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Preparing PK-8 Teachers to Engage in Discussions Regarding Race

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Preparing PK-8 Teachers to Engage in Discussions Regarding Race

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of the Department of Leadership Education

College of Education

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by

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Master of Science

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to discover what PK-8 teachers need to be prepared to engage in discussions regarding race with their students and to explore specific strategies to support teachers. Historically, Black students have been disadvantaged by the educational system and their voices silenced by pervasive racism. Using Critical Race Theory in education, this qualitative study will discuss barriers and strategies to engaging in race-discussions. This study will also discuss leadership implications for better supporting PK-8 teachers to be able to engage in race-discussions with their students. Ultimately, this study argues that PK-8 teachers are unprepared to engage in discussions regarding race with their students and the strategies to prepare them are in need of transformation.

Keywords: education, teachers, strategies, barriers, demographic aspects, White, Black, racism, professional development, teacher candidate programs, race, race-discussions, schools, curriculum, Critical Race Theory, dialogue, culture, community, family, reflection, students, qualitative study, society

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This study could also not have been completed without the love and support of my parents, Scott and Veronica Hallstrom. Their continual and unconditional support throughout my life has pushed me to reach new heights, time and time again. Each time a goal was met, they were right there helping me to shift my lens to the next level and to cheer me on until I made it there. They taught me that the only person I can control is myself, and with that came the perseverance to pursue my dreams, despite whatever challenges were thrown my way.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge my own growth and journey to becoming the person I am today. This study and the degree it afforded me was a steppingstone to self-love. I hope to be able to tell the story to my two beautiful Black and Brown queens about how their mom chose herself, broke free from what was meant to tear her down, and chose to walk on the path to becoming who she was truly meant to be. I hope their own experiences are transformed through the changes we make, to see their beautiful lives as worthy, no matter their skin color.

Chapter 1- Introduction

It should no longer be acceptable to make excuses for not being able to have conversations about race, especially in schools. It is said that it is not enough to not be racist, you have to be actively anti-racist. Monica T. Williams, a clinical psychologist, puts it like this, “If you can’t talk about [race], you can’t understand it, much less fix the racial problems that plague our society (Gonser, 2020, para.3).” It is important that educational research evaluates strategies to prepare teachers to be able to engage in discussions regarding race to support and empower students today. If not, a significant number of students will go on being disadvantaged. As Nebraska’s Education Commissioner, Matt Blomstedt, stated, “The conversation about racial inequities must occur everywhere to prepare our students in every corner of the state to better face the challenges of our nation (Nitcher, 2020, para. 4).”

Problem Statement

The purpose of this study is to discover what PK-8 teachers need to be prepared to engage in discussions regarding race with their students and to explore specific strategies to support teachers.

Background of the Problem

Students are becoming more diverse racially, ethnically, and linguistically while teachers are remaining predominantly White and female. Research also shows that teachers out-scored non-teachers when tested for racial bias, both in theory and practice. This is a concerning outlook for many students and emphasizes the importance of research-based strategies on confronting biases within teachers’ classrooms (Clark and Zygmunt, 2014).

Often, when dealing with these biases and race conversations within their classrooms, teachers have been consistently seen to resort to silence, silencing, and colormuteness. Because

of those practices, students learn similar “rules” about engaging with issues regarding race. (Castagno, 2008). If schools are truly working towards equity, closing achievement gaps, and ending oppressive systems, they must talk to students about issues like race and racism (Castagno, 2008). Teachers’ participation in the bigger system carries a significant influence over their students and need to be prepared to do so effectively and in an actively anti-racist way (Castagno, 2008).

It goes beyond just the biases of teachers. The formal curriculum consists of the classes, lessons, and activities in schools (Great Schools Partnership, 2015). The hidden curriculum consists of the unwritten and unofficial lessons, values, and perspectives that are imparted in schools, including how students should interact with others, how they should perceive others, and what ideas or behaviors are acceptable and unacceptable (Great Schools Partnership, 2015). The term “hidden” comes from the fact that it typically remains unacknowledged and unexamined by stakeholders (Great Schools Partnership, 2015).

Race is institutionalized within the education system itself in various ways. The hidden curriculum, for example, is used to uphold the status quo and institutionalizes racism without it being explicitly named or identified (Langhout & Mitchell, 2008). The hidden curriculum leads to the reprimanding of behaviors that do not fit the mold. This impacts Black and Latino males especially hard (Langhout & Mitchell, 2008). It also may lead teachers to feel pressured to go against their personal beliefs, as it prioritizes student discipline. The hidden curriculum may be “hidden” in practice, but the effects are not. Moreno and Scaletta (2018), showed that teachers held a vital role in the effect of the school-to-prison pipeline on Black students and explained that in some schools, “*law and order*” has come at the expense of students of color due to school policies. It is important that teachers are not only aware of this aspect of education, and how it

upholds agendas outside of the field, but also their role within the system so that they can advocate for better practices within their schools and classrooms for better student outcomes for all.

