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NEW CLASSROOM TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF MULTICULTURAL TEACHER
PREPARATION

by

KELLI FOSTER

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Educational Philosophy
The University of Texas at Arlington
May 2024

Arlington, Texas

Supervising Committee:

Dr. Yi Leaf Zhang
Dr. Catherine Robert
Dr. Casey Brown

ABSTRACT

New Classroom Teachers' Perceptions of

Multicultural Teacher Preparation

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The University of Texas at Arlington, 2024

Supervising Professor(s): Drs. Zhang, Robert, Brown

The nation is becoming increasingly diverse, with the student population mirroring a broad range of ethnicities and cultures. To best serve their diverse classrooms, new teachers need training on multiple teaching styles and cultural backgrounds to understand and meet the individual needs of their students. This qualitative study investigates novice teachers' preparation experiences with culturally relevant teaching and multicultural teacher education practices, their perceptions of its presence and effectiveness in preparing them to teach diverse student populations, and how novice teachers describe their experiences working with diverse student populations. Data for this study was collected through semi-structured interviews with eight novice teachers in years one to five of teaching. Aronson and Laughter's (2016) culturally relevant education, also known as culturally relevant teaching, provides a conceptual framework that informs this study. Dover's (2013) four constructivist methods exemplify how to incorporate culturally relevant teaching into classrooms and schools. The theoretical framework that serves as a lens through which to comprehensively evaluate various teacher preparation programs through which the participants were certified is Gorski's (2009) five defining principles for multiculturalism in preservice teacher education. Most of the programs participants described did

not align with the principles of multicultural teacher education. Teacher preparation programs need updating and revision so teachers can successfully educate the culturally, linguistically, and minority students they encounter in their P -12 classrooms of today and the future.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my supportive and encouraging family, who have walked this journey with me, and those I've lost along the way. I promised my late Grandmother I would keep striving to reach this goal, and WE did it. I want to thank my parents for all their support during this journey, without your support, I would not have been able to accomplish this goal. I want to thank my one-year-old daughter, Kairo, for being my motivation to see this degree through. Thank you to my friends who supported my journey through the years. It takes a village, and I am thankful for mine.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Effective teachers are vital to meeting the needs of diverse learners and are critical in preparing these learners for the 21st century. Teacher preparation programs play a crucial role in helping to prepare prospective teachers to teach these learners successfully (Howard, 2019). Thus, there is a need to prepare all teachers for culturally and linguistically diverse students. This study provides the perspectives needed to help diverse student populations have more progressive and beneficial learning experiences, leading to more successful educational and career achievements.

Teacher preparation programs of the past were traditionally formatted as equitable programs designed for newly certified teachers to educate and treat all students the same regardless of race, culture, and socioeconomic status (Rowan et al., 2021). In the early 1990s, racial *colorblindness* gained widespread use to describe this approach. Racial colorblindness became a concept numerous educational institutions strived to practice daily with staff and students in the early 20th century (Rowan et al., 2021).

Proponents of colorblindness initially argued that ignoring or overlooking racial and ethnic differences would promote racial harmony (Deng & Hayden, 2021). However, this reference changed over time, and in recent years, the term colorblindness has a new meaning and explanation. Once thought to be positive, this concept is not accepted or encouraged today because these practices are problematic if teachers do not see their students' differences as unique, desirable, or valuable (Redding, 2019). The latest version of this term denotes the position that when educators adopt colorblind beliefs and ideologies, they run the risk of consciously and subconsciously avoiding, missing, and overlooking critical identifying

characteristics of student's ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and other personality-defining characteristics (Whaley et al., 2019).

A deeper understanding of students' needs necessitates differentiated treatment, education, and testing approaches. To be effective instructors, teachers must learn about their students' unique cultural experiences while using these personal experiences as a foundation for teaching (Redding, 2019). Student differences should be acknowledged, reviewed, accepted, and utilized as instructional tools in this teaching style. Teachers who apply these methods will effectively teach the whole child to create an open, welcoming, comfortable environment for the students to express themselves, think, process, and learn the content each school day (Redding, 2019).

The student population, nationally and state-wide, has undergone a significant demographic shift over the past decade, with projections indicating continued growth in the coming years (Ingersoll et al., 2021). While teacher demographics are gradually becoming more diverse nationwide (Garlough & Savitz, 2023), the teaching profession still primarily reflects a White, middle-class background. This trend is evident in the national population, as reported by the 2020 U.S. Census Bureau: White (70%), Hispanic (18%), Black or African American (12%), and other races (less than 1%). Notably, Texas presents a different picture, with a more balanced racial and ethnic composition: White (39.8%), Hispanic (39.2%), Black or African American (12%), and other races (less than 8%). While people of color comprise roughly 30% of the population nationally, Texas has a significantly more diverse population, with people of color accounting for nearly 60% of the state's residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020).

Therefore, a demographic difference exists between the student population and the teaching staff. In Texas, high-minority public schools (where 75% or more students are from

underrepresented racial/ethnic groups), only 47% of teachers belong to those groups (Ingersoll et al., 2021). This pattern is consistent for high-poverty schools as well, where just 30% of teachers come from underrepresented backgrounds (Ingersoll et al., 2021).

Problem Statement

Hispanic residents are projected to drive Texas's population growth over the next decade (Irwin et al., 2022). However, recent data suggests a decline in enrollment in teacher preparation among aspiring teachers from Asian, Black, and Hispanic backgrounds (Howard, 2019), which could lead to a teacher workforce that continues to reflect a White European American demographic (Kim, 2020). Studies indicate that most (80% - 93%) of students enrolled in teacher preparation programs are White (Souto-Manning, 2019). These trends raise important questions about ensuring that the future teaching force understands and represents the growing diversity and needs of the diverse student populations in Texas classrooms.

Ensuring a positive learning environment for all students requires a multifaceted approach. While fostering a diverse teaching staff is ideal, a strong focus on pedagogical practices during teacher training is equally essential (La Salle et al., 2020). Effective teaching strategies catering to various learning styles and backgrounds can empower all students to connect with the curriculum and achieve academic success (La Salle et al., 2020). Equipping educators with these skills helps create a truly inclusive classroom environment, regardless of the teachers' and students' racial and cultural backgrounds.

Many teacher education programs are still struggling to adequately prepare preservice teachers to succeed with the challenge of teaching a diverse student population (Redding, 2019). These challenges are generally due to factors such as the limited cultural knowledge bases of teacher educators and students, the disconnection of theory from practice, and curricula

historically grounded in traditional Eurocentric styles of pedagogy (Redding, 2019). This disparity has far-reaching implications and presents an unprecedented challenge for today's public schools.

The demographic landscape is evolving as the U.S. population continues to expand. The nation is becoming increasingly diverse, spanning across various ethnicities and cultures. To best serve their diverse classrooms, new teachers need training on multiple teaching styles and cultural backgrounds to understand and meet the individual needs of their students.

Unfortunately, the continuing problem within many institutions that offer teacher education preparation and training programs is that these programs have not changed or adequately remodeled the curriculum to reflect the changing world (Rowan et al., 2021). The few remodeling efforts that have taken effect have not changed as swiftly as the population has changed within the educational system. Teacher preparation curricula often does not include adequate instruction in techniques and best practices for teaching diverse student populations (Rowan et al., 2021). Focusing on these platforms would enhance transparency and demonstrate a solid commitment to cultivating cultural competence and embracing diversity. Equipping educators with the necessary tools would empower them to address the evolving needs of these students effectively.

Schools of education and teacher preparation programs must provide sufficient curricula that will prepare educators to successfully adapt to, understand, and equitably educate future diverse student populations (Redding, 2019). Scholars agree (e.g., Gorski and Parekh, 2020) that teacher education programs on numerous college and university campuses offer multicultural teacher education programs that are not multicultural or have a consistently focused curriculum around culturally relevant pedagogy. When assessed by the standards of the multicultural

education models designed by scholars Banks (2003), Nieto (2004), Gorski (2009), Grant and Sleeter (2006), and other theorists, they do not align with or include vital components of multicultural education (Redding, 2019). Thus, there is a need to investigate if the curricula these preparation programs provide are informing graduates to learn culturally relevant teaching strategies.

Purpose

While fostering connections between students and teachers who share similar backgrounds can be beneficial, the decreasing number of teachers of color entering the field presents a challenge (Redding, 2019). However, cultivating teacher and student connections remains crucial for all students. Teacher preparation programs can play a vital role by incorporating a solid multicultural component to better address the diverse student population's needs and learning styles. These programs can equip educators, regardless of their background, with the cultural competence and understanding needed to build positive relationships with students from diverse ethnicities, races, and cultures (Redding, 2019). Mandating such training within teacher preparation programs ensures all future educators have the resources to create inclusive learning environments.

This study investigates whether preservice teachers perceive they received training to teach diverse student populations with culturally relevant teaching practices and techniques to create successful learning outcomes. This study also explores how multicultural teacher training during teacher preparation programs impacts novice teachers' perceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural teaching techniques. Lastly, this study examines the experiences of these novice teachers working with diverse student populations.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study are:

RQ1: How do recently certified teachers describe their teacher preparation with culturally relevant teaching practices and techniques to create successful learning environments and outcomes for their diverse student populations?

RQ2: How does multicultural teacher education training during preservice programs impact novice teachers' perceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural teaching techniques?

RQ3: How do novice teachers describe their experiences working with diverse populations?

Definitions

Being familiar with these key terms is essential to understand this study better.

Racial colorblindness, as defined by Jun (2020), refers to the idea that treating everyone equally regardless of race or ethnicity leads to better racial relations. However, failure to see and acknowledge racial differences makes it difficult to recognize the unconscious biases everyone has. Those biases can taint a teacher's expectations of a student's ability and negatively influence a student's performance.

Culturally relevant pedagogy is a framework rooted in social justice for systematically addressing the pervasive gaps in students' educational experiences from historically marginalized communities (Darling-Hammond & Oakes, 2021). Culturally relevant pedagogy then requires teachers to enter recursive processes of acknowledging their attitudes, dispositions, and worldviews because teachers may hold beliefs that conflict with those of the minoritized students. By buying into their values and beliefs, teachers can attempt to reconcile their

perspectives with students' values and viewpoints as they work toward bridging gaps in achievement for the students of color they serve (Redding, 2019). These culturally relevant pedagogy-oriented teachers reject teaching any standardized, one-size-fits-all curriculum developed according to the dominant culture's values. Instead, culturally responsive educators actively interact with diverse students based on their experiences to enable them to gain and apply new knowledge both in and out of school (Warren, 2018).

Cultural competence in education is "a teacher's ability to successfully teach students who came from cultures other than their own" (Moule, 2011, p. 5). Developing cultural competence allows us to learn from and build relationships with people from different backgrounds, enriching our understanding of the world. Cultural competence starts with self-discovery, acknowledging and understanding your cultural background and values. This journey then expands to embrace and respect the richness of others' cultures. Howard and Rodriguez-Minkoff (2017) added that enhancing teachers' cultural competence will increase their capacity to comprehensively understand how cultural knowledge is acquired, expressed, maintained, and transformed across space and time" (p. 113).

Multicultural education (M.E.), defined by McGee Banks and Banks (1995), is:

A field of study designed to increase educational equity for all students that incorporates, for the purpose, content, concepts, principles, theories, and paradigms from history, the social and behavioral sciences, and particularly from ethnic studies and women's studies. (p. xii)

Multicultural education has become a popular term in education whose meaning is varied, yet "as a reform movement, (it) has been described as shifting meanings of equality away from the emphasis on hierarchy and belonging, toward highlighting inclusion and community" (Zembylas

2020, p. 621). Multicultural education aims to help unify a deeply divided country rather than separate a highly cohesive one. This paper refers to multicultural education and culturally relevant education collectively and interchangeably.

Gloria Ladson-Billings introduced culturally relevant teaching to the educational world. She provided what is now considered a classic definition of culturally relevant teaching: “A pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural and historical referents to convey knowledge, to impart skills, and to change attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 13). Delpit’s (2006) way of looking at culturally relevant teaching resonated with many educators:

We all interpret behaviors, information, and situations through our cultural lenses; these lenses operate involuntarily, below the level of conscious awareness, making it seem that our view is simply “the way it is.” Learning to interpret across cultures demands reflecting on our experiences, analyzing our culture, and examining and comparing varying perspectives. We must consciously and voluntarily make our cultural lenses apparent. Engaging in the hard work of seeing the world as others see it must be a fundamental goal for any move to reform the education of teachers and their assessment. (p. 151)

This quote from Delpit argues that cultural biases, often operating unconsciously, shape our interpretations of students and teaching situations. To achieve effective education reform, educators must recognize their biases, actively consider diverse perspectives, reflect on their personal experiences, analyze their cultural background, and understand how viewpoints differ (Parkhouse et al., 2023). Ultimately, seeing the world through students' eyes is crucial for improving teacher education and assessment practices. Delpit was tireless in her call for cultural

relevancy for students but was adept at putting that relevancy in academic standards (Parkhouse et al., 2023).

Role of Researcher/Research Positionality

I grew up in a middle-class, middle-income family. My parents and maternal grandparents are college-educated, have earned degrees, and have careers mainly in education. We lived in a minority-majority neighborhood and attended schools that reflected this norm. As I reflect on the teachers I had in my primary schooling, I realize some created space and opportunity to connect school and home life, and some simply just taught us the required grade-level curriculum year to year. My former teachers, who made those meaningful connections, created a positive atmosphere for me and bonded with my parents. They helped me feel comfortable and helped my parents trust that school was a safe, open space conducive to my learning. These connections are one of the most significant factors leading to my academic success throughout schooling and sparked my interest in becoming a teacher one day.

I also, unfortunately, witnessed teachers and administrators along my educational path who didn't create or foster any relationship outside of the 8 a.m. -3 p.m. pupil and teacher relationship, and therefore, those close and trusting relationships were absent as well as any real connection to me, my family or my cultural norms and characteristics. Reflecting on my education, I recognize that certain teachers and their approaches significantly impacted my ability to grasp and excel in the subject matter compared to others. As I matriculated through various grade levels, I experienced multiple types of motivation and enthusiasm in the different teacher's delivery of the daily lessons. Some teachers employed creative teaching methods, using popular music and catchphrases to bridge the gap between the curriculum and our understanding. In contrast, others were not as enthusiastic or creative, and teaching sometimes appeared like a

chore and laborious. Reflecting on my education, I believe stronger relationships between my early teachers and our families as students could have been beneficial. Teachers could have fostered more effective learning environments by better understanding our home lives and needs, ultimately promoting academic success and a healthy home-school balance.

My education began at a private school with a curriculum considered ahead of its time compared to public schools in the 1980s. My brother and I were two of six African American students in our respective grade levels out of about 60 students. From the earliest memory of my time at this school, the teachers and administration were all White, and I do not remember seeing any staff of diverse backgrounds. The differences between the makeup of most students and staff and ourselves became more visible as we got older. The principal's office became familiar with minor infractions, which had severe consequences. My parents soon became aware of this and pulled us from this school due to the *inappropriate disciplinary* actions that we experienced.

The effects of this experience formed a perception in my mind at a very young age that "White teachers didn't like me." This mindset was particularly daunting because most teachers at the private school were white. After starting at a new public school, the environment was completely different in terms of the school demographics. At least half of the teachers at my new school looked like me, African American, sounded like me and matched me and my family racially and culturally. These teachers were much more comforting, relatable and created a safe and nurturing environment where we felt valued, respected, and accepted. The presence of more African American teachers allowed for meaningful connections and communication between the school and my parents. In this environment, school seemed like an extension of my family, and teachers seemed more like extended aunts and uncles. As a result, my brother and I rarely had behavior issues and were seldom sent to the principal's office for any matters. As all kids need

redirecting at times, these teachers took that time to support our emotional well-being by establishing clear expectations for behavior, promoting inclusivity, and fostering positive relationships. They took the time to sculpt the whole child. This positive guidance resulted in my brother and I excelling academically and athletically through the school's academic and sports programs. Furthermore, we received full college scholarships to a public institution in Texas, where we both obtained teaching degrees in our respective disciplines. We have both furthered our education with advanced master's degrees in educational studies.

After finishing college, I was hired as a teacher in a Texas urban school district and started teaching at a low-income school populated by at-risk students of color. Unfortunately, no culturally relevant teaching components or multicultural teacher educational classes were available or offered in my teacher certification program from 2002 to 2004. Disappointingly, none of my coursework included extensions or insertions focused on cultural competency. There was no dedicated practice, material, or academic emphasis on diversity, multicultural teacher education, or equipping us with the skills and techniques necessary to navigate the diverse student populations we would encounter in our future classrooms. My clinical teaching experiences did have diversity in the aspect of students in different grade levels and ages, but not much diversity in race and culture of the student body. As a result, I started my teaching career in a *sink-or-swim situation*.

My teaching career started in an urban school with a 95% Hispanic, majority Spanish-speaking student body. As an African American, I was instantly a minority on this campus. I had to learn my student's cultural norms, situate myself in their cultural environment, and attempt to teach them successfully while acclimating to my "teacher-hood" as a first-year teacher. During the 2004-2005 school year, I guided my diverse group of third graders through the curriculum,

aiming for optimal learning outcomes and success on the state-mandated standardized tests.

Now, 20 years later, I am still teaching at this same campus. I have seen various trends in learning modalities as an ESL (English as a Second Language) elementary school teacher within a school district and school alike, with high diversity in the student body but minimal diversity in the teacher population. Over the past 20 years, the demographic makeup of the teaching staff at the school has transformed tremendously. The campus's student body is 99% Hispanic and 100% low-income. When I started teaching at this campus in 2004, the campus's teaching population was 70% White, 25% Hispanic, and 5% African American. The current teacher makeup is 15% White, 75% Hispanic, and 10% African American. As a teacher here, I have learned that how I interact with the students and the families I teach is essential to their academic success and beyond.

Instead of exclusively teaching from a textbook, I am the type of teacher who prefers to *go off the grid*. I have scoured the internet and other sources to find texts and materials that appeal to my students' cultural interests, backgrounds, and heritage. Tailoring my instructional planning to my students has enabled me to maintain high expectations for them while educating them meaningfully about themselves culturally and connecting academic skills to the mandated curriculum to create lessons that employ meaningful curricular materials. As an African American educator in a predominantly Hispanic environment, I strive to integrate aspects of my culture, values, and traditions into the classroom. Incorporating these aspects allows me to connect with students and parents on a deeper level and provides them with valuable insights into different cultural perspectives.

Following earning my master's degree in 2010, I encountered the field of culturally relevant pedagogy, now more commonly known as multicultural education. Culturally relevant

pedagogy focuses on multicultural education and advocates for the best strategies when working with high majority-minority student populations. Adopting the techniques has worked well with many of my students over the past decade as I have incorporated them more and more each school year. However, the stark reality that my undergraduate and master's degrees had no components for educating with multiculturalism or culturally relevant teaching techniques to work with diverse student bodies was shocking. Witnessing the growing diversity of student bodies and recognizing the absence of these components in my teacher training program sparked a professional interest in examining how colleges and universities currently prepare future educators through their teacher preparation curricula.

My research delves into the current state of multicultural teacher preparation programs in Texas. Specifically, it examines whether these programs, as mandated by the State Department of Public Education, now integrate essential teaching and learning components for working with diverse student populations, considering the significant increase in classroom diversity over the past two decades. This research investigates how novice teachers describe their teacher preparation with culturally relevant teaching practices and techniques to create successful learning environments and outcomes for their diverse student populations. Also, this research investigates how multicultural teacher education training during teacher preparation programs impacts novice teachers' perceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural teaching techniques. Furthermore, it investigates novice teachers' experiences with diverse populations.

Additionally, with a changing world and classroom each school year, policymakers and educational leaders must step up and emphasize teaching multicultural concepts and strategies with all teacher preparation programs. Implementing these steps would demonstrate a clear recognition by educational policymakers of the critical need for future educators to possess these

multicultural competencies. These tools will be essential for navigating the increasingly diverse student populations in classrooms.

