic success in all children, with Black children in particular. Right now, Black educators make up a low percentage in universities and are low within education programs. If we want more Black educators to enter and stay in the field, redesigning learning to disrupt inequities that exist to support Black educators will take a lot of intentionality. This section provides an overview of the conclusions derived from this study, trailed by the researcher's recommendations, and final reflection.

Black educators have the most influence when they come into this work having already internalized their identity and open to continued identity work.

The first major finding in this study parallels Beverly Tatum's *Stages of Identify* (1992) in that it describes participant's journeys of becoming educators in a cyclical fashion. Black

educators experienced the *Immersion* stage of racial identity development as they began working

with students that look like them. As described by Beverly Tatum, the Immersion stage is noted

for being a point in life where one would want to surround themselves with visual symbols of

their racial identity and actively avoid symbols of the White race. The teachers are focused on

uplifting the identities of their students which is integrated in multiple aspects of their curriculum

and classroom. The educators appear to be passionate about ways they do this in the classroom

and take pride in challenging their students' mindsets around "being Black". This immersion is

also connected to the second finding that focuses on how the educators had a defining moment

that empowered them as a Black student, it provided the foundation for them to promote Equity

and Excellence with their students. I have drawn from this finding that the educators who have

previously been immersed in their own racial identity in their schooling appear to be ready to

have a Critical Influence on their own students.

Critical Influence is about relationships formed with students and families.

Within my findings it is highlighted that the teachers throughout this research did not

reference any particular curriculum/content that they deemed as the model for providing a

critical influence. They talked more about how the curriculum is supposed to make their students

feel. They discussed hope, identity building, and relationships as the foundation for Critical

Influence. Within their descriptions on how Critical Influence looks, feels, and sounds like, the

conclusion is made that Critical Influence is a descriptor of a strong student/teacher relationship.

One could also conclude that the prior finding references how identity work done before

becoming an educator can support the ability to build successful student/teacher relations as this

was a big piece in their own identity development. They share that they have become a part of

their students' families. In the anthology title *Teaching Diverse Populations*, Michelle Foster is

attributed to sharing in her research that "Researchers who have examined the beliefs and

practices effective Black teachers have found that such teachers have strong attachments to the

Black community and consider themselves to be a part of it." (Hollins, 1994 p. 229). These

relationships are a product of cultural solidarity. Cultural solidarity is created in the classroom

when a Black teacher connects and builds bonds with their students' interest, backgrounds, and

history. This same cultural solidarity that creates a Critical Influence on students leading them to

achieve at a greater length academically supports Black teachers to succeed. This leads me to the

next conclusion.

Black educators believe that Lead On was an accomplishment to get to their professional goals, but their ability to have a critical influence is due to their colleagues and school leaders.

All of the participants noted that their school leader and colleagues were a big reason

they stayed in education. There is already research and literature that shares the impact of school

administration on teacher retention. Boyd and Grossman (2011) sum up in their research that

teachers' perceptions of the "school administration has by far the greatest influence on teacher

retention decisions" (p.2). In this research, not only does the school administration have an

impact, but if that leader is also a Black leader that the teacher has built a community with, they

are more prone to stay in the work for a longer period of time. Commitment is also a stage of

racial identity according to Beverly Tatum as "a time when one is able to change their personal

since of race into a plan of action or general sense of commitment to the concerns of their own

race as a group. That is sustained over time." (1992, pg.1). The conclusion can be drawn that the

Black teachers utilized Lead On as a platform, but their Critical Influence was not learned solely

within the organization. It was the professional development and community within their school building that has supported their retention. Participants placed so much value in their peers as they shared their stories around the partnerships they had formed. The fact that they feel supported, motivated, and skilled to interrupt systemic cycles, would conclude that their Black school leaders seem to have a Critical Influence on them.

Recommendations for Future Practice

Given the fact that Black educators in the United States are minimal, but most come from alternative education programs, the recommendations put here are for those programs.

1. Identity development should have a scope and sequence throughout the entire duration of their commitment to the organization. Black Educators who are thinking about their own identities and how it will impact the classroom would be positioned to have a Critical Influence.

Every Black educator does not have a Critical Influence just because they are Black. There is some level of identity work, cultural understanding, and knowledge of self, and cultural regularities that need to occur. The participants often spoke of their role as they support diversity training within their pre-service onboarding versus receiving training of their own. Referring back to the definition, we know that a Critical Influence is only leveraged when cultural identity is used to connect with students and education to motivate and inspire them. As the participants reflect on the joys and burdens of leveraging CI; it seems important to not only continue to

develop Black educators as they make sense of their cultural identity within the classroom to

support students, but also to increase their own retention rates.

2. When recruiting and selecting teachers, there should be some culturally aligned questioning

    to inform where the person is along their racial identity cycle in order to provide the direct

    development they would potentially need (or if they are even suited for teaching Black

    students).

    The goal of Lead On and other alternative education programs is to bring *elite talent* to

schools with the most need. However, what defines *elite talent* does not dig into cultural self-

awareness which limits the selection of teachers that can provide a Critical Influence. Even

within my own experience with Lead On, there is a lot of questioning during the interview

process to understand applicants' "why" statements in alignment to the mission. This type of

questioning does not uncover where an applicant is in their racial identity work and therefore is

ineffective. My recommendation is that if this begins from the very beginning of the interview

process, the organization would be well equipped to make individualized support plans for their

members around their racial identity and how it plays out in the classroom. Similar to what they

would expect candidates to do for their own students.

3. Affinity groupings can be utilized to support identity work and create a community for

    teachers that leads to Critical Influence and retention.

    The participants in this research shared that their school leaders inspired them, colleagues

encouraged them, and their school community was the driving force that kept them going. These

teachers attribute a major portion of their success to their school teams. What happens to those Black teachers who are members of the Lead On organization that are not in a school where that community is already established? My recommendation to support Black members is by requiring Affinity Groups within teacher development. Affinity groups have shown to be a critical piece in many organizations and businesses to support people of color (Moore-South all, 2017). The recommendation is to build a structure where these groupings are integral and consistent pieces of the Critical Influence programming and development. For example, a staff member at Lead On recently shared with me that their school leaders of color conference continue to grow each year. Every year, alumni who have attended have returned and many have brought other educators with them (whether they were alum or not). There is a critical need for more Black male educators. We need to tap into the Black males that are currently connect to the organizations (no matter the region they are a part of) and connect them with one another. Create space. Share their story!

Overall, my recommendations speak to the selection and training of Black educators within this program, but it also illuminates the need to be intentional around racial identity development holistically. We need to consider how this shows up in traditional education programs, administrative programs, and other alternative education certifying programs similar to Lead On.

Recommendation for Further Research

For further research, I recommend that we gain more understanding into the social emotional experience of Black educators who have experienced alternative education certifying programs. Looking further into the trauma and racial development of the Black teacher

experience while working for a system that has been known to be inequitable for their racial background (Anderson, 2018) is crucial to determine the effectiveness of these programs. The talk of trauma showed up in many spaces of different participants' narratives. As they describe how closely tied they felt to the students and their families, and how their identities begin to mirror inside of the identities of their students…trauma is often felt. Alongside, the increased exposure and understanding surrounding the intersection of racism and trauma within a social media world, social-emotional support for Black educators that are experiencing this trauma while trying to work to combat it is imperative.

The following things should be considered:

1. What are the stories Black teachers have around trauma in their work?

2. What do we understand about how Black teachers' identity is shaped and reshaped during their work.

3. How does trauma (individual and experienced through their students) play into the identity development process?

4. What areas are not being addressed within identity development for teachers that are not moving into a commitment stage and leaving education?

5. Are Black teachers more affected by the trauma that occurs to Black students?

6. If so, is this due to the relationships they have built and/or their own experience?

7. How many teachers would say they left education because of student trauma related purposes?

Researcher Reflections

Critical Race scholarship is unified by two tenets; The first is to understand how a regime of white supremacy and its subordination of people of color have been created and maintained in America, and, in particular, to examine the relationship between that social structure and professed ideals such as "the rule of law" and "equal protection." The second is a desire not merely to understand the vexed bond between law and racial power but to *change* it." (Crenshaw et al., 1995)

As I close out this research, I pause to reflect on this experience and how it has impacted me as a Black school leader. There are multiple studies that show that Black students that have Black teachers tend to see a significant increase in their academic success, the research shares that "having one Black teacher by third grade is 7% more likely to graduate high school and 13% more likely to enroll in college. After having two Black teachers, Black students' likelihood of enrolling in college increases by 32%." (Camera, 2018; Perry, 2019; Rosen, 2018).

Having interviewed both high school and elementary instructors, it left me thinking about the level of self-awareness these teachers had developed once they began teaching. Their reflections of the development they had received under Black school leaders set lasting impressions in my heart. These teachers did not feel stagnant within their school settings. They didn't feel that they only had to handle classroom management at the school (Griffin & Tackie, 2019), but felt supported to grow into strong leaders. It is clear to me that *Critical Influence* is about relationships. As we saw from the narratives that describe community with their schools, the identity work with their students that reflected themselves, and the descriptions of family with their students. Deriving from the narratives within this research, all of these relationships

can strengthen and/or weaken the Critical Influence that occurs within a classroom. Without relationships, Critical Influence is impossible. It is also clear that if we want to support Black teachers to have this impact, they need to experience a Critical Influence for themselves. They need to be supported in their identity development as they prepare to enter the classroom.