Theoretical Framework

Culturally appropriate (or relevant) education has been the subject of several theorists (e.g., Aronson and Laughter, 2016; Dover, 2013). Aronson and Laughter's 2016 culturally relevant education provides a conceptual framework that serves as a lens for this study. Aronson and Laughter (2016) explain how teachers can incorporate their students' cultural backgrounds in their classrooms by using culturally relevant education. This conceptual framework posits that teachers promote equity and attempt meaningful change in the school by highlighting students' cultural experiences rather than ignoring them. This framework is used in this study to analyze novice teachers' perceptions. Culturally relevant education is also known as culturally relevant teaching. To incorporate culturally relevant teaching into classrooms, Dover (2013) labeled four "constructivist methods" (p. 6) for using culturally relevant education in a school: (a) use of culture as a bridge for academic skills and concepts, (b) critical reflection, (c) cultural competence, and (d) the critique of discourses of power.

The first method relates to teachers' ability to *connect academic skills and concepts with culture*. Culturally relevant teachers incorporate their students' cultural backgrounds in their classrooms and combine this with their students' understanding of the academic skills and concepts mandated by the curriculum (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). For example, when teachers design lessons for their culturally diverse students, they want to choose a book that interests them first (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Next, teachers must consider what books could address students' target academic skills and concepts from the required state standards. Therefore, the teacher can identify two or three state standards in the selected text that they believe will engage

the culturally diverse students. This choice is an example of linking the students' backgrounds and the curricular demands to create a lesson and select meaningful curricular materials.

As evidenced in the second method, teachers' *facilitation of students' critical reflection on their lives and society is present in culturally relevant education*. Culturally relevant teachers employ classroom activities and opportunities for students to examine their lives and home culture critically (Dover, 2013). For example, a teacher may select a book where a group of space aliens unexpectedly arrived in the United States. This storyline would allow the teacher to facilitate conversations about the parallels between beings from outer space and immigrants new to this country and how race relations impact social, political, and economic interactions in society under the umbrella of science. This subject matter encourages critical reflection for incorporating culturally relevant education in their classrooms (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

The third method is teachers' capability to *build students' cultural competence to take pride in their culture*. Culturally relevant teachers equip their students with the cultural competence necessary to understand and take pride in their own cultures while also learning and appreciating the cultures of others (Dover, 2013). For example, the teacher can teach all students about immigrants' cultural experiences in a science class. However, some non-culturally relevant teachers limit cultural competence in science to such one-time activities as tasting the foods of other cultures during holiday celebrations because of the similar physical and chemical reactions involved in cooking and surface activities. Instead, culturally relevant teachers provide lessons that allow students to develop a more profound sense of cultural competence by planning discussions that require students to hear and understand each other's varied experiences and perspectives about life (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

Lastly, culturally relevant teachers use *critiques of discourses of power* with

intentionality. Culturally relevant teachers expose oppression among institutional systems and facilitate understanding of the presence and functioning of power structures within their environments (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). For example, in a math lab, students can discuss questions such as (a) "Black Americans make up about 30% of the population. What would happen to our economy if we lost that many people?" (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Laughter & Adams, 2012, p. 1125); (b) "Do you think having a Black president means the U.S. is not racist?" (p. 1124). This approach intertwines math concepts, like calculating population percentages in various scenarios, into a social context relevant to the students' lives. For example, it might explore the impact of Black people on the economy. While this line of inquiry may be uncomfortable for some, culturally relevant teachers understand how using unsettling topics and moments to facilitate a conversation is necessary to help students understand the nature of power within institutions.

Despite the evidence suggesting that using culturally relevant teaching in the classroom enhances student outcomes, motivation, and engagement, the types of courses preservice teachers need to develop culturally relevant teaching in practice while in teacher education are dwindling and seemingly non-existent (Butin, 2005; Neumann, 2010). In addition, the lack of research connecting the development of this conceptual framework in teacher education to its impact on student achievement makes it difficult to argue its importance to policymakers. A more detailed framework is crucial to evaluate current teacher preparation programs comprehensively. This framework should focus on the effectiveness of multicultural components and curricula and, more specifically, assess the design and implementation of multicultural components in the curriculum for preservice teachers.

Another theorist of culturally relevant education, Gorski (2009) identified five defining

principles for multiculturalism in preservice teacher education. This study draws upon Gorski's principles, which are grounded in the historical scholarship on definitions and conceptions of multicultural education scholars (such as Banks, 2004a; Grant & Sleeter, 2006; Nieto, 2004; Sleeter, 1996). The five defining principles of multicultural education, according to Gorski (2009), are:

1. Multicultural education is a bureaucratic movement and process that attempts to secure equal opportunities for underserved and disadvantaged students.
2. Multicultural education recognizes that some individual classroom practices are consistent with multicultural education norms. Yet, social justice is institutional and can only be secured through comprehensive school reform and program buy-in.
3. Multicultural education insists that inclusive school reform can be achieved only by critically examining the systems of power and privilege that are in place.
4. Multicultural education's underlying goal, the purpose of this critical investigation, is to remove educational inequalities.
5. Multicultural education is intended to be a good education for *all* students.

The consensus among scholars of multicultural education practices, including multicultural teacher education, holds that such practice, with these principles, creates an excellent multicultural education program (Gorski, 2009).

Significance

There has been an increase in the number of Hispanic children in the U.S. as well as in Texas. Reflecting broader demographic trends, the proportion of white children aged 17 and under has declined significantly. In a 2019 report, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) used consistent demographic identifiers to project the qualities of K-12 student

enrollment from 2020 to 2025: The Asian American student population is projected for the most significant growth, surging from 5.9% to 6.4%. Black American and Hispanic student populations will increase slightly, from 15.0% to 15.1% and 27.5% to 27.6%, respectively. The White American student population faces a projected decline from 46.1% to 44.6%. This trend aligns with broader demographic changes in the United States, where students of color, who already comprise half of all children and births, according to NCES (2019) and McFarland et al. (2019), are likely to become the statistical majority.

Kim and Connelly (2019) assert that the ever-increasing diversity that students bring to classrooms produces mass confusion for novice teachers about how to teach, what to teach, and the best instructional strategies to adapt teaching effectively. The diversity of the population served by the public education systems is already experiencing systematic inequities and adverse outcomes in overall student achievement. It is also forcing more and more educators to question their beliefs and prejudices (Kim & Connelly, 2019). The need for all teachers to be prepared to teach students effectively can hardly be understated; it is now a demographic imperative (Banks, 2020), leading to the need for research to support educators in fostering inclusive learning environments. The current study sheds light on teachers' lives and experiences working with culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse students, ultimately informing best practices for success in all classrooms.

Summary

This chapter introduced the study and its components for conducting the research. Chapter 2 reviews the literature relevant to this research study, and Chapter 3 breaks down the research methodology and participants. Chapter 4 will lay out the findings from the research conducted for this study, and finally, Chapter 5 will include a discussion, conclusion, and

recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This dissertation investigates the perceptions of newly certified teachers on three critical aspects of their teacher preparation programs: (1) how recently certified teachers describe their teacher preparation with culturally relevant teaching practices and techniques to create successful learning environments and outcomes for their diverse student populations; (2) how multicultural education training during preservice programs impacts novice teachers' perceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural teaching techniques; (3) how new teachers describe their experiences working with diverse student populations. This literature review focuses on multicultural teacher education, the educational components, theories, and frameworks. This chapter concludes by introducing the conceptual and theoretical frameworks that guide this study: Aronson and Laughter's (2016) culturally relevant education, Dover's (2013) four constructivist methods, and Gorski's (2009) five defining principles for multiculturalism in preservice teacher education.

Demographic Imperative

Today's teacher preparation programs and the teaching force are slowly changing, but still mirror the teacher populations and programs from over two decades ago, as they are still overwhelmingly white, female, and middle class (Howard, 2019; Jupp et al., 2019). From 2014 to 2020, the percentage of Black/African American teachers was approximately 11%, Hispanic was 27%, and 5% other. During this time frame, the majority of the teaching force, 55%, was White (Texas Education Agency, 2021). Research suggests that some teacher candidates may benefit from increased exposure to culturally and economically diverse learning environments during their preparation programs (Warren, 2018). This exposure can provide valuable insights

into students' experiences from various backgrounds. By integrating diverse perspectives and experiences into teacher training, educators can develop culturally responsive teaching practices that promote positive student-teacher relationships and academic success (Warren, 2018).

Teacher preparation programs face the critical challenge of equipping future educators with the skills needed for success in today's classrooms. These skills encompass a broad range of areas, including classroom management, communication, technology integration, content knowledge, and reflective practice for continuous improvement (Darling-Hammond & Oakes, 2021). Additionally, fostering cultural competence is essential as classrooms become increasingly diverse. Teacher preparation programs can play a crucial role in equipping all preservice teachers, regardless of their background, with the knowledge and skills to create inclusive learning environments that celebrate the rich diversity of their students' cultures, languages, and communities (Darling-Hammond & Oakes, 2021).

Diversity is a dynamic agent of social change not fully embraced by higher education institutions (Karacabey et al., 2019). In today's colleges and universities, diversity is considered a transformative tool that allows universities to achieve their mission and contribute to the betterment of society (Karacabey et al., 2019; Smith, 2020). Notwithstanding the longstanding relationship between diversity and American history, colleges and universities still fail to accept diversity and multiculturalism due to their traditionalist nature (Mohamad Karkouti, 2016). This failure results in students of all races not receiving the educational benefits of diverse learning environments (Quaye et al., 2019; Smith, 2020). Furthermore, faculty of color (i.e., Asian American, Hispanic, Black, and Native American) represent only 17% of the total full-time faculty in the United States. Historically, education schools have traditionally been equally slow to increase their African American, Indigenous, and Asian faculties. Composed of 87% and 96%

of education professors, the high percentage of white professors reinforces what one researcher called the *pitifully homogeneous* higher education faculty (Howard & Milner, 2021).

Based on Howard and Milner (2021), there is a teacher quality and training gap. In addition, the uniqueness of every educator's approach to teaching, shaped by personal teacher identity, makes every classroom *look* different. Therefore, it is essential to understand the standards created that require the inclusion of multiculturalism in teacher preparation programs.

Educational Policy for Teacher Preparation

Several educational organizations have attempted to create dialogue and opportunities to increase the presence of multicultural constructs, such as culturally relevant pedagogy, in teacher preparation programs within higher learning institutions through educational policies and program requirements (Hughes, 2021). For example, professional organizations such as AACTE (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education) and NCATE (National Council for Accreditation for Teacher Education) in the 1970s and early 1980s began to advocate for teacher education programs to include multicultural and diversity issues in the curriculum (Hughes, 2021).

In 1973, the AACTE endorsed the nature of multicultural education by adopting a widely disseminated policy statement (Grant, 1978; Howard & Navarro, 2016). In this statement, *No One Model American*, the responsibility for schools to respond to issues of pluralism in their curriculum and practices had been on the public agenda (Howard & Navarro, 2016). Shortly after, the NCATE issued standards requiring all member institutions to focus more on diversity in their curriculum, instruction, and field placements. Explicitly recognizing the importance of preparing preservice teachers to be able to teach students in their racially and ethnically diverse classrooms, the (NCATE) added multicultural education and teaching for diversity to its

standards in 1976, requiring that institutions of higher education seeking accreditation show evidence that they incorporate such content in their programs (Banks, 2004). These NCATE standards require all member teacher education institutions in the U.S. to implement components, courses, and programs in multicultural education (Banks, 2004). Later, NCATE predicated teacher education program accreditation on preservice teachers' preparation for supporting the learning of all students (Thompson, 2023). NCATE established and reified the inclusion of multicultural education courses in teacher education programs.

Over four decades ago, in 1977, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 1979; Wetherington, 2017) adopted the multicultural education standard and set the standards for accrediting teacher education programs, which became effective in 1979. This standard was a significant factor that energized the growth of multicultural education curricula in teacher preparation programs. This standard stated: "The institution gives verification of planning for multicultural education in its teacher education curricula, including both the professional and general studies components" (NCATE, 1979; Wetherington, 2017). While very broad, this standard was primarily left up to institutions and schools of education to interpret the criteria for evidence of planning for multicultural education in their programs (Wetherington, 2017).

In the last century, the NCATE and the AACTE have included the need to address diversity in the preparation of teachers (Borrero et al., 2016). Despite formally adopted teacher-preparation requirements, recent studies have indicated that many in-service and preservice educators hold limited visions and conceptions regarding what is involved in implementing effective multicultural education (McGee Banks & Banks, 1995). Along with the (NCATE), the TEAC (Teacher Education Accreditation Council), established in 1997, also played a crucial role

in ensuring the quality of academic programs for educators (pre-K through grade 12) across the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2021).

After an extensive review of changes in teacher education over two decades, despite the healthy intentions of the AACTE statement and the subsequent NCATE and TEAC standards, Gollnick (1995) and Cherng and Davis (2019) found significantly few substantive changes related to diversity in teacher education colleges and universities. In addition, the leisurely pace of changes has resulted in uneven efforts to transform preservice and practicing teachers' curricula, programs, and clinical placements (Cherng & Davis, 2019).

In September 2014, NCATE and TEAC merged with the CAEP. The CAEP (Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation) components flow from these two principles (CAEP, 2015; Sinclair et al., 2016). These two prior principles indicate that graduates are competent and caring educators. There must be substantial evidence that the educational staff can create and use a culture of evidence to maintain and enhance the quality of the professional programs. CAEP holds teacher education programs responsible for appropriately preparing their teacher candidates and meeting state standards (Thompson, 2023).

Building upon the institutional knowledge of prior accrediting bodies, the CAEP implements five essential standards. The aim is to elevate the value of accreditation and encourage broader participation in the accreditation process. However, upon close examination, the five CAEP 2022 initial level standards (see Table 1) are listed and required but do not explicitly or extensively discuss *how* teacher candidates must effectively teach diverse groups of students.

Table 1*CAEP Standards: 2022 Initial Level Standards (caepnet.org)*

Standard	Description
Standard 1: Content and Pedagogical Knowledge	<p>The provider ensures that candidates develop an understanding of the critical concepts and principles of their discipline and facilitates candidates' reflection of their personal biases to increase their understanding and practice of equity, diversity, and inclusion. The provider is intentional in the development of their curriculum and clinical experiences for candidates to demonstrate their ability to effectively work with diverse P-12 students and their families.</p>
Standard 2: Clinical Partnerships and Practice	<p>The provider ensures effective partnerships and high-quality clinical practice are central to candidate preparation. These experiences should be designed to develop the candidate's knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions to demonstrate positive impact on diverse students' learning and development. High-quality clinical practice offers candidates experiences in different settings and modalities and with diverse P-12 students, schools, families, and communities. Partners share the responsibility to identify and address real problems of practice candidates experience in their engagement with P-12 students.</p>

Table 1 continued

Standard	Description
Standard 3: Candidate Recruitment, Progression, and Support	The provider demonstrates the quality of candidates is a continuous and purposeful focus from recruitment through completion. The provider demonstrates that development of candidate quality is the goal of educator preparation and that the EPP provides support services (such as advising, remediation, and mentoring) in all phases of the program so candidates will be successful.
Standard 4: Program Impact	The provider demonstrates the effectiveness of its completers' instruction on P-12 student learning and development and completer and employer satisfaction with the relevance and effectiveness of preparation.
Standard 5: Quality Assurance System and Continuous Improvement	The provider maintains a quality assurance system that consists of valid data from multiple measures and supports continuous improvement that is sustained and evidence based. The system is developed and maintained with input from internal and external stakeholders. The provider uses the results of inquiry and data collection to establish priorities, enhance program elements, and highlight innovations.

Diversity is briefly included and discussed in a catch-all statement in the definition of *all*

P–12 students: "children or youth attending P–12 schools with exceptionalities or disabilities, students who represent diversity based on gender, language, ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, religion, sexual identification, and geographic origin and students that are gifted" (CAEP, 2015; Sinclair et al., 2016). Shockingly, Standard 2: Clinical Partnerships and Practice, completely overlooks diversity:

The provider works with partners to design clinical experiences of sufficient depth, breadth, diversity, coherence, and duration to ensure that candidates demonstrate their developing effectiveness and positive impact on all students learning and development. Clinical experiences, including technology-enhanced learning opportunities, are structured to have multiple performance-based assessments at key points within the program to demonstrate candidates' stories of the skills, knowledge, and professional placements, as delineated in Standard 1, that relates to a positive impact on the learning and development of all P–12 students. (CAEP, 2015, p. 1)

Field and clinical experiences are pertinent to the learning process and preservice knowledge teachers acquire while formulating their teaching modalities before they exit the training programs and enter their classrooms (Sinclair et al., 2016). These experiences also require teacher candidates to implement all they have learned throughout their courses and content in authentic classroom situations. This standard does not require teacher candidates to engage in clinical experiences in diverse communities that serve underrepresented and often under-served student populations. This standard also does not require teacher candidates to develop culturally relevant or multicultural practices to impact diverse student populations positively (Sinclair et al., 2016). While Standard 2 includes the term *diverse*, the lack of a specific definition opens the door to misinterpretations and potentially undermines its intended impact. The purpose of the

standard is to ensure field experiences happen in settings with diverse student populations. However, the vague use of "diversity" could be interpreted as simply *requiring a variety of experiences*, potentially neglecting the importance of serving a multicultural student body (Sinclair et al., 2016).

A review of the previous NCATE standards (2008) revealed that the CAEP standards might have gone backward regarding diversity competency and requirements. However, the NCATE standards did include diversity amongst the field/clinical experience standards and described being on target as:

Extensive and substantive field experiences and clinical practices for conventional and distance learning programs are designed to encourage candidates to interact with exceptional students and students from diverse groups. The experiences help candidates confront diversity issues that influence student learning and teaching. These experiences also develop strategies for improving student learning and candidates' effectiveness as teachers. (NCATE, 2008, p. 36)

Although under the former NCATE 2008 standard, "substantive and extensive field experience" to "confront issues of diversity" was required, many teacher education programs continually reduce the significance of these diverse clinical experiences (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Hollins, 2015). Also, engagement in clinical experiences within various settings without prior knowledge and training about diverse populations often reinforced teacher candidates' negative perceptions and biases of communities of color (Allen et al., 2017).

Teacher education programs in higher education institutions are expected to meet CAEP standards by embedding diversity issues throughout all courses and field experiences (CAEP, 2013; Heafner et al., 2014). These requirements benefit the teacher candidates by immersing

them in experiences within environments with students with diverse needs. These include frequently seen needs in more and more classrooms, such as learning disabilities, students from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds, and gifted students. In addition, higher education institutions report that when students have opportunities to access a curriculum addressing diversity issues, they tend to develop culturally sensitive educators' skills and knowledge (Joseph & Evans, 2018).

An infused approach integrates topics of diversity within other teacher education courses, such as general curriculum courses or educational studies courses (Howard, 2019; Urbani et al., 2017). This approach allows teacher candidates to directly connect curriculum, policy, and pedagogy with social issues related to diversity and inclusion (Korthagen, 2016). In contrast, a separate approach enables explicit, focused, and often extended study on specific topics related to educational diversity. These courses are typically elective rather than core program requirements (Glock et al., 2019).

Infusing the curriculum with topics of cultural diversity may help expand the vision of prospective teachers. Using a social justice lens can also influence how future teachers think about, relate to, and work with students of diverse backgrounds (Lambeth & Smith, 2016). Even more important, to give the topic of diversity a positive status in the general teacher education program, schools of education will have to recruit a more diverse faculty with specific training and experience in multicultural education and second-language acquisition.

Multicultural Education

In our present 21st-century educational and academic world, it is impractical to expect to enter a K-12 school setting without witnessing the presence of some form of multiculturalism (Adygezalova, 2021). Globalization has created large-scale immigration flows around the world,

as well as processes of integration and assimilation of various groups and ethnicities, actualizing the phenomenon of multiculturalism (Adygezalova, 2021). It is necessary to recognize the importance of forming conditions conducive to developing positive forms of multiculturalism. Among them is a well-considered state policy that defines the norms of multiculturalism. These norms will find their place in learning and teaching at different levels (Adygezalova, 2021). With this approach, multiculturalism should aim to consolidate all ethnic groups into a single society with shared values and ideals and recognize the rights of these groups to cultural and ethno-confessional autonomy (Adygezalova, 2021). With such a diverse student body encompassing classrooms of today, there is a need to include multiculturalism as a separate and mandatory subject in higher education courses.

Multicultural education reflects freedom and liberation, likely involving controversy and debate (Dixson, 2018). Theorists and practitioners such as James A. Banks, Gwendolyn Baker, Carl Grant, and Geneva Gay have worked to create new curricula and instructional practices that are utilized in classrooms to reflect the changes in the sociopolitical landscape in the United States. These pioneering scholars have challenged traditional Eurocentric educational approaches and systems (Dixson, 2018). Their work laid the groundwork for curriculum design frameworks that reflect the rich fabric of cultures, histories, and lived experiences of all people (races, ethnicities, and backgrounds).