The education industry is dominated by White women, has low retention rates for Black educators, Black men are the lowest demographic to be recruited, and academically Black students fall significantly below any other students (Barnum, 2018; Bell-Ellwanger, 2016; Camera, 2016; Griner et al, 2016). The public education system is working how it was designed to work, but the problem is that it was designed to keep Black children from reaching success by society's standards. . It means a lot of a Black students need to be influenced by their Black teachers to break through societal norms. The *Atlantic* recently did a study and titled its findings as *The Burden of Being a Black Teacher.* They shared that there is a lot to unpack when attempting to understand the burdens of Black teachers. But we must gather the narratives to even begin (2016).

They shared:

"The result is that only around 7 percent of the country's teachers are black, despite the fact that African Americans make up around 16 percent of the overall student population. I've written about why that matters, but the upshot is that children benefit when they see and hear people who come from different backgrounds. Students learn to collaborate and compromise, and they prepare for the inevitably global nature of their future jobs. When schools have a diverse teaching force, they may also be able to limit the effects of implicit bias. A recent study found that white teachers have lower expectations than black teachers for the same black students.

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Having more teachers of color might help mitigate that imbalance. So, in an attempt to figure out how schools can retain more black teachers, Education Trust, an advocacy organization focused on low-income students and those of color, did something that shouldn't be novel, but is: They actually talked to African American educators about the challenges they face." (Para. 2)

My research is an important addition to illuminate the voices of Black educators as they share their dreams, hopes, and needs to be successful within this work. It means that we need to take a step back and plan how we are actively fighting against systems that were not designed for the success of Black educators and students. My work is offering that one way to start being a *Systemic Interrupter* is to create a system that supports, develops, and recruits Black educators by using an avenue that attracts them the most: alternative certifying programs. I am grateful for the opportunity to hear these stories. It has left me thinking about my own Critical Influence that I can have with my team and students.

VIII. Appendices

Appendix A: Thematic Charts of Findings Summaries

THEMATIC CHART 1	
THEME	**Identity Development** Participants describe their journey of becoming educators in a cyclical fashion that resembles Beverly Tatum's *Stages of Identity (*1992). As they are working to support their students, they are experiencing their own development and what it means to be a Black educator.
OVERVIEW	Entering into a majority white workforce but servicing majority Black students creates an environment where the participants spend a lot of time thinking about their own identities and impact within the classroom. The teachers share from the moment they began within the alternative program to their current work, they experience different stages of their Black teacher identity development, while also trying to develop the identities of their students.
LITERATURE	Experts acknowledge race identity is circular not linear. Middle-adulthood may be most difficult time to struggle with racial identity because of one's increased responsibilities and increased potential for opportunities (Tatum, 2017). Good teaching comes from those who are true to their identity (including genetic, socioeconomic, educational and cultural influences) and integrity (self-acceptance). Teachers who are comfortable with their own background (racially and culturally) and teach within their identity and integrity are able to make student connections and bring subjects alive (Brown et al, 2011).

PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVE	"Yeah, I mean I was thinking, I was definitely thinking about the Critical Influence I am trying to have on my students. I was thinking about how my teaching has affected me, how it's changed me, what kind of person I've become, what kind of support that I've needed since I've started teaching and there's a lot that has changed since I became a teacher. There's a lot of self-awareness that I've experienced and I'm kind of still on that journey now." *(*B. Brown, personal communication, September 17, 2019).
	"I see so much of my grandmother in me, but a lot is different too. Even though my grandmother wasn't necessarily like that in terms of her teaching ... She was an educator too, but my grandmother... She did not code switch or anything like that. She was very old school, very prim and proper. I do take my cues from more of a matriarchal style of teaching like her, while trying to adopt a style my school is pushing for which is called the No-Nonsense Nurturer. I am trying, but still hold on to my own philosophy and identity as a teacher because, I don't fully buy into the No-Nonsense Nurturing model because it's got a very rigid approach to it. And I feel like our kids are far too complex to, to be pigeonholed into a rigid model of teaching. I ascribe to it when my coaches are in my classroom or when my administrators are in my classroom, but when they're gone Mama Johnson comes out and I have those 'Come to Jesus' moments with my kids." (D. Jackson, personal communication, September 19, 2019).

	"Well first of all being like white passing, I think it's like inherently difficult. And then being a situation like *Lead On* where you're wearing your identity on your sleeve the whole time, you're going through all of these experiences with people that have leveling understandings of like race. You know, there were a lot of members of the organization that I think saw me automatically like, 'Oh she's just a white girl' and didn't understand my identity or downplayed my blackness because I have light-skin. And so, it was kind of a challenge." (T. Connell, personal communication, September 21, 2019).
FINDINGS & FURTHER QUESTIONS	Beverly Tatum shared that identity development is continual. These teachers share their successes and struggles within being a Black educator. How are Black educators being supporting in identity work as they are being trained to become educators? How does trauma (individual and experienced through their students) play into the identity development process? What areas are not being addressed within identity development for teachers that are not moving into a commitment stage and leaving education?

THEMATIC CHART 2	
THEME	**Equity and Excellence** Inside their individual educational experience as a student, there is an opportunity that occurs that was "door

	opening" and is viewed as a defining moment that empowered them as a Black student and now fuels them as an educator and provides their moral purpose.
OVERVIEW	Participants share moments in their narratives that express the condition(s) that occurred that allowed them to defy the odds. They attribute mentors, teachers, and programs that opened the door for them to become academically successful. There is also a level of "fight" they describe as they share the level of work they put int during these times. This moment created a level of excellence for self. Due to this, they feel charged to hold their students to the same level of excellence as well.
LITERATURE	The integration of excellence and equity in CRP is predicated upon establishing a curriculum that is inclusive of students' cultural experiences and setting high expectations for the students to reach (Brown et al, 2011).
PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVE	"Her name was Ms. Swanson. Like I love Ms. Swanson now as an adult. We're like friends on Facebook and everything. Ms. Swanson was representative of me. To me that like something else was possible. So, my mom was working, you know, 70, at least 70 hours a weekend, you know, fast food, restaurant management, all this stuff. And things were like really tough. My mom always told me I was to go to college, I'm supposed to do all these things, but I hadn't seen it. And so, Ms. Swanson for me was just representative of all the things people believed I could do that like somebody had done them...But what I did know was that something was wrong with the fact that all the school, the kids in my neighborhood, when I came to school, I ain't see them all day." (A.

	Griffin, personal communication, October 12, 2019).
	"I was picked to be in a program, Lions, in 8th grade where you are given a mentor and they pay for you to go to a private high school in the city. My 8th grade teacher told me about it because he and his wife were mentors in the program. It was for Black kids and all of the mentors were Black. This program changed my life even though I fought against it initially. I took the bus from my very urban low-income neighborhood to this private school. The few Black friends that were going to the school never had any classes with me. I was ALWAYS in trouble my first year there. Because of Lions help and guidance, I was in all honors and AP courses, but I didn't like the school. During my sophomore year, I told my grandmother I wanted to transfer. She took me out and I want to a neighboring high school were my friends were. I could tell they were behind. All of the material we were doing I had already done. When Lions found out that I had transferred, my mentor worked to get me back into the private school. I didn't feel like any of the teachers there cared about me. I was number 4 in my class and yet my counselor suggested that I look at other schools when I told him I wanted to apply to Ivy Leagues. My mentor from Lions pushed me to do it anyway. I got into every Ivy League school I applied to." (A. Crawford personal communication, November 6, 2019).
	"My high school was pretty diverse, very diverse school I love going to high school there. It was like very fun. I was a three-sport athlete. I did orchestra and band and I was just very like involved. Okay. But

	my sophomore year when we took, I think it was called like the PSAT or something. I took that test and I scored in the 89th percentile for math and reading. But in order to be eligible for honors at my high school, you had to score in the 90th percentile, because they only offered one honors section. And so, I like had my mom come and talk with my teachers and they weren't willing to plug me into honors reading because they said I wasn't high enough. After she kept arguing for it, they agreed to put me in honors math. So I got into an honors class and then I like had to fight to be an honor the rest of high school. They would always put me in the gen ed classes, and I'd be like, 'I want to take AP' I'm pretty smart. I know I can do this. When I finally made it into the honors program, I was like literally the only person of color in my classes, even though my high school was majority people of color. Like there might've been like one other person of color in those classes with me. I mean when I think who graduated from my high school, like we're the only people of color who made it." (T. Connell, personal communication, October 13, 2019).
	"When I got accepted into the program I felt like a part of an elite group. There were people who applied with me and did not get in. I was so motivated and driven to do something great for my community. I just didn't realize how much my race was going to be crucial to my work. I think I took it for granted until I was forced to address it daily in not only my personal life, but now my work life as well." (B. Brown, personal communication, October 6, 2019).

FINDINGS & FURTHER QUESTIONS	These Black teachers who have felt that a bar was held high for them now holds the bar high for their students. There is a level of "no opt out" narrative that is shared among these teachers. What is needed to be said, seen, or created to ensure that all Black students feel and see that the bar is being held high for them? What measures can be made to ensure school systems mirror this level of excellence requirement for Black students (while dismantling inequitable systems).