Teachers can showcase multiculturalism in classrooms through various means, including storybook selections that reflect diverse cultures, bulletin board displays celebrating different backgrounds, and academic content integrated with multicultural perspectives within teacher and staff-created displays throughout the school building (Dixson, 2018). Schools actively represent multiculturalism through various programs and celebrations. These can focus on holidays

specific to cultural groups or even integrate multicultural perspectives into the everyday items students bring to school, like supplies. For example, in the last decade, Crayola created a *multicultural* crayon set with hues that purposely represent different skin tones of various races that are not formally a part of typical crayon sets (Dixson, 2018). The following section will delve into some of these early studies that paved the way for the development of multicultural education.

Background and Early Forms of Multicultural Education

In the early 1900s, the first educationally cultural movement, the cultural pluralism movement, began (Howard & Milner, 2021). Shortly behind that movement, in the 1930s, came the intercultural and intergroup educational movements, and in the 1960s, the ethnic studies movement. These precursor movements contributed to what we know today as the multicultural educational movement (Howard & Milner, 2021). Finally, the multicultural education movement emerged during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. This movement became the most practiced and targeted approach to equity education in the U.S. today (Sleeter, 2018).

Cultural pluralism was the first form of multicultural education in the early nineteenth century. Cultural pluralism promotes recognizing and accepting ethnic and religious differences as essential to American society (Banks, 2008). Although not widely supported, this movement argued that the presence and incorporation of "ethnic cultures would enrich U.S. civilization" (Banks, 2001, p. 21). The next multicultural education movement, born three decades later in the 1930s, was known as the intercultural and intergroup movements. The intercultural and intergroup movement focused on reducing stereotypes and promoting tolerance of diverse populations (Cho, 2017). The intercultural movement focused explicitly on the inequalities that immigrants faced, while the intergroup movement focused on the inequalities that people of

color faced. Over time, with more immigrants moving into the U.S. and assimilating into American society, the focus moved primarily to the inequity that immigrants face daily in this new country (Cho, 2017). These inequalities caused a nationwide shift in the educational focus toward multicultural education and a broadly conceptualized focus on discriminatory practices based on race, social class, gender, language, and exceptionalities (Cho, 2017).

Almost 30 years later, the ethnic studies movement surfaced. The ethnic studies movement centered around inclusionary educational policies and practices (Cho, 2017). The primary goal of this movement was to bring clarity and validity to the reporting, teaching, and learning about the history and culture of African Americans, Native Americans, Latin Americans, and Latinos (Cho, 2017). This curriculum revision aims to challenge the dominance of whiteness in education.

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s empowered African Americans to fight for educational equality and access, fueling a surge of energy and educational influence for broader societal change (Banks & Banks, 2019). The movement spurred African Americans to demand the inclusion of their histories, struggles, contributions, lives, and possibilities in school textbooks, school context, and the academic curriculum. This outcome was a successful attempt, and nationwide, schools began incorporating African American studies into the primary curriculum (Banks & Banks, 2019). In addition, minoritized ethnic and racial groups, including Mexican Americans, Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Asian Americans, also had similar demands for inclusion into primary schools, colleges, and university academic curriculums within the next decade.

With these demands and the rising diversity in the student populations, these academic settings complied and initiated adding multicultural education into the school curriculum. The

first phase of the multicultural education installment was Black studies (Banks & Banks, 2019). Black Studies, a part of ethnic studies with deep historical roots, was the first attempt in this new phase. Black Studies introduced multicultural education through heroes and holidays and became widespread in schools across the U.S. (Banks & Banks, 2019). Utilizing black studies in this manner was a systematic way to provide what Gutmann (2004) called "recognition" (p. 76) and "civic equality" (p. 74) for racial and ethnic groups whose struggles, experiences, hopes, and dreams had been excluded from the curriculum or marginalized within it.

Over time, multicultural education evolved in focus, name, and dimensions following population shifts and changes in the U.S. and worldwide (Kite & Whitley, 2016). As it is known globally today, multicultural education emerged from its roots in ethnic studies on the literary scene. It evolved through various terms like multiethnic studies and Black studies before solidifying multicultural education. With each shift and name change, though, components from the prior version of these studies remained and were carried over into the new phase (Kite & Whitley, 2016).

Multicultural education will continue to change and evolve as population trends shift and change (Kite & Whitley, 2016). The next phase of multicultural education will describe how cultural, racial, ethnic, language, and religious diversity can manifest in countries worldwide. Hand in hand with this focus, developing powerful concepts, theories, and practices to explain teaching and learning related to diversity across nations is imperative (Kite & Whitley, 2016). Thus, multicultural education in the modern day has reimaged its focus on the present and changing needs of a diverse student population. This section explored how multicultural teacher education is implemented in today's classrooms, preceded by a clear definition and description. The following section will discuss how educators and the academic world view multicultural

teacher education.

Perceptions of Multicultural Teacher Education

The idea that multicultural education is only for people of color and disenfranchised people is one of the most dangerous and damaging misconceptions the multicultural movement has encountered (Grant & Sleeter, 2008; Hollins, 2015). Despite all the research into multicultural education, many educators still view it as an entitlement program for the "others." As a result, educators, teachers, and administrators view multicultural education differently, create a marginalized mindset, and are held apart from mainstream education reform. Even though multicultural education is unfortunately still held in the margins rather than in the center of the curriculum in most schools and colleges, multicultural education content has slowly made substantial inroads into K-12 schools and within the college curricula over the past two decades (Grant & Sleeter, 2008; Hollins, 2015).

There are competing agendas in teacher education. Schools of educational instruction focus more on helping preservice teachers develop specializations and competencies but have little to do with diversity and social justice (Lui & Ball, 2019). In addition, different areas of faculty specialization reinforce detachment within education colleges. Thus, effective inclusive K-12 multicultural education implementation initially requires comprehensive teacher education curriculum reform.

Nieto (2000) suggests that teacher education programs need to (a) take a stand on social justice and diversity, (b) make social justice ubiquitous in teacher education, and (c) promote teaching as a life-long journey of transformation. Schools and colleges can better prepare teachers to work with linguistically, culturally, and socio-economically diverse students when they take a stand on social justice and diversity. Prospective and practicing teachers also need to

learn how to promote the learning of all students and develop educational environments that are fair and affirming (Gorski, 2016). When they focus on all-inclusive issues, education schools are more likely to design programs that advance teachers' values, attitudes, and skills to be fair and effective with all students.

Teacher education programs are a powerful driver for social justice and equality initiatives in K-12 schools nationwide. Their influence spans elementary, middle, and high school levels. While individual teachers can profoundly impact their students' lives, achieving widespread change requires these efforts to be complemented by collective and institutional changes (Genao, 2016). Teacher education programs can do this by offering current and prospective courses, development, and related experiences of the teacher that focus on questioning the equity and diversity that challenge deficit notions and unjustified assumptions about the potential of students of diverse backgrounds.

Apart from students' family background, a good teacher makes the most significant difference in student outcomes from schooling (Smolcic & Katunich, 2017). If not the essential component, teachers are integral in making a considerable difference and positively impacting the increasing student diversity in the school system. Therefore, the teacher must have the knowledge and experience to deliver impactful and meaningful instruction to all students. With this reality, we must find ways to improve the success of diverse students through targeted instruction and purposeful preparation in preservice teacher education.

Imagine if prospective teachers were trained solely to follow a prescribed curriculum, with no opportunity to question established practices. Still, they may lack the critical thinking skills necessary to adapt to a constantly evolving educational landscape. As a result, they are unlikely to examine teaching and schooling practices with a deeper lens (Genao, 2016; Hayes &

Juarez, 2011). Helping prospective teachers become critics of the systems they teach is a fundamental role of teacher education programs. This approach requires them to challenge the schools they will work in, the teacher education programs they will participate in, and the curriculum of their current programs. Taking a critical stance challenges teachers to question seemingly natural and neutral practices (Genao, 2016; Hayes & Juarez, 2011). In teacher education programs, a critical stance means that future teachers and professors should examine methods such as isolating multicultural and bilingual education as an elective or screening practice that makes it possible for a more diverse student body to become teachers.

What they learn in their teacher education programs can significantly impact the attitudes and practices those teachers bring to the schools and classrooms where they work (Clarke & Moore, 2013). The narrative for schools and universities needs to shift from focusing on assimilation as their goal to a plan of respect and affirmation for students of all backgrounds. When teacher education faculties fully embrace diversity and social justice, a profound shift in their worldview, ideology, and curriculum becomes essential (Clarke & Moore, 2013). Through such a process, schools and colleges of education can become more hopeful places because, in the long run, we will be preparing better teachers for all students. The promise of social justice and equal educational opportunity for all, still an elusive dream in our society, will be closer to becoming a reality.

Given the vastly unequal and adequate academic results among students of differing backgrounds, creating balanced conditions for student learning and outcomes needs to be at the core of diversity concerns (Gorski, 2016). A problem for social justice means looking critically at why and how our schools are unjust for some students. It means analyzing school policies and practices- the curriculum, textbooks and materials, instructional strategies, tracking, recruitment

and hiring of staff, and parent involvement- that devalue some students' identities while overvaluing others. When social justice is a significant lens through which we view all backgrounds, diversity gains prominence in the teacher education curriculum. From elementary to secondary levels, all courses should actively integrate diverse content (Gorski, 2016). In addition, pre-practicum and practicum placements, other field experiences, course assignments, and course readings should reflect support for racial, ethnic, linguistic, gender, and diversity. Diversity would become part of all prospective teachers' everyday experience and practice.

Shifts in Teacher Preparation

An essential focus in teacher education programs has shifted to preparing teachers for multicultural settings, mainly because of the cultural shifts in our school system due to the overwhelming increase in diversity in the U.S. population. This new level of diversity and its challenges have many teacher preparation programs trying hard to keep up, particularly in preparing the high population of White teachers for culturally diverse settings (Correa et al., 2014; Wyatt, 2017).

Despite rapid changes that have taken place in our society, some schools and colleges of education are still functioning and going about their day-to-day operation, as if we were preparing teachers for classrooms half a century ago that were not as diversified (Wyatt, 2017). These programs must change and adjust immediately to reach all students. We live in a new century with cultural and linguistic diversity, international communication, and tremendous access to information, so meeting this need should be paramount. Enormous inequalities and a lack of democratic opportunities for many people characterize this age (Wyatt, 2017). A rigorous and critical education is crucial and necessary for young people to learn meaningfully and appropriately in this new century. The immense demographic changes in our society have severe

implications for teacher education in the present and future (Wyatt, 2017).

Historically, the literature shows that teacher education programs have aimed to address diversity with an add-in or piecemeal approach, with little success (Mills & Ballantyne, 2016). The classic response of teacher education programs to the growing diversity among students has been to incorporate a course or two on multicultural education and leave the rest of the curriculum largely intact (Taylor et al., 2016). DeCapua (2016) mentions that Banks (2001), Sleeter (1995), and others have found that many preservice teachers go into and leave out of these stand-alone diversity courses unchanged and unaffected, often reiterating their stereotypical images of self and others in the process. These systems leave preservice teachers with numerous deficits in classrooms with diverse student populations.

Although integrating multicultural education content is slow and often contentious, multicultural content is increasingly becoming a part of core courses in schools and colleges. Textbook publishers are also integrating ethnic and cultural content into their books. The integration of diverse content is accelerating, with recent educational textbooks showcasing positive material improvements for multicultural education (Gorski, 2016). The teacher education textbooks dealing with multicultural education have expanded and become substantial. For example, one of Amazon's top ten best sellers in teacher educational books is "Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Asking a Different Question (Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy Series) (2021b) by Gloria Ladson-Billings. Culturally responsive pedagogy literature has shown great promise with the increased presence and number of researchers and authors meeting the need for research, data, and strategies. However, many educators still struggle with the implementation. In her 2021 book, Ladson-Billings explores the theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, providing concrete examples of its implementation in different subject areas and highlighting its

significance for preparing future educators. Most major education publishers now have at least one text dedicated to the field of study of multiculturalism (Wetherington, 2017).

The University of California at Berkeley, the University of Minnesota, and Stanford University are just a few of the nation's leading universities and colleges that have attempted to revise their general core curriculum over the most recent decades to include multicultural education in the curricula (Gay, 2018). These revisions have tried to include ethnic content or have established an ethnic studies course requirement in their programs. Each year, the list of more prestigious universities with similar conditions also starts to revise their curricula (Gay, 2018). Change is good, and revisions are necessary on college campuses to fit the growing diversity of the world and classroom. However, curriculum changes come slowly to university campuses (Gay, 2018), and those linked to race issues evoke primitive feelings and directly reflect the racial crisis present in American society.

Approaches to Multiculturalism in Teacher Preparation

The 21st century has experienced a more significant surge in multicultural education, with schools, colleges, and universities actively attempting to implement it across their programs. Many national conferences, school district workshops, and teacher education courses in multicultural education show its success and perceived importance (Banks & Banks, 2019). Many researchers have also created theories and frameworks to understand multicultural education components better and utilize them in curriculum options.

Teacher educators and preparation programs may falsely assume that prospective teachers of African American, Native American, Hispanic, and Asian American backgrounds are somehow automatically prepared to teach students of diverse backgrounds simply by their own experiences, but this is not always true (Kretchmar & Zeichner, 2016). Instead, schools and

colleges should provide prospective teachers equal opportunities to reflect on their identities and privileges before teaching children from diverse racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Learning critical information about one's students is not simply a technical strategy or picking up a few cultural tidbits, which only skims the surface (Kretchmar & Zeichner, 2016). Teachers will not become culturally or linguistically responsive simply by taking a course that reduces these concerns to strategies and techniques. Instead, students learn to think of themselves as learners when they identify with their teachers. This concept means developing solid and meaningful relationships with teachers, parents, and families (Kretchmar & Zeichner, 2016).

Teacher preparation programs can imbed positivity about the value of cultural diversity and the benefits of knowing a second language (Aragona-Young & Sawyer, 2018). But suppose they do not allow their students to learn another language or become multicultural. In that case, they lose a vital opportunity to put their beliefs into practice. Thus, schools of education need to make it worthwhile for students to dig deeper into becoming multilingual and multicultural by having incentives that help them view diversity as an asset and something to strive towards and add to their repertoire in their teacher toolboxes (Aragona-Young & Sawyer, 2018). This effort starts on the state level with educational policy.

Multicultural education cannot be addressed entirely by written national and state standards or a textbook series pushed into the school curriculum (Aragona-Young & Sawyer, 2018). Conversely, multicultural education involves continuous teaching and learning built upon concentrated attempts across the curricula to transform all learners' knowledge base, disposition, and skill sets (Jokikokko & Uitto, 2017). Therefore, preservice teacher education programs must step to the plate and heed this call for change and diversity preparation. One way to address this

call is by exploring various syllabi from multicultural teacher education courses presently taught across the United States. Gorski (2009) analyzed the theories and philosophies underlying multicultural teacher education course designs and recommended needed changes and revisions, called Five Defining Principles.

Five Defining Principles by Gorski

The (2009) study by Gorski analyzed various teacher education syllabi and reviewed the components of multicultural education and related topics taught in teacher education programs across the United States. Gorski and Parekh (2020) specifically focused on uncovering how the courses structured and conceptualized multicultural education. In addition, they also researched the history of definitions, conceptions, and principles that created an excellent multicultural education program from well-known scholars in the educational field, such as Vavrus (2002), Banks (2004), Cochran-Smith (2004), and Gorski (2006); The resulting five defining principles of multicultural education according to (Gorski, 2009) are:

1. Multicultural education is a bureaucratic movement and process that attempts to secure equal opportunities for underserved and disadvantaged students.
2. Multicultural education recognizes that some individual classroom practices are consistent with multicultural education norms. Yet, social justice is institutional and can only be secured through comprehensive school reform and program buy-in.
3. Multicultural education insists that inclusive school reform can be achieved only by critically examining the power and privilege systems in place.
4. Multicultural education's underlying goal, the purpose of this critical investigation, is to remove educational inequalities.
5. Multicultural education is intended to be a good education for *all* students.

These principles summarize the consensus among these well-known scholars on a good multicultural education program focus.

The (2009) research of Gorski of the 45-course syllabi for teacher preparation programs also uncovered some common themes present in most of the syllabi. One common theme was that most of the syllabi framed multicultural education in ways that supported dominance and continuance of the existing power relations by:

- Format using *other language* defines a person or group as being outside normalcy.
- *Presenting non-dominant groups as homogeneous.*
 - The practice of grouping all minorities as one identical group.
 - Used the “contributions approach,” which references the various groups primarily in terms of surface-level traits and contributions.
- *Defining multicultural education through a market-centric or capitalistic lens.*
 - Preparing teachers to handle diversity by understanding people from various identity groups requires a surface-level understanding.

The examination of the courses revealed that they aimed to equip preservice teachers with the skills to identify and eliminate educational inequalities (Gorski & Parekh, 2020). These skills prepare them to create learning environments that promote equitable student opportunities. Unfortunately, most educational systems remain unsuccessful at framing multicultural education as a movement focused on social justice as an approach to complete school and program restructuring. This movement would serve as a necessary examination of power and privilege to remove educational inequalities that are in place (Gorski, 2009).

Gorski's (2009) analysis of syllabi revealed a critical shortcoming: most were not designed to equip teachers with the skills needed to practice authentic multicultural education.

Instead, most syllabi fell between classifications, drawing on approaches that were neither distinctly antimulticultural nor distinctly critical multicultural in nature or form. Yet, they did appear designed to meet the National Accreditation of American Teachers (NCAT) standard (Gorski, 2009). Through Gorski's (2009) research, he analyzed the language embedded in the NCAT's diversity standard (Gu & Day, 2013; NCAT, 2008), which reveals patterns that correlate with the "Teaching with Multicultural Competence" (Antón-Solanas et al., 2020) approach as follows:

The unit designs, implement, and evaluates the curriculum and provides experiences for candidates to acquire and demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions necessary to help all students learn. Assessments indicate that candidates can explain and apply proficiencies related to diversity. Experiences provided for candidates include working with diverse populations, including higher education and P-12 school faculty, candidates, and students in P-12 schools. (p. 5)

Thus, teacher preparation must revise and review the programs and systems in place and incorporate components in their schedules to help preservice teachers create respectful and inclusive classroom environments with the growing diverse student populations they will teach (Gorski & Parekh, 2020). Curriculum reform is necessary to equip teachers with multicultural teaching competencies to reach and successfully prepare all students, including diverse populations, especially at the teacher education and training levels.

Four Constructivist Methods by Dover

To incorporate culturally relevant teaching into classrooms, Dover (2013) labeled four "constructivist methods" (p. 6) for using culturally relevant education in a school: (a) use of

culture as a bridge for academic skills and concepts, (b) critical reflection, (c) cultural competence, and (d) the critique of discourses of power.

The first method relates to teachers' ability to *connect academic skills and concepts with culture*. Culturally relevant teachers incorporate their students' cultural backgrounds in their classrooms and combine this with their students' understanding of the academic skills and concepts mandated by the curriculum (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). For example, when teachers design lessons for their culturally diverse students, they want to choose a book that interests them first (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Next, teachers must consider what books could address their target academic skills and concepts from the required state standards. Therefore, the teacher can identify two or three state standards in the selected text that they believe will engage the culturally diverse students. This choice is an example of linking the students' backgrounds and the curricular demands to create a lesson and select meaningful curricular materials.

As evidenced in the second method, teachers' *facilitation of students' critical reflection on their lives and society is present in culturally relevant education*. Culturally relevant teachers employ classroom activities and opportunities for students to examine their lives and home culture critically (Dover, 2013). For example, a teacher may select a book where a group of space aliens unexpectedly arrived in the United States. This storyline would allow the teacher to facilitate conversations about the parallels between beings from outer space and immigrants new to this country and how race relations impact social, political, and economic interactions in society under the umbrella of science. This subject matter encourages critical reflection for incorporating culturally relevant education in their classrooms (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

The third method is teachers' capability to *build students' cultural competence to take pride in their culture*. Culturally relevant teachers equip their students with the cultural

competence necessary to understand and take pride in their own cultures while also learning and appreciating the cultures of others (Dover, 2013). For example, the teacher can teach all students about immigrants' cultural experiences in a science class. However, some non-culturally relevant teachers limit cultural competence in science to such one-time activities as tasting the foods of other cultures during holiday celebrations because of the similar physical and chemical reactions involved in cooking and surface activities. Instead, culturally relevant teachers provide lessons that allow students to develop a more profound sense of cultural competence by planning discussions that require students to hear and understand each other's varied experiences and perspectives about life (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

Lastly, culturally relevant teachers use *critiques of discourses of power* with intentionality. Culturally relevant teachers expose oppression among institutional systems and facilitate understanding of the presence and functioning of power structures within their environments (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). For example, in a math lab, students can discuss questions such as (a) "Black Americans make up about 30% of the population. What would happen to our economy if we lost that many people?" (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Laughter & Adams, 2012, p. 1125); (b) "Do you think having a Black president means the U.S. is not racist?" (p. 1124). This approach intertwines math concepts, like calculating population percentages in various scenarios, into a social context relevant to the students' lives. For example, it might explore the impact of Black people on the economy. While this line of inquiry may be uncomfortable for some, culturally relevant teachers understand how using unsettling topics and moments to facilitate a conversation is necessary to help students understand the nature of power within institutions.

Theoretical Framework

Culturally appropriate education has been the subject of several theorists (e.g., Aronson and Laughter, 2016; Dover, 2013). Aronson and Laughter's (2016) culturally relevant education provides a conceptual framework that serves as a lens for this study. Aronson and Laughter's (2016) culturally relevant education theory explains how teachers can incorporate their students' cultural backgrounds in their classrooms. Thus, culturally relevant education is a conceptual framework teachers use to promote equity and attempt meaningful change in the school. This framework is used in this study to analyze novice teachers' perceptions. Culturally relevant education is also known as culturally relevant teaching. To incorporate culturally relevant teaching into classrooms, Dover (2013) labeled four constructivist methods for using culturally relevant education in schools. This study uses these methods to analyze the novice teachers' incorporation of culturally relevant teaching into their classrooms with diverse student populations.

The theoretical framework that serves as a lens through which to comprehensively evaluate the various teacher preparation programs through which the participants were certified is Gorski's (2009) five defining principles for multiculturalism in the preservice teacher education system. Gorski found five defining principles of multicultural education based on the history of definitions and conceptions of multicultural education from scholars (such as Banks, 2004a; Grant & Sleeter, 2006; Nieto, 2004; Sleeter, 1996). The consensus among scholars of multicultural education practices, including multicultural teacher education, holds that such practice, with these principles, creates an excellent classroom practice focused on creating relevant and meaningful experiences for all students (Gorski, 2009). The researcher analyzes participant data using these frameworks and approaches in this study.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the relevant literature on culturally relevant teaching and multicultural teacher education. Chapter 3 explains the methods used for this study. Chapter 4 will present the analysis and findings, and Chapter 5 will show the conclusions and implications of the study.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study investigates the perceptions of newly certified teachers on three critical areas of their teacher preparation programs. These aspects are (1) how recently certified teachers describe their teacher preparation with culturally relevant teaching practices and techniques to create successful learning environments and outcomes for their diverse student populations; (2) how multicultural teacher education training during preservice programs impacts novice teachers' perceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural teaching techniques; (3) novice teachers experiences working with diverse student populations.

This chapter delves into the research questions, the study's design, procedures, and ensuring trustworthiness. The research questions guiding this study are:

RQ1: How do recently certified teachers describe their teacher preparation with culturally relevant teaching practices and techniques to create successful learning environments and outcomes for their diverse student populations?

RQ2: How does multicultural teacher education training during preservice programs impact novice teachers' perceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural teaching techniques?

RQ3: How do novice teachers describe their experiences working with diverse populations?

The following sections detail the research design, research setting and context, sampling strategy and description of the sample, confidentiality, data collection strategies, data analysis, trustworthiness, quality assurance, study limitations, research delimitations, and a chapter summary.

Research Design

This research employed a qualitative design to gain an in-depth understanding of teacher preparation, culturally relevant teaching, and multicultural education. Qualitative research involves interpretive, material practices that make the world visible (Mayan, 2023). They turn the world into representations, including interviews, conversations, and recordings (Gray, 2021; Hancock et al., 2021). The researcher chose to utilize this research design for this study because it captured the experiences of novice teachers in their natural settings with diverse student populations.

Mayan (2023) suggested that a qualitative researcher seeks to understand individuals' knowledge, perceptions, and feelings through intensive, in-depth interviewing. In this research, the goal was to investigate how recently certified teachers describe their teacher preparation with culturally relevant teaching practices and techniques to create successful learning environments and outcomes for their diverse student populations, how multicultural education training during preservice programs impacts novice teachers' perceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural teaching techniques, and how new teachers describe their experiences in working with diverse populations. Therefore, the participants must be allowed to express their experiences, feelings, and opinions. For this reason, a qualitative design was most appropriate for this study (Mayan, 2023).

Participant Selection and Recruitment

This study interviewed certified teachers with one to five years of experience in urban areas within Texas schools. Creswell and Creswell (2017) stated that "It is essential that all participants have [similar lived] experience being studied" (p. 155). The researcher focused on newly certified teachers (years one to five) for two key reasons. First, their recent entry into the

profession allows them to reflect on fresh experiences with diverse student populations.

Secondly, focusing on novice teachers within the first five years of their careers maximizes the accessibility of memories and experiences from their teacher preparation programs. This timeframe allows for richer discussions and comparisons as these educators can readily draw upon their recent training.

Texas' urban schools are a focus point in this study due to their unique characteristics. Urban schools often have high enrollment rates, complex bureaucracies, and student populations reflecting significant cultural diversity across all K-12 grade levels. This diverse student body exemplifies the growing majority demographic increasingly filling classrooms across DFW, Texas, and the nation. This study defined urban education based on four tenets undergirded by Welsh and Swain (2020). Urban education connotes a dynamic and complex rather than static and monolithic setting, with communities that continue to be shaped by the relics of a discriminatory and oppressive past. Second, a school district's characteristics, challenges, and context create a continuum of conditions that define urban education. Educational inequality is a central defining characteristic of urban education. Fourth, urban education rejects deficit perspectives and contends that considerable assets exist within "urban" communities that scholars have yet to discuss thoroughly or empirically document (Welsh & Swain, 2020).

The researcher actively recruited educators through social media platforms, primarily Facebook. Creswell and Creswell (2017) also stated that in any qualitative research study, it is essential that "you select people or sites that can best help you understand the central phenomenon" (p. 206). The researcher targeted various teacher networking groups within the Facebook community to find participants for the study. The researcher developed an informative advertisement to explain the study and its requirements to potential participants. It also included

the primary researcher's contact information (email and phone number) for interested educators. The next step was to email those interested a survey to capture essential information to see if they meet the criteria for the study. The aim was to recruit 8 to 15 participants to interview for this study.

Through recruitment, the goal was to get current educators from programs that trained, prepared, and certified them to be educators. This study targeted educators in their first five years (years one to five) who graduated from teacher preparation programs specifically focused on urban settings. By examining their experiences, the researchers aimed to gain insights into program quality, usefulness, and impact on these teachers' current outlook and teaching methods in urban classrooms. Utilizing teachers specifically in Texas was the goal because Texas is among the fastest-growing states in the U. S., with diverse, majority-minority student populations over the last decade. The study employed pseudonyms to protect the participants' identities and ensure confidentiality (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Recruiting began after securing IRB-international review board approval from the University of Texas at Arlington. The researcher recruited interested teachers who met the criteria by posting a flyer in social media teacher groups. The link on the flyer directed potential participants to a questionnaire that included questions about their teaching experience to identify if they fit the study criteria. After participants completed and submitted the introductory questionnaire, contacting individuals who fit the study criteria began.

Once a potential participant submitted their questionnaire, they promptly received an email with an appointment calendar link (within one week) to schedule a mutually convenient date and time for the interview. The researcher scheduled individual interviews with participants between May and June 2023 to understand their perspectives.

As for the research population and sample size, Creswell and Creswell (2017) suggested that "when selecting participants for a study, it is important to determine the size of the sample you will need" (p. 146). This study aimed to recruit eight to fifteen participants, with interviews continuing until data saturation was achieved. Likewise, in a qualitative research tradition, the sample size of the participants can be between two and twenty-five (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The sample size of participants in this qualitative research was eight, representing a diverse population based on race, cultural variety, and educational experience. These participants' selection reflects and represents the homogeneity among the participants' sample pool. Interpretive qualitative research with a homogeneous participant group delves into their lived experiences to gain a deeper understanding of their shared perceptions.

Qualitative research relies on obtaining informed consent from participants before any data collection begins. The informed consent form explained how the researcher planned to use the information participants shared about their experiences. This qualitative research investigation aimed to achieve two objectives: corroborate the *lived experiences* of research participants and dispute the allegations entirely if they lacked authenticity or credibility.

Data Collection

The interview process started with the abovementioned questionnaire to determine who would fit the study requirements. At the beginning of the questionnaire, participants had to select if they agreed with consent to continue by giving written permission to proceed to the next page of the questionnaire. As part of the process of selecting participants for a qualitative research study, Creswell and Creswell (2017) stated that it is "important to obtain participants' written permission" (p. 154).

Twenty-five interested teachers completed the questionnaire to give insight into their

current teaching roles and teacher preparation training. Following eligibility confirmation, the researcher emailed them about the next steps, including an interview sign-up schedule. Nine teachers responded with availability and expressed interest. Next, these nine teachers received Microsoft Teams meeting invitations to confirm their chosen date and time. Ultimately, eight interviews were successfully conducted via Microsoft Teams video chat platform.

Given the active COVID-19 pandemic during project planning, the researcher opted for the Microsoft Teams video chat platform, recognizing that some teachers might be more comfortable with virtual interviews than face-to-face meetings. Virtual interviewing offers an effective and safe alternative. Each interview was audio-recorded and video-recorded through the Microsoft Teams video chat platform to ensure an accurate interview record for later transcription. The researcher informed participants that the Microsoft Teams recording function would record the interview. Before starting the interview, participants had to actively accept and consent to being recorded. The semi-structured interview protocol allowed the researcher to actively prompt teachers for clarification, ask for elaboration of ideas, and provide further explanations and details during the interview. The researcher transcribed the interview recordings carefully verbatim into transcripts.

The interview protocol uncovered teachers' perceptions and experiences with culturally relevant teaching and multicultural teacher education in teacher preparation programs. The interview explored three key areas to gain insights from the teachers: how recently certified teachers perceive the impact of their teacher preparation programs in equipping them with culturally relevant teaching practices and techniques to create positive learning environments and successful outcomes for their diverse classrooms; how multicultural teacher education during preservice programs impact preservice teachers' perceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy and

multicultural teaching techniques; and the experiences of these novice teachers working with diverse student populations.

The researcher assured teachers throughout the interview that they had the right to pause, skip questions, or end the interview at any point. They had the right to withdraw from the study at any given time, answer only the questions they felt comfortable answering, choose to end the interview at any time, and have anything they said omitted upon request. The one-on-one interviews lasted between 45 to 60 minutes each. The purpose of this time frame for the interview was to give each participant ample time to explain and expand on their answers to the interview questions to their desired extent.

The qualitative research study design aims to reach data saturation when interviewing study participants (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Johnson et al., 2020). The researchers actively identifies data saturation through several key indicators (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Johnson et al., 2020). These include when no new information emerges from the data and repetitive themes begin to dominate (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Johnson et al., 2020). Failure to reach data saturation impacts the quality of the research conducted and hampers content validity (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Eight interviews conducted over two months yielded data saturation. The next stage is transcribing and analyzing the collected data.

Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed within 24-48 hours of the interview so that analysis could begin promptly. After transcribing each interview, the researcher reviewed each transcript to ensure accuracy and make any necessary corrections. To provide a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the interview content, the researcher examined the transcripts multiple times before commencing data analysis. This process ensured accuracy and a strong foundation for this

study. Then, as appropriate, the interviews were read and coded line-by-line (Creswell, 2013), the data compiled, and the codes condensed into broader categories of families of codes and themes. This systematic approach allowed the researcher to relate the data to other categories, validate those relationships, and fill in categories that needed further refinement and development (Creswell, 2013).

Next, the process of open coding and chunking began, which meant the transcripts were read without searching for any a priori codes (Chun et al., 2019). Specifically, the content was labeled for each paragraph in the transcript with a single, broad code. The researcher thoroughly reviewed the transcripts following the data chunking process to refine the analysis and capture all critical information. The researcher employed line-by-line coding of the transcripts to capture the participants' perceptions meticulously (Tashakkori, 2020). For example, some codes came directly from the research questions and theoretical guides (e.g., multicultural education and culturally relevant teaching). Other codes came from consistent phrases, expressions, or common ideas among participants (e.g., instruction, relationships, culture). The coding process adopted an iterative approach (Vagle, 2018). Whenever new codes emerged during the analysis of individual interviews, the researcher revisited all transcripts to determine if these newly identified codes were present in the remaining data. This iterative approach enabled a comprehensive search through the data to identify all codes relevant to the research questions (Vagle, 2018).

Data analysis employed a constant comparative approach, systematically comparing emerging codes across transcripts. As new ideas emerged during analysis, the researcher revisited previous transcripts to identify instances of these newly identified codes or themes. Constant comparative methods helped tease out the content from the interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The codes were then collapsed into broader categories or themes to ascertain

patterns from the various interviews related to teachers' perceptions of multicultural teacher preparation.

Next, the researcher employed the lean coding approach and searched for Dover's (2013) four tenets of culturally relevant education/culturally relevant teaching, which include culture as a bridge for academic skills and concepts, critical reflection, cultural competence, and the critique of discourses of power to determine if they guided the participants in their pedagogical practice (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Redding, 2019). The same coding approach was employed when reviewing artifacts for Gorski's five principles and where similar codes emerged. Chapter 4 presents a detailed description of the final identified themes.

Trustworthiness and Quality Assurance

The rigor of qualitative research is judged by the trustworthiness or consistency of the findings (Creswell, 2013). Thus, the question for qualitative researchers is if the interpretation of the data captures the participants' perceptions. My professional background aligns with and mirrors the teaching background of the teachers utilized in this study. As the researcher, one similarity shared with the participants is that, as a novice teacher, a similar classroom atmosphere was present, with a majority-minority student body. To reduce the influence of personal biases and prevent overgeneralization, the research process utilized in this study incorporated the following measures.

The data analysis process incorporated careful measures by employing multiple strategies to guarantee the trustworthiness of the findings and minimize the potential influence of personal biases. According to Patton (2014), "the trustworthiness of the data is tied directly to the trustworthiness of the researcher who collects and analyzes the data" (p. 1205). This study utilized member checking and peer debriefing techniques to ensure the analysis's accuracy and to

reflect the teachers' perspectives accurately. Member checking is a technique where researchers actively seek feedback from participants on their analysis of the data, including categories, interpretations, and conclusions (Guest et al., 2020; Hancock et al., 2021). This step will also allow participants to provide additional details if necessary. Lincoln and Guba (1985) posit that this is "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314) in a qualitative study. The informed consent process ensured teachers understood they could choose to stop the interview or withdraw from the study entirely at any time. Participants gave written informed consent at the beginning of the questionnaire and verbal consent at the start of the interview. To foster trust and ensure participant understanding, the researcher actively offered teachers the opportunity to follow up for clarification on any interview content. This approach fostered trust in the research process and its outcomes.

Peer debriefing helps establish credibility (Bloomberg, 2022; Lincoln et al., 1985). This study benefitted from the insights of two qualified researchers without a stake in this project who served as peer debriefers. Specifically, they were fellow doctoral students. They assisted in reviewing the data interpretation. The peer debriefers read the transcripts and the findings and provided feedback. Lincoln and colleagues (1985) elucidate that peer debriefing helps keep the inquirer "honest," exposing them to searching questions by experienced protagonists doing their best to play the devil's advocate. The research process "actively probes the inquirer's biases, explores the intended meanings of the data, and clarifies the basis for interpretations" (Lincoln et al., 1985, p. 308). In addition, peer debriefers question the researcher's findings to decrease the likelihood of alternative explanations of the data. Finally, triangulation occurred using data collected from interviews, survey data, and participant classroom artifacts to ensure the analysis's validity (Creswell, 2013).

Maintaining confidentiality in this study was paramount to ensuring participants' privacy, a fundamental principle in ethical research (Creswell, 2014). Due to the culturally sensitive and personal nature of the research study, confidentiality was vital throughout data collection. Before data collection, the researchers sought approval from the IRB (Institutional Review Board) to secure permission to conduct this study (Creswell, 2014). It was also necessary to keep the participants' sensitivity in mind during the research process (Rashid et al., 2019). Potential problems during the data collection process could include the reluctance of the participants to share personal information. As the researcher, the goal was to be upfront about the study's intent and reassure participants about the confidentiality of this research study.

Limitations and Delimitations of Study

As with all research, this study has some delimitations and limitations. One delimitation of this research study is that it is focused explicitly on teachers working in cities in Texas and schools of education within urban areas. Texas was selected as the focus setting because it is one of the fastest-growing states with a diverse student population, which drives the growth in K-12 schools. Hispanic residents are projected to continue to drive Texas's population growth over the next decade (Irwin et al., 2022). Thus, the significance of these teacher preparation programs and systems is specific and limited to the state of Texas and the demographic environment within.

A second delimitation of this study tasked novice teachers with recalling their experiences from various points in their teacher preparation programs. Some questions asked them to remember their curricula and content regarding culturally relevant teaching. Other questions asked them to think about specific activities, events, and curricula that assisted them in learning and being trained with multicultural teacher education strategies and techniques. This study further prompted novice teachers to consider their exposure to multiculturalism in training,

encounters with intersecting multicultural experiences with diverse student populations during clinical teaching, and using culturally relevant teaching strategies with their students. Thus, while not limited, it is essential to consider that these findings inform novice teachers' perceptions of their teacher preparation experience rather than informing them of their programs' exact, detailed structure. Thus, self-reported data, experiences, and recall of experiences may have been affected by personal perceptions, recall, and articulation, which may or may not match the realities of these programs' content and designs.

Summary

This qualitative study explores the perceptions of newly certified teachers regarding the effectiveness of the cultural competency components in their teacher preparation programs. This chapter overviewed the research approach and methods used to reach this goal. It includes the research questions, design, setting, and context, as well as the qualitative study design, sampling strategy, description of the sample, confidentiality, data collection strategies, approach to data analysis, and steps taken to achieve the trustworthiness and quality assurance of the findings, as well as the limitations and delimitations of the study.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS

This qualitative study investigated the perceptions of newly certified teachers in three critical areas of their teacher preparation programs. These aspects are (1) how recently certified teachers describe their teacher preparation with culturally relevant teaching practices and techniques to create successful learning environments and outcomes for their diverse student populations; (2) how multicultural teacher education training during preservice programs impacts novice teachers' perceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural teaching techniques; (3) how novice teacher describe their experiences working with diverse student populations. The central purpose of this chapter is to present the findings from these critical areas that resulted from the data collected throughout this study.

This study dives into the perspectives of eight novice teachers, examining how their teacher preparation compares to the everyday challenges they face in the classroom. This insight will shed light on the presence and effectiveness of culturally relevant teaching and multicultural teacher education within teacher preparation and its impact on their teaching practices. This chapter outlines the qualitative findings of semi-structured interviews with the eight novice teachers. Following the outline of these findings, the analysis will involve structuring the identified themes from the data to address the research questions that guided this study.

This study first revisits the purpose and research questions to establish a foundation for the analysis. Then the following section describes the study participants, including their teacher preparation programs and current classrooms. Finally, the findings of this study are unveiled and organized according to the research questions that guided this study and then by the themes that emerged from the interviews.

Research Questions

This chapter includes the research questions that guided the study, details the chosen research design, outlines the research procedures employed, and explains the strategies used to ensure trustworthiness. The research questions guiding this study are:

RQ1: How do recently certified teachers describe their teacher preparation with culturally relevant teaching practices and techniques to create successful learning environments and outcomes for their diverse student populations?

RQ2: How does multicultural teacher education training during preservice programs impact novice teachers' perceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural teaching techniques?

RQ3: How do novice teachers describe their experiences working with diverse populations?