THEMATIC CHART 3

THEME	**Teaching the Whole Child/ Manage Student Emotions/Developmental Appropriateness.** Participants spend less time discussing the exact curriculum in their narratives but share a focus on the development of pride and hope occurring often and early.
OVERVIEW	The teachers feel responsible for and charged with building in identity affirming curriculum. It is beyond the test scores but informing them of their culturally background and debunking misconceptions within their students.
LITERATURE	When teaching a child wholly, educators must be cognizant of the socio-cultural influences that have attributed to the learning progress of that child even before they enter the classroom. These outside influences must naturally be accounted for when designing a culturally relevant curriculum (Brown et al, 2011). Several concepts collectively define Developmental Appropriateness within the context of CRP. These concepts

	include, "...learning styles, teaching styles, and cultural variation in psychological needs (motivation, morale, engagement, collaboration)." The goal is to assess student's cognitive development progress and incorporate learning activities within the lesson plan that are challenging and culturally relevant (Brown et al, 2011).
PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVE	"So, when I taught third grade I ... and it's more of a session, like a series of lessons that I did. This was when we were having a conversation about blackness, but I had created a whole PowerPoint and lesson and worksheets and stuff on the African American experience for primary grade. We talked about like Africans before America. We talked about Queen Tiye, Amenhotep, Nefertiti and Mansa Musa and we would talk about them and talk about their contributions to government and to language and to the arts and to science. And so, I saw more awe from them. There were questions, but more awe from them, and then that's when we really got into the conversation about, when people call you Black as a put down, you don't want to take it as a put down because look at all of these things that people who look just like me and you do or did, hundreds of years ago." (B. Brown, personal communication, October 26, 2019).
	"So, it was kind of more of a series of lessons that I identify with as an educator. In fact, my handle on Instagram is about being a Black cultural educator because I want to impact students' identity at a young age. I want them to see education as an identity-affirming experience at a young age and I'm actively looking towards how I can really apply identity-affirming pedagogy into my STEM

	teaching, because I'm a STEM teacher. So, I'm going to be really working towards that this year with this group of kids." (A. Crawford personal communication, November 10, 2019)
	"And it's hard because these are primary. This is like first grade. So, it's probably easier when you get into middle school and high school to have all kinds of conversations, but in first grade, this is when they're slowly starting to identify as Black or identify as a person of color. And so, I think that these years are so formative. These are so important. So, I really want to encourage them along those lines." (T. Connell, personal communication, October 27, 2019).
	"When I was a kid, I remember learning about the LA riots while it was happening. My mom would sit me down and discuss what it meant and why people were so upset. One day I went to school and I asked a white boy his thoughts on it and he shrugged his shoulders. I just wanted to know what he was going to say. I will never forget thinking, "He has no clue what is even going on". I want to make sure my kids understand what is going on. Even though they are young…they are not stupid. They see these things every day." (D. Jackson, personal communication, September 28, 2019).
FINDINGS & FURTHER QUESTIONS	When sharing their narratives around thing they address with their students, it can be traced back to knowledge they gain within their own education narratives. The moments when they learned more about their cultural backgrounds inspired them

	to set up their classroom in the manners that they have. How do you choose what information to add to your curriculum? How do you figure out what is appropriate information at which grade level? How do you continue to develop yourself to have these conversations with your students?

THEMATIC CHART 4

THEME	**Student Teacher Relationship** In a system that is it hard to implement restorative practices in the classrooms for Black students, these Black educators have been able to be more successful because of the relationships they have built.
OVERVIEW	One of the Principles of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (based on the research from Brown and Cooper). CI speaks to when educators from similar cultural and/or economic backgrounds as their students are able to influence and impact their students additionally through their own identities by building a deep and meaningful relationship with students and their families, and creating ongoing conversations about short- and long-term goals that leverage student talents and strengthens their areas of growth.
LITERATURE	Students must feel that the teacher has their best interest at heart to succeed in implementing CRP (Brown et al, 2011). "As its goal, RP seeks to interrupt and halt the school to prison pipeline while helping students overcome and cope with

	trauma. To do this, RP relies on developing relationships with students which enables them to reflect on and repair the harm they have caused." (Sutton, 2020)
PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVE	"I was saying credibility, but I think that that's like a two-edged sword because on one hand, they think that the only people who are smart and go to college and have money are white. And on the other hand, though, they don't respect their white teachers all the time. So, I think it was kind of like a two-edged sword. Like on one hand, they may have respected me because they saw me more as a mother or an auntie type figure in their lives. But on the other hand, because they saw me more of an auntie or mother type figure, they did not see me as having achieved beyond eighth grade or beyond high school. They didn't give me that kind of living the life kind of credibility that they ultimately would aspire to." (B. Brown, personal communication, October 26, 2019). This is my 5th year in education and my students keep me in this work. I think about how someone was there…has been there for me. I am in this for them." (A. Crawford personal communication, November 16, 2019).
FINDINGS & FURTHER QUESTIONS	When describing areas that are draining for them in this work, utilizing relationships and restorative practices is not an area of focus. It is either experience repeated trauma when their students experience trauma or the stress of operating within a school system that does not make their students "appear" to be success. Questions to consider: Are Black teachers more affected by the trauma that occurs to Black students?