Participant Background Information

This study adopted purposeful sampling to select participants to ensure the study focused on relevant experiences. Ensuring a qualified participant pool was vital for this study. This study defined three essential criteria for selection:

1. Must be a certified teacher in years one to five of teaching,
2. Must teach in the state of Texas,
3. Must teach in urban areas.

Eight novice teachers from Texas urban area schools participated in the data collection phase of this study. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym based on details from their interview responses to ensure confidentiality. The following section presents a description of these eight

novice teachers. Following the individual participant descriptions, Table 2 summarizes their characteristics for easy reference.

Tina

Tina is a Hispanic female in her early 20s and was a first-year teacher. She graduated from a public research university and received a bachelor's degree with teacher certification. Tina came to teaching because of struggles she experienced as a Spanish-ELL-English language learner in the fourth grade. Tina, motivated by a challenging transition to English herself, wanted to help young students in her community navigate the language more effectively.

In her teacher preparation program, Tina's experience was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, her program required the teacher candidates to attend classes virtually and in person. COVID-19 also affected her clinical teaching platform. Her teacher preparation program required student teachers to do a portion of the clinical teaching experience virtually. This situation required Tina to incorporate technology into her clinical teaching, planning, and training with students. Her clinical teaching experiences were with elementary grade levels, and she encountered primarily Hispanic students and a few African American students. Tina believes that her program actively exposed her to culturally relevant teaching strategies. This exposure included learning about the backgrounds of students from diverse racial groups and the challenges they face due to socioeconomic status, particularly those from lower and middle socioeconomic classes.

Tina describes her first year as *overwhelming*. She rated herself as a five on a ten point scale for her readiness to enter a diverse classroom, and she attributes this to her teacher preparation program focusing on academics only and not on student behavior or building relationships with students and parents. Tina's campus, where she currently works, has 99%

Hispanic students, and the professional majority comprises White and Hispanic staff. Tina teaches first grade and incorporates culturally relevant teaching techniques by sharing situations and life events that have personally happened to her. This way, she can connect with students because they share cultural similarities.

Charlie

Charlie is a White female in her mid-50s who has taught for one and a half years. The COVID-19 pandemic forced the closure of Charlie's school for half of her first year, transitioning to virtual learning for the remainder of that school year. Charlie graduated from a comprehensive R1-level research university and obtained her degree with teacher certification. She had dreamed of being a teacher since she was 18 years old and decided to pursue this career to get a guaranteed job as she thought teaching was a promising, stable career field.

Charlie's clinical teaching experiences were with elementary K-4th grades and middle school grade six. Both school environments were inhabited mainly by *Black and Brown* students. In her teacher preparation program, Charlie mentioned she had classes that addressed culturally relevant teaching strategies in numerous ways. One class of several that she mentioned addressed culturally relevant teaching. In this class, she participated in a study using a book titled "CRT (Culturally Relevant Teaching) and the Brain." Charlie mentioned that her professors were upfront and forward about the diversity and poverty the novice teachers were likely to face in their future classrooms.

Charlie describes her first year as an *adventure*. She rated herself as a ten on a ten point scale for her readiness to enter a diverse classroom and be successful, and she attributes this to her teacher prep program being very clear and direct about a "real world" classroom. Charlie's campus had 97% Hispanic students and predominately White and Hispanic staff. Charlie teaches

a K-1st grade split class and incorporates culturally relevant teaching techniques through stories, holidays, food, and community to connect with students. The campus where she teaches also has schoolwide cultural events and activities to celebrate holidays and cultural days of significance.

Nadia

Nadia is a White female in her early 30s and was in her fourth year as a teacher. She attended a private, non-profit university and earned her degree with teacher certification. Nadia came to teaching because of her love of kids and great experiences working part-time at an afterschool program. From that experience, she decided to move into teaching full-time to earn more money.

In her teacher preparation program, she received clinical teaching experience with high school and elementary-aged students. In these settings, she worked with 60% African American and 40% Hispanic populations. In Nadia's program, she encountered multiculturalism through the ESL learning and the instruction she received while learning about other languages students may speak. She mentioned she did not receive direct multicultural training for diverse student populations.

Nadia describes her first few years as a teacher as *wonderful*. She rated herself as an eight out of ten for her readiness to enter a diverse classroom. Nadia attributed this to her previous experience working with the afterschool program with a similar student demographic makeup. In her four years as a teacher, she taught Pre-K through sixth-grade general education, Pre-K through sixth-grade Art, and Pre-K through sixth-grade Music. The COVID-19 pandemic forced a shift to virtual learning, abruptly interrupting Nadia's first year of teaching. She was teaching Art at the time of the interview and felt like this school year was like her first year because it was her first school year without remote learning. The student makeup at her campus was primarily

Hispanic, and the staff was predominantly Hispanic and White. She incorporates culturally relevant teaching as much as possible through the songs and dances she plans for her classes. She teaches students lessons and topics at certain times during the school year based on the month and celebrations.

Sonya

Sonya is a White female in her mid-30s who has taught for three and a half years. She attended a public university and earned a master's and teacher certification combination. Sonya came from a family of teachers and got all her expectations for the teaching profession from her family members, which also influenced her to choose teaching as a career.

Sonya's clinical teaching experience was mainly in Georgia's rural middle and high schools. The rural middle school had 98% White students and staff. The clinical teaching experience in the rural high school was with a diverse student body encompassing 50% African American, 30% White, and 20% Hispanic. She mentioned that her teacher preparation program did not teach any cultural components or competencies because it was unnecessary due to the lack of diversity present in the community. Her first two years of teaching were during Covid. She looks at teaching as *just a job*.

Sonya described her first year as a teacher as *hard*. She rated herself as a six out of ten for her readiness to enter a diverse classroom, and she attributed this to her teacher prep program not preparing her for how students would perceive a "White teacher." Sonya's campus is diverse, with almost equal numbers of Hispanic, Black, White, and Asian American students and a majority of White and Hispanic staff. Sonya, a ninth-grade A.P. World Geography teacher, questions the need to teach geography to students who will likely stay within their neighborhoods and communities within Texas. She believes the information won't be relevant to

their lives. Charlie does not incorporate culturally relevant teaching techniques but prefers to stick to the prescribed curriculum.

Bella

Bella is an Asian American female in her late 20s who has taught for four years. Bella attended a privately endowed university and earned her degree with teacher certification. She came to the teaching profession by taking up an interest in social justice while in college, and she felt the classroom would be the perfect passageway to fulfill her desire to make a difference in that area.

Her teacher preparation program included mentions of culturally relevant pedagogy during teaching practicums, but Bella felt it lacked a dedicated course for in-depth exploration. Consequently, the program failed to address crucial aspects like closing academic gaps and effectively explaining complex concepts about race or culture. In her clinical teaching experience, she mainly encountered Hispanic and a few Black and White students. Her coursework included topics focused on teaching ESL (English as a Second Language) and learning about the home language versus the academic language of students whose first language was not English.

Bella described her first year as *Covid*. Rising COVID rates forced schools to shut down during her first year. Bella rated herself as a four out of ten on her readiness to enter the classroom in her first year because she had some ideas of what to do, but they were not concrete. The teacher makeup of her campus is 50% White, 30% Hispanic, and 20% Black. Students at the campus she currently teaches are 90% Hispanic and 10% Black, and the staff is a mixture of Black, Hispanic, and White. Bella teaches 11th and 12th-grade I.B. (International Baccalaureate) Math Applications. In her classroom, Bella does not find it helpful to orient the curriculum

around student likes, topics, and culture due to the need to follow and stay on track with strict academic standards. She said that the subject and higher level of math she teaches at the high school level make it harder to incorporate her students' cultural background in her classroom and combine this with their understanding of the academic skills and concepts mandated by the curriculum. Bella also said students in high school with specific career paths are less interested in learning about culture, cultural references, or connections while in school.

Cristal

Cristal is an African American female in her late 20s who has taught for four years. She attended a public research university and earned her degree with teacher certification. Cristal came to the teaching profession through personal positive experiences from helping her niece with her schoolwork as a teenager, and this ignited an interest in teaching for her. It "just felt right" to work with kids. She also struggled academically in elementary school and wanted to work with kids who may struggle as she did before they got older to impact younger students' educational path positively.

Cristal encountered multiculturalism in her teacher preparation program through ESL classes. She learned about teaching ESL (English as a Second Language) to students with limited vocabulary, how to expand it, and about accommodations and modifications for these students. In her teacher preparation experience, the staff was predominately White. Students were 60% Hispanic and White and 40% Black.

Cristal described her first one to two years as *hard* due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She could not focus on teaching the curriculum because she was focusing on other needs of the students, such as making sure they had adequate food and were healthy. Cristal's readiness to enter the classroom was a six out of ten because she would have liked more time training and

learning to engage with the community, she would serve in her future classroom. The makeup of her campus is predominately White and staffed with a few Latinos and Blacks. The student population is predominately White. Cristal felt her clinical teaching environment was *in a perfect world* scenario, was unrealistic, and did not adequately prepare her.

Cristal teaches fifth-grade science and social studies. In her teaching, she tries to consider the traits and personalities of her students. Cristal stops when teachable moments occur to explain cultural terms and allow further discussion. She invites students to share their interests with her and tries to plan topics and lessons that interest her students. Cristal also mentioned that her district now requires monthly cultural training for staff to improve relationships and understanding of students of various cultural and racial backgrounds.

Laura

Laura is an African American female in her mid-30s who has taught for two years. Laura attended a private Christian university, where she obtained her teaching certification. Before teaching, she was a parole officer and saw the disparities of minority youth. Laura wanted to get into teaching to stop the rising number of minority youth entering the criminal justice system.

Laura's clinical teaching experience was with a predominantly Hispanic student population in middle school and high school settings. She learned a lot from the hands-on experiences during the clinical teaching phase, which helped expose her to diverse cultures. In her program, she had lessons on teaching ELLs (English Language Learners) and how to relate to them. Laura received training on various resources for use with ELL students. Her clinical teaching experiences with ELL content and accommodations fostered her cultural competency.

Laura described her first years as a teacher as *revealing*. She denoted this was because when you are not a teacher, you have an opinion about schools and the classrooms, but it is not

concrete until you get in and experience it. She rated herself as a seven out of ten because she does not perceive she had all the necessary resources to work best with students who do not speak English or did not speak English as a first language. Her current campus staff is 90% African American and 10% White. The student population is 70% Hispanic, 20% Black, and 10% other. She tries to integrate student culture and likes into daily lessons so the students can relate and take ownership of their learning.

Mario

Mario is a Hispanic male in his mid-30s who had taught for three years. He attended a public university where he earned his degree with teacher certification. In high school, he volunteered as a teacher assistant with an elementary school and liked the leadership role of the teacher. Providing this service and working with students as an ESL and minority teacher assistant sparked his interest in pursuing a career in teaching.

During Mario's clinical teaching experience, he encountered predominantly White faculty. He was among a few Hispanic teachers, with less than five campus-wide. The student population was predominantly Hispanic. Mario felt his program had no explicit courses that discussed or addressed multicultural teacher education.

Mario described his first few years as *fun*. He learned that many different avenues exist to get lessons across to students. Mario thrived in the autonomy his campus provided. He could explore different teaching strategies and choose the ones that best aligned with his administration's goals and, most importantly, facilitated student learning and retention. Despite initially feeling prepared and rating his first-year readiness a five out of ten, Mario learned a lot during his first year that he had not anticipated. Mario was confident in what to do to teach the lessons effectively to his students, but he learned you must make your classroom your own once

you get in there and have your classroom and students. He enjoyed developing his teaching skills and transferring his knowledge to students. Mario actively seeks opportunities to integrate students' cultural experiences into reading lessons, fostering a richer learning environment that celebrates diversity and enhances understanding. Mario's campus has 99% Hispanic students; the professional majority comprises 80% Hispanic staff, with 20% being a mixture of White and African American teachers.

Table 2

Participants

Participants	Years Taught	Race	Age	Multicultural Teacher Education
Tina	1	Hispanic	Early 20s	yes
Charlie	1.5	White	Mid 50s	yes
Nadia	4	White	Early 30s	no
Sonya	3.5	White	Early 30s	no
Bella	4	Asian American	Late 20s	yes
Cristal	4	African American	Late 20s	no
Laura	2	African American	Mid 30s	yes
Mario	3	Hispanic	Mid 30s	no

Table 3 below demonstrates the relationship between the research questions that guided this study and the probing questions that guided the interview process. Appendix C contains the complete interview protocol.

Table 3*Research Questions and Protocol Question Alignment*

Research Questions	Protocol: Interview Questions
RQ1: How do recently certified teachers describe their teacher preparation with culturally relevant teaching practices and techniques to create successful learning environments and outcomes for their diverse student populations?	IQ1, IQ2, IQ3
RQ2: How does multicultural education training during preservice programs impact novice teachers' perceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural teaching techniques?	IQ4, IQ5, IQ6, IQ8, IQ9
RQ3: How do new teachers describe their experiences working with diverse populations?	IQ7, IQ10, IQ11

Findings

The data collected for this study came from the perspectives of eight novice teachers in years one through five who teach in Texas in an urban area. The conceptual framework used to analyze novice teachers' perceptions of culturally appropriate education is Aronson and Laughter's (2016) culturally relevant teaching in conjunction with Dover's (2013) four

constructivist methods for using culturally relevant education in schools. The theoretical framework used to comprehensively evaluate the various teacher preparation programs through which the participants were certified is Gorski's 2009 five defining principles for multicultural education in preservice teacher preparation. The researcher organized the emerging themes based on the research questions they addressed and these three frameworks.

The findings of this study are presented in the participants' voices to illustrate the three main questions addressed in this study. The research questions focused on (1) how recently certified teachers describe their teacher preparation with culturally relevant teaching practices and techniques to create successful learning environments and outcomes for their diverse student populations (2) how multicultural education training during preservice programs impacts novice teachers' perceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural teaching techniques (3) how novice teachers describe their experiences working with diverse populations?

The following sections explore the overarching themes identified in this study: (a) culturally relevant teaching... is it or is it not, (b) incorporating culturally relevant teaching, (c) mislabeling multicultural teacher education, (d) multicultural teacher education- clinical teaching experience, (e) student-teacher relationships, (f) measure of success.

Culturally Relevant Teaching... is it, or is it not...

The consensus among scholars of multicultural education practices, including multicultural teacher education, holds that such practice, which has Gorski's five principles, creates an excellent multicultural education program (Gorski, 2009). When examining the transcribed data that focused on the culturally relevant teaching experiences identified by the eight novice teachers, the first theme of *Culturally Relevant Teaching ... is it or is it not* emerged.

Charlie felt confident that her teacher preparation program addressed culturally relevant

teaching, including practices and techniques for diverse student populations. When asked to describe her experiences, Charlie responded,

So, we would have classes about what it is like to work in an urban district. I am a White woman, you know... I mean, I think they were pretty good about routing out people who had implicit bias, people who did not want to teach black and brown children. Professors were pretty upfront that you know this will be... almost exclusively black and brown children... there is a lot of poverty. You see, we knew it would be pretty exhausting but very rewarding. Ensure you care for the kids, make them feel accepted, wanted, and valued, and focus on helping them learn. I was part of a book group called *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*.

Unlike the program Charlie went through, other participants had a different experience with culturally relevant teaching in their teacher preparation. When asked if their teacher preparation programs had any culturally relevant components, such as Sophia, she stated, "Probably not. We did not have diversity aspects that way, probably just in the academic diversity, but I do not know if cultural diversity existed. It was always like planning differentiation for your smart kids and your struggling kids, but it was never race-based or anything".

On this same note, Bella expressed that their teacher preparation programs also addressed culturally relevant teaching. When asked if their programs had any multiculturalism training or experience in teacher preparation, Bella stated,

I do not think a class was explicitly designated for it. Still, we would discuss culturally relevant pedagogy in other courses. However, I do not know if I ever felt like I was given concrete examples or if they were good concrete examples.

Mario had a similar experience as Bella. Mario stated, "I think they should have made it more

engaging. It was vague, just, you know, you are going to be dealing with various cultures and parents and just how sensitive you must be towards that".

These participants had different experiences based on their perceptions with multicultural teacher education in their teacher preparation programs. Some perceived their teacher preparation had culturally relevant teaching practices and techniques, and some did not. Through this analysis of their shared words, the theme of *Culturally Relevant Teaching.... is it or not...* emerged. In addition to this theme, a second theme emerged from the data collected in the interviews about culturally relevant teaching, *incorporating culturally relevant teaching*.

Incorporating Culturally Relevant Teaching

Teacher preparation programs aim to equip graduates with multicultural teacher education skills, including culturally relevant teaching strategies and tools. After completing teacher preparation programs with these components, the goal is for these novice teachers to integrate these learnings and techniques into their classrooms. This teaching focus aligns with the second theme that grew out of the data, *Incorporating Culturally Relevant Teaching*.

The researcher asked participants how they applied cultural competency teaching strategies and tools learned in teacher preparation to incorporate culturally relevant teaching with their students. Tina stated,

I use that a lot for science, for example, when discussing Mexican Independence Day or slavery. There was separation not only between the whites and the blacks but also between the Hispanics, like we weren't wanted. So, they will start having ideas, and then those start making those connections and say, oh, yeah... my mom and dad would tell me this and that. I think the best way to teach culture to students is to bring scenarios that have happened to you and explain them to them.

On this same note, Charlie also incorporates culturally relevant teaching with her students.

Charlie described her strategies,

I look for stories, like important holidays that come up or celebrations that are going on in the community, especially around food. Celebrating things brings you in, like whether it is a kind of food, how we will do this, or what celebration we will do, like dressing in red, white, and green to celebrate Mexico tomorrow or Cinco de Mayo. We do a lot of read-aloud, and thank goodness, in the last, I would say, five years, there has been a real jump in authors of color, which I'm so pleased to see because you can't read a book about little white English children to inner city Hispanic kids. We even have a book, one of my favorites, called "Marlo Draws the World... about a boy on a train going somewhere with his sister but does not know where, and Milo sees all the images of all the people on the train... they get off the train together and they are walking into a prison to visit their moms. It has opened some fantastic discussions because I have a lot of students with incarcerated parents. With my students, I do a lot of background knowledge because I know they have never seen the outside of their neighborhoods, and I listen to them as I walk around the classroom and have lunch with them to talk to them and hear them understand them better. I'm trying to figure out what they are involved in and what they are doing. I also find ways to reach them where I can teach them about something that is like something they could go home and see.

Like Charlie, Mario also considers background knowledge students may need, and breaking down the lessons to minimize confusion so that students can grasp the concepts he is teaching is essential in pre-planning and preparing weekly lessons. Mario mentioned, "I break it down because I already know the misconceptions that will pop up, the confusion, or the different

avenues I can take for them to understand. I love reading and starting the lesson with a book".

On the other hand, Bella, when asked if she uses students' interests and likes in your planning and approach to teaching, responded,

Occasionally, when I can, we have been using I.B. math... it is kind of an advanced class, so I think it is probably hard to orient what we are doing in class around students and their interests when there is a definitive curriculum to cover... they give us a certain number of standards and skills that we are expected to cover. Is it essential to incorporate culturally relevant teaching? I think it would be good if you could. I don't know if it needs to be the driving force behind every single lesson you are doing because if you do that, I think you get into the danger zone of not having an organized set of standards you're covering. You are hopping around all over the place, trying to please your students... I do not know if it would be super productive to spend hours trying to find examples that would be culturally relevant when I could just solve simple problems.

Like Bella, Sonya does not feel that embodying culture is necessary for her students because of her subject matter. Sonya stated,

World geography is interesting because teaching it in a place like Richardson, you've got kids who will probably never leave the metroplex. So, I am like, this kid does not care about what's happening in Asia. They do not care about diversity because it will never impact them.

Another participant who tries to incorporate culturally relevant teaching is Cristal. She responded when asked if she incorporates culturally relevant teaching into her classroom,

I've had it where my students have changed the flow of the lesson. And I welcome it completely. We were talking about adaptations and science once, and I asked the students

if they ever heard the term *blind as a bat*. I had one student message me directly and was like Miss, and I come from a Hispanic household. What does that mean? I said, "Oh, it is a cultural thing and explained it's a simile to the entire class... I essentially let them guide my teaching.