	If so, is this due to the relationships they have built and/or their own experience? How many teachers would say they left education because of student trauma related purposes?

THEMATIC CHART 5

	Commitment Phase Participants have committed to this work and note the relationships of their students, fellow Black staff members, and their Black school leader as a contributor of this commitment.
THEME	
OVERVIEW	Black teachers only make up 7% of the teaching force in the US and Black teachers have the lowest retention rate among any other racial group (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The themes that emerge within the narratives regarding what has kept the teachers in this work revolve around their Black school leaders, colleagues and student/families.
LITERATURE	Beverly Tatum describe this as, a personal sense of blackness is translated into a plan of action or a general sense of commitment to the concerns of blacks as a group, which is sustained over time (1992). This Black-White teacher retention gap can largely be explained by Black teachers' experience and education and the challenging school and community contexts in which these teachers worked. Compared with White teachers who had similar professional attributes and worked

	in similar school settings, Black teachers were more likely to stay in schools serving a larger proportion of Black students and to move to a school that served a higher proportion of Black students. The marginal probability of Black teachers' retention received an additional boost with an increase in teachers' observational ratings and math value-added scores. Stronger school leadership and higher-quality professional development predict a higher retention rate of more effective Black teachers (Sun, 2018).
PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVE	"The other staff members at my school ... I have a close relationship with other staff members, and I feel very tight with them, even though some of them have left and a lot of them have stayed. And the ones who stayed I bonded with. So, I think the reason why I stayed at this particular school is because of my peers and also because we have a lot of support around just being a better teacher. We have a lot more instructional support than I'm sure a lot of schools. And so, I really enjoy that about the school. I probably would not be the kind of educator that I am if it wasn't for the teaching at this school. It's really a diamond in the rough." (L. Woodard, personal communication, December 2, 2019). "I just don't think that, like, I feel like I'm in like the Renaissance of my teaching right now. And then I just, I, you know, I'm seven years in, so I'm thinking about people who are, who started being an admin in year three or year four. I don't know how, I mean it just like, you know, you just don't know until you know that to live, to know you, like you have to

experience so many things and, and I'm still a baby teacher at my school, parents, the staff. And that's another thing that we could talk about too because I was, I'm very blessed with them, with the group of people that have raised me as a teacher and like X surrounded me as a teacher and, and I don't think that a lot of teachers from *Lead On* get that, but at the same time I did things that made that happen for me that I don't see other teachers from *Lead On* do. " (T. Connell, personal communication, October 20, 2019).

"A lot of people were like, when I was in my first two years they were like, how are you doing all of this? Cause I never doubted myself. I was never like, I can't do this or I'm not capable. They have a lot of sessions about like self-care you know, find the things that, you know, make you feel warm and fuzzy at night and blah, blah, and don't take on too much. They do a lot of that. Like kind of like, I dunno, it's very, um, well it's like, you know, it's made for white people. Yeah. Cool. Let's nurture you, blah, blah, blah. My whole thing is like, okay, no, no, I can do more. Like what you know, like if you know that you're resilient and you can accomplish more and you can say yes to this, first of all, know your limits. But second of all, if you can do it and you feel confident about it, then do it. You can call me cocky. I don't care. I'd rather walk in with the behavior of like, I'm the best teacher here than you know, I can't do this every day. Yeah. I don't, you know, I don't know what I'm doing. Okay. None of us knew what we were doing when we came into the classroom, but I'm not going to pretend like I don't, I'm not gonna. I'm not going to walk around like I don't know what I'm doing. I'm going to walk around

	like I'm going to learn. I'm going to reach out to my peers. Learn from the veterans in my building. Learn from my parents. I'm going to ask questions. I'm going to lean in hard." (D. Jackson, personal communication, October 18, 2019).
FINDINGS & FURTHER QUESTIONS	When discussing their colleagues and school leader the narrative paints a picture of a family. Teachers feel more effective due to their team. What things does the school leader and peers do to provide this feeling within their staff (coaching, mentoring, leadership, etc.)? Are Black school leaders providing a Critical Influence on their staff similar to how the teachers have on their students?

Appendix B: Demographics Survey

Do you agree to this screening?

Yes, I agree

No, I do not agree

Name (fill in the blank)

Did you complete an Alternative Certifying Program for your teaching certificate? (yes or no)

What year did you complete it?

Do you currently still work in a school building? (yes or no)

Do you currently (drop down box) work directly in the classroom, support teachers, school leader.