Like Cristal, Nadia tries incorporating culturally relevant teaching into her music and art classes with students. Nadia mentioned,

One of the songs we learned about was de Colores, a Mexican folk song. I try to ensure that whenever I talk about portraits and Art, I have people of different skin colors and backgrounds in the picture. And since my population is primarily Latina, I always try to make sure that there is a Latino portrait. And then we do extra things every month for Hispanic Heritage Month and Black History Month where we do a little bit different emphasis on learning some of the art history that goes into that and some specific names of people that have been very impactful in those communities... sometimes, you know you can incorporate things. Still, sometimes you're not depending upon what that particular like is but on your competency as a teacher.

The themes of *Culturally Relevant Teaching...is it...or is it not* and *Incorporating Culturally Relevant Teaching* captured the perceptions of eight novice teachers. These themes focused on how recently certified teachers describe their teacher preparation with culturally relevant teaching practices and techniques to create successful learning environments and outcomes for their diverse student populations. The next set of themes matriculated from the data focused on aspects of multicultural teacher education.

Mislabeling Multicultural Teacher Education

Many scholars agree that on numerous college and university campuses with teacher

education programs, what passes for multicultural teacher education is not multicultural at all. According to Cochran (2004), Gorski (2006), Vavrus (2002), and others, multicultural teacher education initiatives, such as degree programs, staff development content, or single multicultural education courses, tend to only focus on celebrating diversity or understanding the cultural *other* rather than one committed to educational justice and social justice (Grant & Sleeter, 2006; Hollins 2015). An analysis of the interview data led to the third theme that emerged from the data: *Mislabeling Multicultural Teacher Education*.

When asked if their teacher preparation programs had multicultural teacher education and culturally relevant teaching, a few participants related and connected multicultural teacher education to other components of their teacher preparation. When Cristal was asked about multicultural teacher education in her teacher preparation program, she responded, "Oh yeah, I am ESL (English as a Second Language) certified. I learned different methods to work with kiddos and a lot about accommodations and being explicit and implicit in vocabulary. Similarly, Laura responded,

Yes, there was a lesson segment that specifically talked to us about teaching ELLs or English language learners... we spoke about something as simple as pronouncing their names correctly because different diversities are different.

Nadia's perceived experience was like Laura and Cristal's. Nadia's response when asked if her program had multicultural teacher education components was,

There was a bit mixed with other courses about it, like if you are teaching reading, how that might look different for somebody that is an English language learner, or how that might look to somebody that speaks African American vernacular or Ebonics. So, there was a bit of mixed feelings about some cultural awareness as it applied to teaching

Reading or something else, but beyond that, or there is a specific course, I do not remember.

All these experiences dealt with ELL-English language learners and diversity in home languages.

Multicultural Teacher Education - Clinical Teaching Experience

Student teachers must connect theory with practice and understand action, knowledge, and skill development with student bodies like those they will encounter in future classrooms (Jokikokko & Uitto, 2017). The fourth theme from the transcribed data examining how multicultural education training during preservice programs impacts preservice teachers' perceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural teaching techniques was *Multicultural Teacher Education- Clinical Teaching Experience*.

For most participants, the clinical teaching experiences were similar. When asked to describe her clinical teaching experience and the racial makeup of that setting, Nadia stated, "The biggest class was all black children, and my other class was 50% Hispanic and 50% Black". Similarly, Bella described her clinical teaching environment as,

I think it is the same as the whole time I have taught, predominantly Hispanic. There is a significant contingent of black students, but a minority compared to the Hispanic population. Maybe one or two White students here and there, but not very many.

Along the same lines as Nadia and Bella, Cristal's clinical teaching experience was similar. Cristal mentioned,

In the 2nd-grade setting, there were at least four languages or four students with different languages in one classroom. Clinical teaching was 30% black, 10% Asian, and the rest were White and Hispanic. Our Asian population was underrepresented entirely in the school, and there were not very many, like I said, 30% Black maybe, 10% Asian, and the

rest, I would say, Hispanic and White.

Laura's student-teaching experiences were like those of the previous three participants, and she stated that the student-teaching part of the teacher preparation was her favorite part of her teacher training. Laura stated,

I like the observation part because I feel like you can learn a lot of something in the classroom. You can think that you'll enjoy it or understand what it entails, but when you see it performed right before you, I think it gives you the most in-depth exposure. My favorite part was getting in those classrooms and watching it happen before me.

Teacher preparation training exposed all four participants to highly diverse student populations. Overall, the participants' voices illustrated two main themes in response to the second research question, which sought to investigate how multicultural teacher education training during teacher preparation programs impacts novice teachers' perceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural teaching techniques. The themes of *mislabeling multicultural teacher education* and *multicultural teacher education- clinical teaching experiences* captured the participants' responses into a meaningful whole, which is the intent of themes described by DeSanti & Ugarriza (2000). The following themes champion the development of strong relationships between students and teachers, aiming to unlock student success.

Student-Teacher Relationships

Supportive teacher-student relationships are a critical aspect of the interpersonal climate in schools. The fifth theme developed from the interviews was *student-teacher relationships*. The researcher asked participants about their relationships with students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Tina responded,

I try to make many real-life connections, and they'll be shocked and surprised. They're

very curious about my life. I let them know I have a dog... I have a baby... just like their families. They always give me hugs... So I try to give them that mother instinct like they could always come to me for anything.

Similar to Tina, Cristal mentioned she connects with her students during her office hours,

I have a group of students that come to my office hours and just want to spend time with me, and it'll just be a matter of wanting to get to know me as well. They are just like, who are you? Tell me. Like, tell me more about you.

Bella's responses about relationship building with their students slightly differed from Tina's and Cristal's experiences. Bella responded,

I think I have good relationships with them as people. Am I always able to reach everyone? I don't know. It's like... I know that there are some teachers who, if there's a student who's struggling or has an issue like, they do a lot to probe further and figure out the root cause of this and that and have those supportive extra conversations with students. I don't know if I'm always the first person to do that unless a student approaches me with a specific concern.

Sophia similarly described her difficulty with building relationships with students. When asked, Sophia responded,

It's hard because, like, they see me as just, like another white girl teaching social studies. And like, they don't like it, it's hard for them to connect to me too, because, like, I'm twice as old as the freshman that I teach now, which is crazy.

Oppositely, Charlie built student-teacher relationships through her efforts to learn the predominant language of her students. Charlie mentioned,

I have been learning rudimentary Spanish, and next year, Mr. Cortez, who is our bilingual

first-grade teacher and head of the bilingual department, says we will practice two days a week. All the teachers speak Spanish, but me on the first-grade team. I'm ESL certified, so we do a lot with pictures and acting things out.

Along these same lines, Nadia stated,

I'm mostly bilingual. There are still a few words that stump me every now and then, so I'll usually reach out to one of the students or bilingual teachers to go over specific conversation words to have that vocabulary ahead of time.

Over half of the participants were able to build connections they perceived as successful with their diverse and linguistic students.

Measures of Success

Effectiveness is an elusive concept when we consider the complex task of teaching and the many contexts in which teachers work. The sixth and final theme that grew out of the data from this study was *Measures of Success*. The researcher asked participants to reflect on their success in teaching and connecting with their diverse student bodies. Bella replied, "I think I've learned a lot from them and know how to improve going forward. So, in that case, yes, I was successful." Like Bella, Cristal responded,

I have data, of course, passing rate and stuff like state test scores and things like that, help show growth of my teaching... I've grown a lot and I love that because I've been able to advocate for my students more, and that was the heart of my reason for going into education.

Both Bella and Cristal measure their success by the growth they have experienced as teachers. Sophia felt she was also successful. She based her success on a slightly different measure, the relationships she built with students. Sophia responded,

Yes... I feel like I've been successful. Umm, I have a few kids from my old school who sent me graduation announcements, so I feel like that means they like me... so I still see a couple of them like as friends on Facebook.

Laura also felt successful based on the relationships she established with her students. When asked about perceived success, Laura responded,

I think it was successful because the majority of my students did pass, so that lets me know that they were able to actually grasp the information, and then I would also say it was successful because of the relationships that I built with my kids.

Charlie and Mario used different aspects to measure success. They measured their success by student achievement. Charlie responded,

I think it's been successful. For two reasons, one, because I can see it in my data, in my testing data. The kids are growing. There, you know, I had a very low group. They were, like, subterranean. They were so low and below grade level. Now I've got most of them to the basement and almost to the first floor. But they've got the tools to keep moving forward, and I'm watching, and I'm seeing them use them. They've got some things to, you know, some tools in their toolbox to continue to help them grow.

Using this same measure of success, Mario responded,

I feel it has been successful... just by seeing whatever the program requires us to use to keep track, to look at the progress. So, I base it on that, not something personal that I may use other than teaching strategies or teaching style that I use. So, I know that gives me an idea of, you know, if I'm doing a good job or not.

All participants perceived success in teaching based on their varied measurements. The themes of *student-teacher relationships* and *measuring success* emerged based on similar participant

responses to the third research question, which examined the experiences of novice teachers working with diverse student populations.

Summary

This chapter included the findings and analysis from the questionnaire and interviews collected from eight novice teachers. Data from the interviews show how recently certified teachers perceive the impact of their teacher preparation programs in equipping them with culturally relevant teaching practices and techniques to create positive learning environments and successful outcomes for their diverse classrooms; how multicultural education training during preservice programs impacts novice teachers' perceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural teaching techniques; how novice teachers describe their experiences working with diverse populations.

Several participants perceived their teacher training programs had some aspects of culture, culturally relevant teaching and multiculturalism. These programs (as described) give insight into the presence of culturally relevant teaching and multicultural teacher education in teacher preparation as perceived by eight novice teachers. These findings presented in this chapter also explored current classroom realities of these teachers in their early years of teaching.

The following chapter will tie the findings of this study to the existing literature on culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural teacher education and discuss the limitations of this study. The following chapter will also discuss these findings and implications for policy and practice. This study offers recommendations for future research based on the findings. A final reflection will bring closure to this study and the conclusions revealed.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Teacher preparation is a process that should produce highly qualified and knowledgeable teachers who provide excellent teaching quality. "Teaching is an intellectual, cultural, and contextually local activity" (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 2). This quote by Cochran-Smith captures the essence of teaching. It highlights the importance of intellectual rigor, cultural awareness, and adapting to the specific needs of the local community. Some researchers say teacher education is "primarily technical, neutral, dismissing the place for values and perspectives of universal causes and effects within teacher education" (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 2). Others say teaching is a political problem connected to social justice rather than a policy problem (Gay, 2018; Howard, 2019). Regardless of the exact defining terms, teacher preparation is a topic that needs immediate attention and discussion to address the constantly changing and diversifying student bodies that these programs should prepare future teachers to educate.

In the 21st century, multicultural education has become increasingly important, with schools, colleges, and universities actively incorporating it into their curriculums. The increased focus on multicultural education is reflected in the prevalence of national conferences, school district workshops, and teacher education courses, highlighting its growing recognition as a vital education component (Banks & Banks, 2019). The research world has experienced a surge in research theories and frameworks to improve the understanding of multicultural education and its practical implementation in curriculum design. This study utilizes approaches that align with the five defining principles of multicultural education outlined by Gorski (2009), culturally appropriate education by Aronson and Laughter (2016), and the supporting four constructivist methods to integrate culturally relevant teaching in schools by Dover (2013).

This qualitative study explores how recently certified teachers describe their teacher preparation with culturally relevant teaching practices and techniques to create successful learning environments and outcomes for their diverse student populations. This study examines how multicultural teacher education training during teacher preparation programs impacts novice teachers' perceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural teaching techniques. Lastly, this study explores how novice teachers describe their experiences working with diverse student populations. The researcher analyzed the data collected from these novice teachers' experiences through the lens of these approaches for interpretation.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study are:

RQ1: How do recently certified teachers describe their teacher preparation with culturally relevant teaching practices and techniques to create successful learning environments and outcomes for their diverse student populations?

RQ2: How does multicultural teacher education training during preservice programs impact novice teachers' perceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural teaching techniques?

RQ3: How do novice teachers describe their experiences working with diverse populations?

Summary of Findings

The themes that emerged were organized based on the research questions they addressed. The findings prioritize the participants' voices, using their experiences to illustrate the three main research questions. We will investigate these questions individually, showcasing how the novice teachers' perspectives illuminate the related themes. This section explores the overarching

themes identified in the study: (a) culturally relevant teaching is it or is it not? (b) incorporating culturally relevant teaching, (c) mislabeling multicultural teacher education, (d) multicultural education- clinical teaching experience, (e) student-teacher relationships, and (f) measuring success.

The researcher employed thematic analysis by examining data from all eight interviews. The central theme that emerged was *Culturally relevant teaching... is it or is it not?* Interview questions heavily focused on this topic. Four out of eight participants reported that their programs incorporated elements of culturally relevant teaching, as described by Aronson and Laughter (2016).

The second theme that emerged was *incorporating culturally relevant teaching*. After these novice teachers graduated from their perspective teacher preparation programs and earned their teacher certifications, they became full-time teachers with classrooms and students to lead independently. The primary goal of the teacher preparation program is to prepare novice teachers to meet the needs of the students they serve and help their students reach their maximum learning potential. Based on their experiences and teacher preparation curriculum, these novice teachers' next step and goal was to incorporate culturally relevant teaching and strategies into their present classroom teaching environments. Based on the beliefs, preparation, and comfort level with multicultural understandings, only about 50% of these novice teachers mentioned attempting to incorporate culturally relevant teaching in their current classrooms. This theme aligned directly with Aronson and Laughter's culturally relevant education theory of incorporating students' cultural backgrounds in their classrooms.

The third theme from the data was *mislabeling multicultural teacher education*. The analysis revealed a critical disconnect between perceived and actual multicultural teacher

education. When questioned about their programs' multicultural education training, over half of the eight participants described a focus on English Language Learners (ELLs), mainly Spanish speakers, a prevalent demographic in Texas schools. While such training is vital for supporting bilingual students, it represents a limited scope of multicultural education. Training for ELLs only addresses training for teaching students with language barriers and students who face challenges transitioning to learning the English language. ELL training does not go into the depth of cultural understanding and teaching that utilizes the racial and cultural environments and backgrounds that students come with to connect students to the curriculum. ELL training does not train teachers on various differentiated techniques for working with diverse students to increase and maximize successful learning outcomes, a key component of multicultural teacher education. ELL training leads novice teachers to mislabel culturally relevant teaching and does not align with the conceptual or theoretical frameworks guiding this study in evaluating the teacher preparation programs.

The fourth theme that evolved from the interviews was the *multicultural education-clinical teaching experiences* of novice teachers. Clinical teaching programs should offer teaching practice and training in environments that mirror the diversity of future classrooms to prepare future educators for working with diverse student populations. A meaningful clinical teaching environment will contribute to novice teachers getting real firsthand experience with teaching diverse student bodies that are culturally, racially, and linguistically diverse. Most (75%) participants had field and clinical teaching experiences reflecting diverse student bodies. This area of their teacher preparation was practical and aligned with Gorski's principle of multicultural education: multicultural education is a good education for *all* learners.

The fifth theme that developed from the interviews was *student-teacher relationships*.

Most teachers aim to build a good rapport with the students and families they teach. Good rapport helps build trust and openness for students to feel comfortable expressing themselves and being vulnerable with their teachers. The more students can connect, the better they will view the school, the teacher, and the learning environment. Six of the eight participants perceived they had successfully created these relationships and bonds with their diverse student bodies. Forming meaningful relationships aligns with Dover's constructivist method for using culture as a bridge for academic skills and concepts.

The sixth and final theme that grew out of the data from this study was *measures of success*. The participant's measures of success ranged from improving teacher learning and cultivating successful student outcomes to building positive relationships with their students. Regardless of the measure used for success, all participants felt they achieved success with their diverse student populations in years one through five of teaching. These different ways of evaluating and measuring success align with Dover's (2013) constructivist method of critical reflection.

Based on Gorski's (2009) five defining principles for multiculturalism in preservice teacher preparation, one participant extensively described a program she perceived to fit all the principles that create an excellent multicultural education program and exemplify a good education for *all* students. This participant, Charlie, elaborated on how her experiences with culturally relevant education, as defined by Aronson and Laughter (2016), empowered her to integrate students' cultural backgrounds into her teaching. Charlie achieved exceptional student outcomes, motivation, and engagement by implementing Dover's (2013) four constructivist methods in a uniquely culturally relevant way. Utilizing these methods, her experiences with multicultural teacher education surpassed those of other participants in the depth and

effectiveness of her culturally responsive teaching.

Charlie's teacher preparation program taught her the importance of empathy for children in urban school environments. The program also provided a comprehensive overview of the cultural, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds of the diverse student populations novice teachers would encounter. These characteristics of Charlie's teacher preparation program align with the first principle of Gorski's (2009) five principles of multicultural teacher education: multicultural teacher education is a bureaucratic movement and process that attempts to secure equal opportunities for underserved and disadvantaged students.

Charlie further explains that with every lesson and each week of planning, she incorporates some form of multiculturalism and content with cultural relevance, from holidays to read-aloud to utilizing background knowledge for lessons where she presumes her students may lack experience or firsthand knowledge of the topic to help students understand the lesson content. Charlie's purposeful planning aligns with Gorski's (2009) second principle: multicultural education recognizes that some individual classroom practices are consistent with multicultural education norms, but comprehensive school reform is needed to secure institutionalized social justice. Dover (2013) highlights this teaching trait through his first and fourth methods of culturally relevant education. These methods involve using culture as a bridge to connect academic skills with students' cultural concepts and foster cultural competence, empowering students to take pride in their heritage. Dover's methods also connect academic skills and concepts with culture. These approaches allow teachers to engage the diverse learning styles of all students.

Charlie's teacher preparation program further promoted a deeper understanding of culturally relevant teaching through a book study she participated in focused on Hammond's

(2014) work, *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*. This book delves into the impact of culturally relevant teaching on students' cognitive development. Gorski's third principle captures this point: multicultural education emphasizes the necessity of critically examining existing power structures and privileges to achieve inclusive school reform. This book study aligns with Dover's (2013) fourth method: culturally relevant teachers intentionally utilize critiques of discourse and power. These approaches empower teachers to cultivate learning environments that foster academic success for all students.

One of Gorski's principles for multicultural teacher education programs goes beyond simply working with diverse students. It emphasizes the importance of teachers delving into individual identity groups' cultures, values, lifestyles, and worldviews. Charlie's practice of integrating literature that reflects "normalcy" for challenging situations students or their families might face demonstrates empathy and a desire to help students and their families process these challenges. Integrating curricula in this way directly addresses Gorski's fourth principle, which emphasizes dismantling educational inequalities—a goal that resonates with Dover's second method of culturally relevant education. This method facilitates students' critical reflection on their lives and society. Charlie's many classroom endeavors to connect with all her students to create successful outcomes align with Gorski's last principle: multicultural education is good for *all* students.

Charlie's detailed account of her teacher preparation program parallels Gorski's (2009) five principles for an effective multicultural teacher education program. These principles aim to equip teachers with a comprehensive skillset for navigating diverse classrooms. Charlie's teacher preparation program demonstrates this focus by fostering cultural competency and offering culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural teacher education. Focusing on this skill set

involves profoundly understanding students' backgrounds, values, cultures, and perspectives. Her program goes beyond simply acknowledging these differences. It strives to create learning environments that affirm students' identities, celebrating what makes them unique by equipping teachers with practical tools. Charlie's program equipped educators with the skills to implement multicultural curricula and diverse teaching strategies, maximizing student engagement and academic achievement.

Self-reflection is another crucial component of Charlie's teacher preparation program. Teachers are encouraged to critically examine their biases and understand how they might influence their interactions with students. This level of self-awareness is crucial for establishing a fair and inclusive classroom environment. Charlie's positive self-assessment further validates the effectiveness of her teacher preparation program. She self-assessed herself as a ten out of ten for her preparedness for entering the classroom and working with diverse students. Charlie credits her teacher preparation program for thoroughly preparing her for the realities of diverse classrooms, ensuring she felt fully equipped to handle their diverse populations. Charlie felt confident in her ability to succeed due to the program's emphasis on developing her understanding, knowledge, cultural competency, and culturally relevant pedagogy. Multicultural teacher preparation ensures novice teachers like Charlie feel fully prepared and confident entering their first-year classrooms. Equipped with the necessary skills, novice teachers can create learning environments that create successful learning environments and outcomes for their diverse student populations. The following section will go into more depth about the three research questions and give a snapshot of the participant responses that led to creating the related theme.

Discussion

Exploring the novice teachers' experiences illuminated their perceptions on three critical aspects of their teacher preparation programs: (1) how they describe their teacher preparation with culturally relevant teaching practices and techniques to create successful learning environments and outcomes for their diverse student populations; (2) how multicultural education training during preservice programs impacted their perceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural teaching techniques; (3) how they describe their experiences working with diverse student populations. This discussion weaves the research questions with the teachers' voices.

RQ1: How do recently certified teachers describe their teacher preparation with culturally relevant teaching practices and techniques to create successful learning environments and outcomes for their diverse student populations?

The consensus among scholars of multicultural teacher education holds that such practice, which has Gorski's five principles, creates an excellent teacher preparation program (Gorski, 2009). Most of the teacher preparation programs described by the participants lacked principles one through five entirely. Thus, teacher preparation programs are not teaching essential skills that ultimately help teachers create equal opportunities for underserved and disadvantaged students.

Several participants described programs that only touched upon multicultural and culturally relevant aspects indirectly. Mentions of cultural relevance accompanied discussions of academic levels or parent communication sensitivity. The absence of a clearly defined curriculum around culturally relevant pedagogy highlights a learning gap despite efforts to enforce diversity through policy and accreditation. The participants' perceptions reveal a lack of

curriculum that reflects the core principles and components of culturally relevant teaching and multicultural education, as educational researchers advocate. This absence of clear and focused coursework leads preservice teachers to misunderstand these crucial components. Consequently, they cannot internalize or utilize the skills effectively to incorporate culturally relevant teaching strategies with their students.

Charlie's program was upfront about routing out people with a negative bias towards the realities of urban environments and the poverty they could encounter. This characteristic of her teacher preparation program aligns with the second principle of Gorki's (2009) principles: multicultural teacher education is a program that prepares teachers to enter their classrooms with awareness of and sensitivity towards diversity, mainly by examining their biases.

Unlike Charlie's program, Sophia's program trained potential teachers in differentiated instruction based on academic levels and the diversity of the student's instructional skills. Still, she did not encounter any intersection with race or culturally relevant training. Sophia's teacher preparation program lacked the training to address racial and cultural intersections within the classroom. Bella and Mario also answered that their teacher preparation programs had culturally relevant teaching. Yet, when asked to go more into detail about what this looked like, they described program content that was unclear, indirect, or vacant of culturally relevant examples or multicultural engagement. The programs Bella and Mario described lack the basic tenets of Gorki's (2009) five principles.

Overall, most of the programs described outside of Charlie's lacked one of the most basic principles of Gorski (2009): multicultural teacher education is a program that prepares teachers to work effectively with a diverse student population by studying the cultures, values, lifestyles, and worldviews of individual identity groups. 88% of the participant responses represented an

omission of culturally relevant teaching or multicultural teacher education in any of the descriptions they gave for their coursework, topics, or focus of their teacher preparation programs.

Dover's (2013) four constructivist methods create a viable avenue for using culturally relevant education in schools. Some novice teachers emerged from their multicultural teacher preparation programs equipped with cultural competency strategies and tools. However, the question remains: did their programs adequately prepare them to translate this knowledge into practice and incorporate culturally relevant teaching practices and techniques to create successful learning environments and outcomes for their diverse student population?

For half of the participants, the answer is yes. The teacher preparation program equipped participants with the necessary skills and knowledge, leaving them well-prepared to teach diverse student bodies. Thus, about half perceived they purposefully attempted to incorporate culturally relevant teaching into their weekly or bi-weekly lesson planning, especially around certain holidays and specific times when cultural events occurred. These efforts reference Dover's (2013) methods, which relate to teachers' ability to incorporate their students' cultural backgrounds in their classrooms and combine this with their students' understanding of the academic skills and concepts mandated by the curriculum.

Tina connects herself with her students and the lessons, as she shares the same culture with much of the student body that she teaches. She uses her science lessons to incorporate cultural references to holidays, celebrations, and adverse historical events, including her personal experiences, to connect to experiences the students and their families may have been through and discussed. These efforts connect with Dover's (2013) method: culturally relevant teachers equip their students with the cultural competence necessary to understand and take pride in their

culture.

Cristal and Nadia embody a principle of Gorski's (2009) model for an excellent multicultural teacher education program, which prepares teachers to work effectively with all diverse student populations. This principle emphasizes studying the cultures, values, lifestyles, and worldviews of individual identity groups, but it raises critical questions about the potential for assimilationist practices within the education system. Cristal allows the class to be led by culturally relevant teaching inquiry if that is the direction the class is led to, flowing with the topic of the class and the discussion that ensues afterward. She gave an example of a simile that she used with her students that elicited a response from a student that created a cultural reference through the student explaining his misunderstanding of the simile. Cristal's teaching aligns with Dover's (2013) methods of incorporating culturally relevant education by employing classroom activities and opportunities for students to critically examine their lives and home culture.

Sonya and Bella's perspectives on culturally relevant teaching contradict Gorski's (2009) principles for multicultural teacher education. Gorski emphasizes integrating student interests and cultural contexts into the curriculum, regardless of the academic level. However, Bella views her I.B. (International Baccalaureate) math class as too focused academically to incorporate cultural references. Similarly, Sonya attributes her students' lack of global awareness to their limited backgrounds, suggesting they might not be interested in broader issues. These perspectives, however, overlook the transformative potential of multicultural teacher education. Gorski highlights the role of culturally relevant pedagogy in sparking curiosity and broadening students' horizons. By incorporating diverse perspectives and issues into their lessons, Sonya and Bella could engage their students and teach them about culture and the world beyond their neighborhoods.

Nadia uses cultural music and portraits that show people who resemble the students and their cultural and racial backgrounds. She also tries to connect to the community and incorporate references to essential people that students are familiar with. An interesting point that Nadia mentioned in describing how she incorporates culturally relevant teaching is when she says, "You can incorporate things sometimes; you are not depending upon what that particular thing is but on your competency as a teacher." Nadia seems to be conflating teacher preference with cultural competency. Culturally relevant pedagogy goes beyond a teacher's likes and focuses on developing the skills and knowledge to teach students from diverse backgrounds effectively. It's about tailoring lessons to resonate with students' cultures and experiences, not simply relying on a teacher's racial or cultural background. This decision raises a critical point: the effectiveness of culturally relevant teaching hinges on the teacher's connection with the student's cultural background and overall teaching competency and comfortability. Today's increasingly diverse classrooms make culturally relevant teaching and multicultural teacher education essential. By equipping preservice teachers with informed toolboxes of strategies and techniques, these programs empower them to enter their careers confidently, be prepared to navigate multicultural issues, and effectively reach all their students.

Nadia's observation highlights a crucial challenge in implementing multicultural teacher education effectively. She emphasized that teachers' comfort levels and cultural knowledge significantly impact their abilities and willingness to integrate culturally relevant teaching practices. This concern aligns with research by Lambeth & Smith (2016), who suggest that a lack of comfort and knowledge among teacher educators and professors may be a key reason why multicultural teacher education is often inadequately addressed or even absent from college teacher preparation programs and K-12 classrooms.

Essentially, the success of multicultural teacher education hinges on educators feeling equipped to discuss, teach, and elaborate on cultural norms, issues, and best practices. Based on the perceptions of recently certified teachers in this study, the majority perceived their teacher preparation programs did have multicultural teacher education. Still, the programs they described did not include culturally relevant teaching practices and techniques to create successful learning environments and outcomes for their diverse student populations.

Curriculum designers for teacher education programs face competing priorities. While education schools prioritize developing specialized skills and competencies in preservice teachers (Lui & Ball, 2019), diversity and social justice education often fall by the wayside. According to the teacher preparation program participants, faculty specialization in separate areas frequently led to a disconnect within education colleges.

It is conclusive that despite efforts to enhance teachers' skills and knowledge for diverse populations, coursework on topics such as multicultural education, antiracism education, social justice, and culturally relevant teaching are typically still peripheral to the core curriculum and educational studies courses (De Luca & Lam, 2014; Howard, 2019). Many teacher preparation programs now prepare teachers in distinct areas through separate coursework and research tracks. Such areas are labeled cultural competency but teach ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and special education (De Luca & Lam, 2014). Given the current inclusive, standards-based paradigm of public education in the U.S., teacher education programs must promote integrated culturally relevant teaching and multicultural teacher education practices to prepare competent teachers to teach diverse student populations (Howard, 2019). These factors necessitate a comprehensive reform of teacher education curriculums to implement inclusive K-12 multicultural education effectively.

RQ2: How does multicultural education training during preservice programs impact novice teachers' perceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural teaching techniques?

When asked if their teacher preparation programs included multicultural teacher education and culturally relevant pedagogy, participants such as Cristal and Nadia described English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, not multicultural teacher education. All participants responded that, from their perceptions, their programs did have multicultural teacher education. On the contrary, based on their responses, it seems the programs did not focus much on diversity, relationships, or culture, which elucidates the understanding that what some programs label as multicultural teacher education is simply just that, a label, marker, stamp, tag, and nothing more. These programs do not address nor discuss techniques and ways to educate and connect with diverse students and their families in efforts to connect the students and their families to the learning targets and schoolwide academic goals, which are components of Gorski's principles of multicultural teacher education.

As students, Cristal, Laura, and Nadia were given instruction and teacher preparation in addressing the proper pronunciation of the names of students from other languages, accommodations, and focusing on vocabulary to help English language learners communicate and understand foundational English. Nadia even had teacher preparation that addressed Ebonics, an African American vernacular. While all these preservice experiences of Cristal, Laura, and Nadia touch on language barriers and understandings of English language learners, it is not multicultural teacher education based on the five-principle model of Gorski (2009) for what qualifies as a comprehensive or *excellent* multicultural education program.

The clinical teaching experiences for most of the eight participants were parallel. With the diverse classrooms that inhabit our public schools, the more pre-exposure novice teachers have with diverse student bodies, the more real-world experience they can gain from having hands-on training with these students (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021). Diversity in the clinical-teaching phase also helps expose novice teachers to building positive relationships and understanding various cultural aspects and cultural norms (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021). The diversity of the clinical teaching experiences for most participants reflected what their classrooms look like today. This aspect of their teacher preparation proved essential, equipping them with the tools they needed to navigate the rich diversity of their current student populations. Benefits include exploring and experiencing new roles in a community of cultures other than their own. Student teachers can test, adjust, consolidate, and fully develop various aspects of multicultural teaching competencies. They can put these into play and practice (Jokikokko & Uitto, 2017).

Four participants (Nadia, Bella, Cristal, and Laura) had highly diverse student populations they have experienced thus far in their teaching careers. The program's inclusion of diverse clinical teaching experiences proved to be a distinctive element that prepared them and aligns with Gorski's (2009) model. These experiences provided participants with invaluable firsthand exposure to various student cultures, which enhanced their understanding and equipped them with the practical skills to teach diverse student populations effectively.

RQ3: How do new teachers describe their experiences working with diverse student populations?

Strong teacher-student connections are essential for all students' success. Teacher preparation programs can significantly impact this by incorporating robust multicultural

components. Equipping educators, regardless of their background, with cultural competence and understanding empowers them to build positive relationships with students from diverse backgrounds (Redding, 2019). Furthermore, these programs are crucial in preparing future teachers to instruct these diverse learners (Howard, 2019) effectively. A more trusting and connected school environment flourishes when teacher preparation programs nurture novice teachers' skills and enthusiasm for building connections with students, parents, and the community. This environment, in turn, empowers educators to utilize a broader range of success measures to demonstrate positive student growth throughout the year.

A supportive teacher-student relationship is positively related to social self-concept, school adjustment, and grades (O'Connor et al., 2011). One benefit of diverse clinical teaching experiences is that students are more behaviorally and emotionally engaged when they have positive relationships with their teachers, which further contributes to their academic achievement (Hughes et al., 2008). Tina mentioned that she tries to create an environment that portrays her with motherly instincts that make students feel comfortable to come to her for anything they need. With her sharing the same culture as most of her students, some may already see her in this role, which helps build trust with her students and their families. Cristal builds relationships by allowing students to come to her office hours and "hang out" and ask questions for them to get to know her better. These efforts by Tina and Cristal address Gorski's principle of multicultural teacher education as a program that prepares teachers to enter their classrooms with awareness of and sensitivity towards diversity.

Two teachers who had difficulty connecting with students were Bella and Sophia. Bella doesn't initiate connecting with her students. She leaves the door open for students to bring issues to her to address versus addressing them upfront. Sophia's observation about being

perceived as "just another White lady" reveals an opportunity for building stronger relationships with her students. Acknowledging this perception and fostering open communication, she can bridge the cultural gap and establish a more authentic connection with her students. This approach can transform the narrative and create a more inclusive learning and teaching environment. Another pathway to building student-teacher relationships is by increasing language congruently. Mario and Charlie actively bridged cultural and language gaps to foster solid student-teacher relationships by leveraging their Spanish language skills.

Effectiveness is an elusive concept when we consider the complex task of teaching and the many contexts in which teachers work. In discussing teacher preparation and the qualities of effective teachers, Lewis et al. (1999) aptly noted that "teacher quality is a complex phenomenon, and there is little consensus on what it is or how to measure it" (para. 3). There is considerable debate as to whether we should judge teacher effectiveness based on teacher inputs (e.g., qualifications), the teaching process (e.g., instructional practices), the product of teaching (e.g., effects on student learning), or a composite of these elements.

Another factor in measuring teacher success is the importance of maintaining a positive and productive learning environment, which is noticeable when students follow routines and take ownership of their learning (Covino & Iwanicki, 1996). Effective teachers nurture a positive environment by setting and reinforcing clear expectations throughout the school year, especially at its beginning (Cotton, 2000). A productive and positive classroom environment flourishes when teachers consider students' academic, social, and personal needs.

Success can be measurable based on each teacher's goals for the school year. Dover (2013) suggests using culture as a bridge to connect academic skills and concepts, thereby allowing educators to measure success through this culturally relevant approach. In this study,

some teachers measured success by how much the teacher has learned from the student and how to use this data to become a better teacher, such as Bella and Cristal, who both mentioned they have learned from their teaching experiences and that created a measurement of success for working with diverse students for them both. Sophia successfully connected with her diverse student population because her former students still connect and communicate with her about different events through social media platforms. Charlie and Nadia both measured successes based on student achievement and outcomes. Nadia mentioned that her students passed their tests, which showed success. Charlie mentioned that her students grew tremendously over the year and now have *tools* to help them continue to learn and be successful. These themes illuminate how new teachers describe their experiences working with diverse student populations. Teachers reported forming positive student-teacher relationships, leading to successful outcomes for teachers and students throughout the school year, based on most participants' assessments of success.

Significance

Reflected in the broader U.S. demographics, the U.S. and Texas are witnessing a demographic shift, reflected in its K-12 student population. Students of color, already half of all children, according to NCES (2019) and McFarland et al. (2019), are on track to become the majority. Texas mirrors the national trend of surging Hispanic student demographics. This population pattern is leading to a significant increase in Hispanic representation within the K-12 student body, with the percentage of Hispanic children jumping from 40.5% to 48.3% (Ee & Gandara, 2020). The rapid growth of Hispanic populations in U.S. cities and suburbs, as projected by Ee & Gandara (2020) to continue through 2050, necessitates a critical shift in teacher preparation.

Kim and Connelly (2019) highlight that the growing diversity in classrooms and existing educational inequities underscore the urgency of effective teacher preparation (Banks, 2020). This research study sheds light on the experiences of novice teachers working with diverse students, aiming to inform best practices for creating inclusive learning environments and fostering student success in all classrooms. As Kim & Connelly (2019) point out, increasing classroom diversity can overwhelm novice teachers. Educators must be equipped with culturally responsive teaching strategies to serve this evolving student body effectively. The inequities diverse students face (Kim & Connelly, 2019) underscore the urgency of this demographic imperative (Banks, 2020). By preparing teachers to navigate diverse classrooms, we can ensure all students have the opportunity to succeed.

U.S. classrooms are transforming into vibrant hubs of multicultural and multilingual learners, mirroring the rich tapestry of our society. This ever-increasing diversity demands continuous research to equip educators with the tools to cultivate inclusive learning environments. This study delves into teachers' experiences navigating through teacher preparation in these diverse classrooms, ultimately informing best practices for preservice teachers and students' success across the board.

Implications for Policy, Practice, and Research

This qualitative research study delved into the experiences of eight novice teachers. This study explored the journeys of teachers who participated in multicultural teacher preparation programs. It examined how they translated their perceived cultural competency gains into practical strategies for their diverse classrooms. The insights derived from this study illuminate valuable aspects of current multicultural teacher education practices, programs, and research.

The following section explores these findings, offering valuable implications to the ongoing dialogue about preparing educators for the complexities of diverse classrooms.

Implications for Policy

This study affirms the need for a solid multicultural teacher education curriculum within teacher certification programs, consisting of a balance of academic and clinical teaching experiences to teach and expose preservice teachers to culturally relevant teaching practices. The CAEP teacher certification standards should mandate (rather than recommend) a uniform and specific requirement incorporating multicultural teaching strategies, techniques, and culturally relevant teacher training. This study suggests that Charlie's teacher preparation program was successful based on Gorski's (2009) model of an effective teacher preparation program. Her program prepared her for the diverse student population she is teaching and has created successful learning outcomes for students and success in connecting and building pertinent relationships between her, her students, and their families.

Gorski's five multicultural teacher education principles address a critical social justice issue: the vast disparities in academic achievement among students from different backgrounds (Gorski, 2016). These principles aim to create a level playing field and ensure equitable student learning outcomes. At the heart of social justice education lies a critical examination of school practices and policies contributing to these inequalities. These practices include analyzing curriculum materials, instructional strategies, tracking systems, staffing decisions, and parent involvement. These elements often undervalue the identities of some student groups while privileging others.

Diversity becomes a central concern in teacher education when viewed through social justice. Gorski emphasizes the importance of actively integrating diverse content across all

elementary and secondary courses (Gorski, 2016). Furthermore, pre-practicum and practicum placements, field experiences, course assignments, and readings should all reflect and support racial, ethnic, linguistic, gender, and other forms of diversity. Immersing preservice teachers in diverse learning environments and integrating diversity throughout the curriculum can become an everyday experience and a core principle of their teaching practice.

Schools with diverse student bodies urgently need teachers trained in multicultural teaching strategies. Unlike traditional programs, or even those labeled "multicultural" that often lack depth, programs like the one Charlie participated in could be a model program and offer a robust solution. Multicultural teacher education equips preservice teachers with the skills and knowledge that align with Gorski's (2009) five multicultural teacher education principles for multicultural teacher education by emphasizing inclusivity, direct application, and in-depth exploration of culturally relevant pedagogy.

This study serves as a call to action for colleges, universities, and teacher preparation programs. It urges them to critically evaluate the benefits of programs grounded in Gorski's (2009) principles and the positive impact on preservice teachers and their students' educational experiences. This study calls for colleges, universities, and teacher preparation programs to closely examine the advantages of a program aligned with Gorski's principles, such as Charlie's, and its impact on preservice teachers and their future students.

Implications for Practice

This study calls for a reexamination of practices related to teacher preparation. Suppose the mission is to prepare teachers to be culturally competent and create successful student outcomes. In that case, preservice teachers must be provided with experiences in teacher preparation that will help them prepare and build skills for diverse student populations. These

experiences could begin by including culturally relevant pedagogy in the program's curricula planning and practices. College and university teacher preparation programs that do not currently expose students to culturally relevant pedagogy or incorporate it properly might disadvantage their prospective preservice teachers.

Traditional teacher preparation programs often struggle to fully prepare educators for the complexities of diverse classrooms and have many limitations (Sharp et al., 2019). One major limitation is a limited focus on cultural understanding. These programs may not prioritize developing a deep understanding of students' cultures, values, lifestyles, and worldviews. This understanding is crucial for appreciating students' richness in the classroom and fostering a truly inclusive learning environment (Sharp et al., 2019). Celebrating different cultural backgrounds can become the norm in classrooms when teachers are equipped with tools to appreciate and value the diversity their students bring.

Another limitation is inadequate self-reflection (Sharp et al., 2019). Current programs may inadequately prepare preservice teachers for the realities of the classroom by neglecting to address personal biases. Integrating self-reflection and critical examination into the curriculum is essential (Sharp et al., 2019). By preparing teachers to identify and challenge their biases, we can cultivate a more equitable learning environment for all students. Teachers aware of their biases are better equipped to ensure their teaching practices are fair and inclusive.