What is the name of your school and what percentage of your school student body is Black? (Fill in the blank)

Have you used the Calendy link here to schedule a time? (yes or no)

Appendix C: Informed Consent
<u>ADULT CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH</u>

"AM I A SYSTEMIC INQUITY INTERRUPTER?"
Understanding the Influence of Critical Race Educating Through the Narratives of Alternative Ed. Black Educators.

Principal Investigator: Ayanna L. Gore, Grad Student/Doctoral Studies in Educational Leadership

Institution: DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois, USA

Department, School, College- College of Education

Faculty Advisor: Horace Hall, PhD Associate Professor, Human Development, Counseling and Special Education, Doctoral Program

<u>Key Information:</u>

<u>What is the purpose of this research?</u>
We are asking you to be in a research study because we are trying to learn more about the impact of Black alternative ed. Educators on Black students by studying their narratives on the successes, struggles, and benefits of teaching Black students. This research defines Black as those with African ancestry raised in the United States. These narratives will help illuminate the perceived meaning and systems that are at play when these teachers have a *Critical Influence* within the classroom. This study is being conducted by Ayanna L. Gore at DePaul University, a graduate student at DePaul University as a requirement to obtain her doctoral degree. This research is being supervised by her faculty advisor, Horace Hall.

We hope to include about 8 people in the research.

<u>Why are you being asked to be in the research?</u>
You are invited to participate in this study because you are an educator that went through Teach For America for 2 years (became an alum) and currently work in a setting where at least 70% of the student body is African American/Black.

<u>What is involved in being in the research study?</u>

If you agree to be in this study:

- You will participate in 3-1 hour "story telling" sessions with myself (occurring over the next 2 months) and will earn **$20 Amazon electronic gift certificates for each interview (totaling $60).**

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- With your consent, I would audio record our sessions over Zoom web conferencing and then use the information in a coded fashion to pull out trends.
- After each interview, you will have the opportunity to provide any feedback through google survey.
- You will also have the opportunity to journal (optional) in between sessions using the prompts to prepare for the next session.
- Once the 3- interview sessions are complete, you will be provided the opportunity to review the transcription data for a week and provide any feedback. Feedback questions will ask 1) Overall, how would you rate your experience? (Scale of 5 where 5 is excellent and 1 is poor). 2) What did you like about it? 3) What would you want to see/ hear/ feel more of? 4) Any other comments?

Content of the 3 story telling sessions will involve the following topics?
- Share your educational narrative
- Discuss the impact of your race within the classroom/school.
- Reflect on systems you have used to impact Black students.
- Reflect on your preparation as an educator and learnings since then.

Are there any risks involved in participating in this study?
The most common risks to social behavioral research are breaches of confidentiality (e.g., someone outside the research gaining access to the data, if data are collected and stored in an identifiable manner), and feeling uncomfortable or being upset, particularly if questions are sensitive or the topic is one that can provoke strong feelings or emotions (psychological harms).

Participants will be asked to describe their experiences as a student and as an educator. It is possible *(50% chance that they either have or have not)* that someone could have had a negative experience within either of these times of their life. A potential risk could be some negative emotions are resurfaced for a participant. The probability and magnitude of this is low, given that the pool of participants are alum within a program that often provides reflection around personal educational experiences. If someone has experienced negative situations in their educational experience, the probability that they would have discussed this with their program manager is high.

The probability of personal information being leaked is low as all the information will be coded. Audio recordings of interviews are for transcription purposes. All audio recordings will be stored in a private folder on a locked computer for a minimum of 6 months.

To keep all in information private, all audio and transcriptions will be stored on a locked computer. The probability of personal information being shared or discovered will be low as all the information with be recorded in codes originally. Through all stages of data collection, storage, sharing, and analysis, your privacy and confidentiality will be protected.
Every precaution will be taken to minimize the risk of a break into the system that stores information about you Audio recordings of interviews are for transcription purposes.

Are there any benefits to participating in this study?
You will not personally benefit from being in this study. We hope that what we learn will help add to the continued development of urban education and the preparation of teachers (particularly teachers who enter alternative certification programs).

How much time will this take?
* Screening survey- 5minutes
* There are three interviews and each interview will take approx. 60 minutes to complete (totaling 3 hours)
* Feedback survey- 5 minutes (totaling 15 minutes after all 3 sessions).
* Journaling (optional) 1-4 hours

Other Important Information about Research Participation

Is there any kind of payment, reimbursement or credit for being in this study?
You will receive $20 [as an amazon e-gift card] for each completed storytelling session/interview (right after the interview is completed) for a total of $60 for completing the study. If you do not complete the entire study, you will be paid for the surveys you did immediately after they are held.

Can you decide not to participate?
Your participation is voluntary, which means you can choose not to participate. There will be no negative consequences, penalties, or loss of benefits if you decide not to participate or change your mind later and withdraw from the research after you begin participating.