Another limitation is the lack of practical skills, another major challenge (Sharp et al., 2019). Many programs may not equip preservice teachers with the knowledge and practical skills to effectively implement multicultural curriculum and pedagogy. Equipping teachers with these skills allows them to engage diverse learning styles and ensure all students can thrive (Sharp et al., 2019). Imagine a teacher who can tailor lessons to different learning styles, ensuring all

students have an equal chance to succeed.

Furthermore, preservice teachers may have a limited understanding of systemic issues (Sharp et al., 2019). A lack of proper training may prevent them from critically examining the systemic influences of power, oppression, dominance, inequity, and injustice in education. Understanding these systemic issues, from classroom practices to federal policies, is essential for dismantling inequities and creating a more just education system (Sharp et al., 2019). Teachers who understand these issues can advocate for positive change within the system.

Finally, these programs may fail to develop teachers as positive change agents. Teacher preparation programs may fail to equip preservice teachers with the skills and knowledge to act as change agents within the education system (Sharp et al., 2019). By incorporating counter-hegemonic teaching approaches and social activism training, programs can allow educators to advocate for positive change and dismantle existing inequities. Imagine teachers who are not just educators but advocates for a more just and equitable education system. By addressing these shortcomings, teacher preparation programs can ensure educators are well-equipped to celebrate diversity, create inclusive classrooms, and advocate for a more just education system for all students (Sharp et al., 2019).

This study affirms the need for teacher preparation programs that do not currently use these culturally relevant pedagogical techniques as part of their teacher preparation to consider comprehensively including them in some of their courses and curricula. This consideration would allow their students to be trained for diverse student populations, thus providing novice teachers with pertinent skills that could make a difference in their connections, relationships, and abilities to teach diverse student populations and create successful learning outcomes.

Implications for Future Research

This research explored novice teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the multicultural components of their teacher preparation programs in urban areas in Texas. This qualitative study provides valuable insights that can be used to examine university teacher preparation programs in other states and environments with high minority student populations. This extension would validate the need and findings of using multicultural teacher education teaching techniques in teacher preparation presented in this study.

This study uniquely explored the presence and perceived effectiveness of culturally relevant teaching and multicultural teacher education programs in equipping preservice teachers to work with diverse student populations. It investigated whether these programs trained teachers in culturally relevant teaching practices and techniques, how effective teachers perceived this training in developing their culturally relevant pedagogy skills, and the impact of such training on their preparedness for diverse classrooms. Future research can delve deeper by isolating specific aspects of teacher preparation programs. For instance, researchers could analyze course content, syllabi, and university offerings to understand better how these programs integrate multicultural education.

This study focused on overall program impact rather than individual teacher practices. Future qualitative research could explore teachers' specific efforts to support student success in diverse classrooms. This exploration might include examining teacher-community collaboration, incorporating cultural references, or using external motivators. Researchers can gain valuable insights into the most effective approaches for promoting student achievement in diverse settings by investigating these strategies.

This study's participant demographics reflect the current reality of Texas public schools,

where most teachers are white, female, and middle-class. While this research explored the experiences of a diverse group of teachers, future studies could dig deeper by examining how white teachers perceive and implement culturally relevant teaching in classrooms with predominantly minority students since they continue to be the majority of teachers actively in the field and entering teacher preparation programs. Investigating this perspective could yield valuable insights into successfully implementing culturally relevant teaching across racial and ethnic boundaries. These insights could then inform best practices for educators working in diverse classrooms and striving to achieve equitable student outcomes.

Future research can also explore the experiences of students themselves. Studies that investigate students' perceptions of culturally relevant teaching practices, including their impact on learning, achievement, and relationship-building with teachers, can provide valuable insights. By including students from various grade levels, researchers can gain a nuanced understanding of how students at different developmental stages understand and respond to culturally relevant pedagogy. This knowledge can then inform educators' approaches to creating a learning environment that caters to students' successes and interests.

Another critical area for future research is the long-term impact of culturally relevant teaching on student achievement. While this study did not explore standardized test scores, future studies could examine the relationship between culturally relevant teaching instruction and performance on state and national exams. If research establishes a positive correlation between culturally relevant teaching and academic success, it could propel these practices to the forefront of educational agendas. Furthermore, such findings could inform revisions to standardized tests to ensure they accurately reflect the knowledge and skills developed through culturally relevant teaching.

Conclusion

Multicultural education becomes even more crucial in a society and world of growing diversity. It should prepare all students, both majority and minority, to become influential citizens who can thrive in this interconnected reality. (Banks, 2001). Banks (1993, 2001) calls for a new inclusive conception of multicultural education. Still, many teacher educators, intentionally and unintentionally, concentrate on dealing with the critical pedagogy of multicultural education and overlook its many inclusive benefits (Espinoza-Herold & Gonzalez-Carriedo, 2017; Hollie, 2017; McLaren & Fischman, 1998).

This study builds upon Aronson and Laughter's (2016) research on the role of culturally relevant education for students of color and their teachers by addressing a gap in the current literature. It examines how recently certified teachers describe their experiences with culturally relevant teaching practices and techniques during their teacher preparation. The study focused on how these practices create successful learning environments and outcomes for their diverse student populations. The qualitative research methods applied in this study allowed for a nuanced examination of the teachers' descriptions of their teacher preparation programs and explanations of how they use the practices in their classrooms.

This study highlighted how multicultural teacher education training during teacher preparation programs impacts novice teachers' perceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural teaching techniques. Multicultural teacher education classrooms often prioritize authentic relationship building between teacher and student. These novice teachers significantly contributed to their students' academic success by integrating cultural knowledge into their lessons and lesson preparation. While the extent of incorporating students' interests and cultural norms varied across classrooms, most participants actively expressed their intention to connect

with students' cultures and celebrations as frequently as possible within the constraints of the prescribed curriculum. The researcher employed the theoretical framework of Gorski's (2009) five defining principles of multicultural teacher education to analyze this aspect of multicultural education. This framework allowed the researcher to evaluate the teacher preparation programs described by the eight teachers in this study.

This study investigated how novice teachers describe their experiences working with diverse student populations. We drew upon all the conceptual and theoretical frameworks discussed earlier to analyze this research question and the connected data. The findings highlight the importance of building strong student-teacher relationships for student success. Students and parents who feel more comfortable and connected to the school and teacher will likely experience more positive learning outcomes throughout the year. The effectiveness of these relationships, as described by novice teachers, primarily stemmed from their intentional efforts to create, cultivate, nurture, and grow them with their students. Teachers who actively engaged in these efforts fostered blossoming connections, while those who did not struggle to build positive relationships like their peers. Furthermore, each teacher used their chosen instruments to assess their success, judging their growth as progressive and successful based on their criteria.

It is not enough for teachers to know that a student may be bicultural or bilingual. Culturally responsive teachers must have effective strategies to practice with culturally and linguistically diverse students (Warren, 2018). For example, teachers must build on the existing cultural knowledge of students to scaffold their learning and connect with the sanctioned curriculum. They must understand how to use students' first language in the classroom to facilitate and enable second-language understanding. In recognition that assessments are often culturally biased, they need to know how to design culturally sensitive assessments.

The varied backgrounds of these new teachers, shaped by their distinct teacher preparation programs, learning experiences, and comfort levels, heavily influenced their decisions to incorporate culturally relevant teaching in their current classrooms. Multicultural teacher education in teacher preparation would encourage and expose teachers of all races and backgrounds to cultural teaching strategies and understandings to make them feel more comfortable connecting with diverse students and incorporating students' cultures into their lessons, lesson planning, and teaching methods. These culturally relevant teaching methods and training aim to assist novice teachers in connecting with diverse students, leading to successful academic outcomes. Brottman et al. (2020) identified a critical gap in educator training, and cultural competence education is sometimes delivered by instructors who lack proper training. Therefore, precisely defined learning outcomes are needed to guide more coherent and systematic delivery.

Now more than ever, there is an imperative need for a new blueprint for teacher preparation programs. In addition, these programs must explore various avenues for incorporating components of multicultural education for preservice teachers and active teachers alike. The need for these changes is apparent with the massive population diversity and growth over the past two decades. Thus, a more updated curriculum for diverse students needs to be added to teacher prep programs so teachers can successfully educate the culturally, linguistically, and minority students they encounter in PK -12 classrooms.

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Appendix A

Participant Questionnaire

Background Information

1. What racial background/identity do you identify yourself as?
2. What college/university did you attend?
3. What degree did you attain?
4. What type of field experiences were you offered in your teacher preparation program?
 - a. Traditional-Observation and student teaching over 2-3 semesters
 - b. Abbreviated-Observation only
 - c. None- only viewing videos and/or no in-person experience prior to certification
5. Did your program offer experiences in various schools with different types of students?
6. At what school did you begin your first year of teaching?
7. Where is this school located?
 - a. Urban
 - b. Suburban
 - c. Rural
8. How long did you teach at this campus?
9. Why did you decide to leave or stay at this campus?
10. What grade(s) and subject areas have you taught within your first 1-5 years?

Appendix B

Introductory Interview Protocol

Participant Name: _____

Date: _____

Thank you for meeting with me today and agreeing to participate in this interview. The purpose of this interview is to:

- get to know you and your identity as a teacher
- learn about your teacher preparation experiences and how they prepared you for teaching

You were selected to participate in this interview as you have met the following criteria:

(1) You are a 1–5-year teacher in the state of Texas; (2) You went through a college or university to attain your teacher preparation and certification; (3) You teach in an urban school/district with a culturally diverse student population. Your participation in the research will be of great importance to assist with the need to prepare all teachers for culturally and linguistically diverse students. Your participation in the study will also provide needed perspectives which will help diverse learners have more progressive and beneficial learning experiences which will potentially lead to more successful outcomes and educational and career achievements.

This interview will last 45-60 minutes. Our conversation will be video recorded through the Microsoft Teams platform. In the chat I have included an attachment for the letter of consent and the interview questions for you to look at as we go through them. I may periodically look

down to write notes during this interview, so please don't think I'm not paying attention at any time. You ready to get started.

Schooling Background Information

1. What interested you in becoming a teacher? When did you make the decision to pursue this path??
2. Tell me about your college/university teacher preparation experience?
 - a. What made you pursue this degree option and program?
 - b. What were the expectations of this program?
 - c. What types of courses did you take in your teacher preparation sequence?
 - d. What were your favorite courses?
 - i. Why?
 - e. Did you have any experience the with multiculturalism in your teacher preparation training?
 - i. If so, how did you hear it or see it?
 - ii. If so, where did it come about in your program
3. Tell me about your teacher preparation field experience?
 - a. Did you encounter multicultural experiences?
 - b. Did you encounter experiences with diverse student bodies
 - c. What was the predominate student make-up of the schools where you did your field experience?
 - d. What was the predominate teacher make-up?
4. How has your experience as a teacher been?
 - a. Can you describe your first five years as a teacher?

- b. What's been your favorite, most memorable thing about teaching?
 - c. Is there anything you would have changed about your experience thus far?
5. Can you describe the staff and students at this campus?
 - a. What was the predominant make-up and race/ethnicity of the staff?
 - b. What was the predominant make-up and race/ethnicity of the students?
 - c. What the socioeconomic status of the majority of the student body?
6. Looking back to these experiences and training you received in your teacher preparation, how would you describe your level of readiness to teach diverse student populations now that you have completed your first 1-5 years of teaching?
 - a. What do you believe worked or did not work in your preparation?
 - b. What in your opinion could have been done/taught better?
 - c. How successful do you feel you were in connecting with parents and building relationships with students and families?
 - d. How did your work with parents go and how did you feel when you talked to parents?
7. How would you describe your relationship with your students of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds?
 - a. Do you feel you were able to connect with these students?
 - b. Do you feel you were able to build a good relationship with these students and their families?
 - c. Do you feel these students felt comfortable in your class?
8. Do the students in your class affect your approach to planning and teaching?
 - a. In what ways?

- b. What does this look like in your classroom?
 - c. If no, why?
 - d. Do you include the interests and/or backgrounds of your students in class?
9. Are you familiar with culturally relevant teaching strategies?
- a. What does that mean to you?
 - b. What do you know about these teaching strategies?
 - c. Have you used these in your approach to planning and teaching?
 - d. Do you feel it was necessary to incorporate these teaching strategies with your students? Why or why not?
 - e. Do you feel utilizing these strategies was or could be useful to create successful outcomes with your students? Why or why not?
10. Have your approaches to teaching changed since you began?
- a. In what ways?
 - b. Why did you make these changes?
11. Do you feel in your first 1-5 years, you have been successful in teaching and connecting with your diverse student bodies?
- a. How have you measured your success or non-success?
 - b. What would/could you have done better in hindsight now 1-5 years later?
 - c. Based on your teacher experience how would you change that?
12. Is there anything else you would like to add to your previous responses?

Appendix C

Interview Invite

Dear Invitee,

Thank you for completing the study survey and for showing interest in participating in this study. My name is Kelli Foster. I am a doctoral student at the University of Texas at Arlington K-12 Educational Policy Doctoral Program. I am kindly requesting your participation in the next phase of this doctoral research study, the interview. The purpose of this study is to investigate novice teachers' perceptions of multicultural education and more directly, the multicultural teacher education they received in their teacher preparation programs.

The study involves completing a survey & a 45-minute to 60-minute interview through Microsoft Teams video conferencing platform. Here are available dates and times for the interview:

Time Frame	June 1-4, 2023	June 5-11, 2023	June 12-18, 2023	June 19-25, 2023	June 26-30, 2023
7am-9am					
9am-11am					
11am-1pm					
1pm-3pm					
3pm-5pm					
5pm-7pm					

****Please select a week and a time frame that works best for you. Interviews can be Monday-Sunday at a time of your convenience.**

Participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. The study assures complete confidentiality for participants and any information given during the interview, therefore all participants, campus names, educator program names and stories will be masked, and pseudonyms used to cover all identifying information.

Your participation in the research will be of great importance to assist with the need to prepare all teachers for culturally and linguistically diverse students. Your participation in the study will

provide needed perspectives which will help diverse learners have more progressive and beneficial learning experiences which will potentially lead to more successful outcomes and educational and career achievements.

Thank you for your time and consideration of participation in this study.

Sincerely,
Kelli Foster, Doctoral Student, University of Texas at Arlington

Appendix D**Informed Consent for Studies with Adults****TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT**

CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEACHER PREP: Teacher's Perceptions of Their Culturally Relevant Pedagogical Training

RESEARCH TEAM

Primary Investigator:

Kelli Foster, UTA Doctoral Student- K-12 Policy Studies

Email: kelli.foster@mav.uta.edu, Contact: 214-697-0121

Faculty Advisor:

Dr. Catherine Elizabeth Robert, Assistant Professor, Educational Leadership

Email: Catherine.robert@uta.edu, Contact: 817-272-5166

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THIS RESEARCH PROJECT

The research team above is conducting a research study about effectiveness of teacher preparation. This dissertation aims to

- investigate novice teachers' perceptions of MTE- multicultural teacher education
- explore how novice teachers view culturally and linguistically diverse learners

- investigate novice teacher's perceptions of the presence and effectiveness of MTE in their teacher preparation programs
- investigate how the presence or absence of MTE training in teacher prep has affected their teaching ability and ability to successfully teach diverse student populations in their classrooms in their first to third years of teaching.

You can choose to participate in this research study if you have taught one to five years in an urban school located in the state of Texas.

You might want to participate in this study if you feel your teacher preparation experience had a positive or negative effect on your teaching ability and experience during year 1-5 of your teaching career. Also, you may want to participate if you want to contribute your perspective to the educational field of knowledge that can inform the current perceptions of the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of teacher prep in preparing novice teachers for diverse classrooms.

However, you might not want to participate in this study if you are uncomfortable sharing your personal experiences about your journey through teacher preparation and now as a 1-5 year teacher.

This study has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board (IRB). An IRB is an ethics committee that reviews research with the goal of protecting the rights and welfare of human research subjects. Your most important right as a human subject is informed consent. You should take your time to consider the information provided by this form and the research

team and ask questions about anything you do not fully understand before making your decision about participating.

TIME COMMITMENT

Participation in this study will last approximately 45-60 minutes.

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be interviewed and asked to answer a series of questions on a specific research topic. The research topic is teacher preparation and multicultural teacher preparation and how it has influenced your teachability now in your first to fifth years of teaching.

The interview will be audio recorded using the Microsoft Teams video chat platform recording capability. After the interview, the recording will be transcribed, which means they will be typed exactly as they were recorded, word-for-word, by the primary investigator, Kelli Foster.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS

This research will contribute knowledge to society of the current state of multicultural teacher preparation. This study specifically focuses on novice teachers' experiences with if these programs have been beneficial to their experience as teachers of diverse student populations in their first to fifth year of teaching. This research will not benefit the participant directly.

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

This research study is not expected to pose any additional risks beyond what you would normally experience in your regular everyday life. However, if you do experience any discomfort, please inform the research team.

COMPENSATION

No compensation given for participation in this study.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

There are no alternative options offered for this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The research team is committed to protecting your rights and privacy as a research subject. All paper and electronic data collected from this study will be stored in a secure location on the UTA campus and/or a secure UTA server for at least three (3) years after the end of this research. The interview recordings will be destroyed after transcription.

The results of this study may be published and/or presented without naming you as a participant. The data collected about you for this study may be used for future research studies that are not described in this consent form. If that occurs, an IRB would first evaluate the use of any information that is identifiable to you, and confidentiality protection would be maintained.

While absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, the research team will make every effort to protect the confidentiality of your records as described here and to the extent permitted by law. In addition to the research team, the following entities may have access to your records, but only on a need-to-know basis: the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the FDA (federal regulating agencies), the reviewing IRB, and sponsors of the study.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS

Questions about this research study or reports regarding an injury or other problem may be directed to Kelli Foster, kelli.foster@mavs.uta.edu, 214-697-0121. Any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject or complaints about the research may be directed to the Office of Research Administration; Regulatory Services at 817-272-3723 or regulatoryservices@uta.edu.

CONSENT

By signing this form, you are confirming that you understand the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and your rights as a research subject. By agreeing to participate, you are not waiving any of your legal rights. You can refuse to participate or discontinue participation at any time, with no penalty or loss of benefits that you would ordinarily have. Please sign below if you are at least 18 years of age and voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

SIGNATURE OF VOLUNTEER**DATE**

**If you agree to participate, please provide the signed copy of this consent form to the research team. They will provide you with a copy to keep for your records.*

Appendix E

(IRB) Institutional Review Board Approval

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

REGULATORY SERVICES

REGULATORY SERVICES

The University of Texas at Arlington, Center for Innovation

219 W. Main, Arlington, Texas 76010

(Phone) 817-272-3723 (Email) regulatoryservices@uta.edu (Web) www.uta.edu/rs

4/5/2023

IRB Approval of Minimal Risk (MR) Protocol

PI: Kelli Foster

Faculty Advisor: Catherine Robert

Department: Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

IRB Protocol #:2023-0165

Study Title: CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEACHER PREP: Teacher's Perceptions of Their
Culturally Relevant Pedagogical Training

Effective Approval: 4/5/2023

Protocol Details

- Original Protocol Approval Date: 4/5/2023

The IRB has approved the above referenced submission in accordance with applicable regulations and/or UTA's IRB Standard Operating Procedures. The IRB team has reviewed and approved this non-federally funded, non-FDA regulated protocol in accordance with the UTA IRB Internal Operating Procedures. The study is approved as Minimal Risk.

Principal Investigator and Faculty Advisor Responsibilities

All personnel conducting human subject research must comply with UTA's IRB Standard

Operating Procedures and RA-PO4, Statement of Principles and Policies Regarding Human Subjects in Research. Important items for PIs and Faculty Advisors are as follows:

- ****Notify Regulatory Services of proposed, new, or changing funding source****
- Fulfill research oversight responsibilities, IV.F and IV.G.
- Obtain approval prior to initiating changes in research or personnel, IX.B.
- Report Serious Adverse Events (SAEs) and Unanticipated Problems (UPs), IX.C.
- Fulfill Continuing Review requirements, if applicable, IX.A.
- Protect human subject data (XV.) and maintain records (XXI.C.).
- Maintain HSP (3 years), GCP (3 years), and RCR (4 years) training as applicable