Your decision whether or not to be in the research will not affect your membership within any alternative education certifying body.

Who will see my study information and how will the confidentiality of the information collected for the research be protected?
The research records will be kept and stored securely. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study or publish a paper to share the research with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. We will not include your name or any information that will directly identify you. Some people might review or copy our records that may identify you in order to make sure we are following the required rules, laws, and regulations. For example, the DePaul University Institutional Review Board may review your information. If they look at my records, they will keep your information confidential.
To prevent others from accessing our records or identifying you should they gain access to our records, we have put some protections in place. The probability of personal information being leaked is low as all the information will be coded. Audio recordings of interviews are for

transcription purposes. All audio recordings will be stored in a private folder on a locked computer for a minimum of 6 months.

To keep all in information private, all audio and transcriptions will be stored on a locked computer. The probability of personal information will be low as all the information with be recorded in codes originally. Audio recordings of interviews are for transcription purposes.

All direct identifiers will be removed, like name or record number, from your information and replace it with a code name. All names and locations will be coded and de-identified *(You will have the opportunity to invent your own code name).* It is possible that we might use this de-identified information in future research studies or share the de-identified information with other people. If we do this, we will not contact you to get additional consent.

You should know that there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court or to tell authorities if you report information about a child being abused or neglected or if you pose a danger to yourself or someone else.

Who should be contacted for more information about the research?
Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study or you want to get additional information or provide input about this research, you can contact the researcher, Ayanna L. Gore-773-580-9779

This research has been reviewed and approved by the DePaul Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact Susan Loess-Perez, DePaul University's Director of Research Compliance, in the Office of Research Services at 312-362-7593 or by email at sloesspe@depaul.edu.

You may also contact DePaul's Office of Research Services if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.

You can print a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent from the Subject:

I have read the above information. I have had all my questions and concerns answered. By verbally stating "I indicate my consent to be in the research" you will be confirmed to participate.

Appendix D: Interview Scripts

<p style="text-align:center">Session 1</p>

Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge that this conversation is being recorded for research purposes. Please let me know now if you do not agree to being recorded. You may request that the recording stop at any time.

First, can you state your name, what year you entered into Lead On, where do you currently work, and how long have you taught there?

Let me share a brief overview of our 3 story telling sessions:

We will start with your educational story and how you experienced it as a student.

2. Then, you will share your understanding of PAI and how this does or does not play out day to day in your work.

3. Lastly, you will reflect on your current practicing, learnings, and growth areas (maybe things you even realized throughout this process).

Before we begin, I want to be normed on what the definition of CI is. Critical Influence- This phrase, coined by Lead On, is based on a concept that recognizes individuals who belong to targeted groups (e.g., women, people of color, people with disabilities, etc.) and how they are uniquely positioned to (1) understand the effects of and systems causing oppression, (2) act to mobilize and organize others to dismantle oppression; and when they choose to leverage this opportunity, can have a critical influence towards creating positive social change. (Unknown, 2012)

Do you have any questions or concern about this?

Let's begin out first story telling session.

Session 2

Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge that this conversation is being recorded for research purposes. Please let me know now if you do not agree to being recorded. You may request that the recording stop at any time.

BACKGROUND/ IDENTITY PROMPTS

1) What did your early childhood schooling look like (elementary and high school)? FOLLOW

   UP: What did it look like? Describe the community, school, type?

2) Describe a teacher who you feel impacted your life? FOLLOW UP: Is there a teacher that

   motivated you beyond comparison to your other teachers? Describe the teacher and teething

   they did to help you feel this way.

3) Tell me about a moment you knew you wanted to become an educator. FOLLOW UP: Who

   was involved in the process?

Session 3

Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge that this conversation is being recorded for research purposes. Please let me know now if you do not agree to being recorded. You may request that the recording stop at any time.

CURRENT PRACTICES/ STUDENT IDENTITY PROMPTS

1) Do you think your Blackness reveals itself in your daily work?

2) Do you think your ethnicity helps and/or hinders your work as an educator?

3) Do you feel your teaching methods/style manifests in the classroom?

4) Does your race/ethnicity play a role in what you experience as an educator?

5) Describe an event that occurred in class that really represents your teaching philosophy?

GROWTH/ CHANGES PROMPTS

1) Share a moment that prepared you to be the teacher that you are today?

2) What sets you apart from the other teachers from similar economic or racial backgrounds as you?

3) What in your training prepared you to have a CI? What may have hindered you?

4) What do you identify was your current strengths as an educator? What in your training would you contribute to building these strengths?

5) What do you identify as your current gaps as an educator? What would you change in your training to support these?

6) What are some learned lessons from your career that you would share with other Black Lead on educator?

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