Research Questions

The research objective for this study is to answer the following research questions:

1. What do PK-8 teachers need to be prepared to engage in discussions regarding race?
2. What specific strategies are there to support teachers in being prepared to engage in discussions regarding race?

Limitations/Delimitations

There are some limitations that are to be expected. Because the survey will be done voluntarily and pertains to a potentially sensitive or controversial topic, teachers may not feel comfortable providing truthful responses. Martell and Stevens (2018), shared a similar limitation with their voluntary survey regarding teaching and race and inferred that teachers who were more aware of race issues may have been more willing to take the survey. Delimitation to that barrier could be that the source of the survey is not through school administrations, which could lead to a sense of intimidation or fear, but rather a fellow teacher.

Definition of Terms

Words like race, racism and White seem to be serving as the source of a lot of discomfort for teachers. Though words such as these are words used to describe structures and systems of oppression, many White educators attach personal blame, guilt, and feelings to them. Even when teachers mean well, they can still have a strong sense of defensiveness and fear of being thought of to be racist, discriminatory, or unprofessional. Other consistent themes seen in the practice of

White educators were teacher silence and silencing, colormuteness, and conflating concepts (Castagno, 2008).

For the purpose of this study, the following terms will be used:

Race: Refers to society's sorting of people based on physical characteristics, such as skin color, for social and political reasons (ADL, 2020).

Racism: The marginalization and/or oppression of people of color based on a socially constructed racial hierarchy that privileges white people (ADL, 2020).

Systematic Racism: Systems, institutions, and factors that advantage white people and puts people of color at a disadvantage for access and opportunity (ADL, 2020).

White: Referring to people who are racialized as white in the United States, including those who identify with ethnicities and nationalities that can be traced back to Europe (Thuy & Pendleton, 2020).

Black: Referring to people of African descent; signifies a history of and the racial identity of Black Americans (Thuy & Pendleton, 2020).

Silence/Silencing: Explicit ignoring of students' race talk and active silencing of students around issues of race (Castagno, 2008).

Colormuteness: Using coded language for racial meaning (Castagno, 2008).

Conflating Concepts: The combining of differing words such as culture with race, equality with equity, and difference with deficit (Castagno, 2008).

Summary

This chapter introduced that the purpose of this research is to discover what PK-8 teachers need to be prepared to engage in discussions regarding race with their students and to explore specific strategies to support teachers. For the purpose of this study, a selection of terms

was defined to help the reader disassociate certain words from personal feelings to view the research in a more objective way. The next chapter will briefly discuss some of the origins of certain issues regarding race within education. It will then explore the evolution of trends in engaging in discussions regarding race from ethnic studies, multiethnic education, cultural deprivation paradigm, cultural difference theory, multicultural education, to anti-racist education. This chapter will also provide a literature review of barriers and strategies for engaging in discussions regarding race within schools.

Chapter 2- Review of the Literature

Chapter two addresses research question one and two through review of the literature. This chapter contains a brief background of how the racial demographics of students have transformed and notes specific trends of how race has been discussed in schools in the past. This chapter concludes with possible barriers for PK-8 teachers engaging in discussions regarding race and offers strategies to overcome those barriers.

Historical Overview of the Problem

Arguably, the closest steps taken to achieving education equality occurred between 1868 and 1878, but only lasted for so long, according to Anderson (2015). This time period saw a Black majority in politics and an active pursuit of education equality. The year 1890 saw a shift back to disenfranchisement and the reversal of educational equality motions. In 1896, the Plessy v. Ferguson decision created a legal foundation for segregated schools (Anderson, 2015).

The years between 1954 and 1980 are referred to as the “Desegregation Era.” The year 1954 saw the Brown v. Board of Education decision. Black educators saw this as a “second-class integration” and were rightfully skeptical (Anderson, 2015). The U.S. Supreme Court did not include a specific timetable for its decision creating the opening for Southern states to ignore it for the most part and to continue implementing voting regulations against Black voters and influencing public school segregation (Anderson, 2015). It was not until the 1960s that Supreme Court cases began enforcing the Brown v. Board of Education decision, but southern states were still able to find loopholes to maintain favoring White students and families. Desegregation in the 1960s and 1970s led to many Black public schools being closed and tens of thousands of Black teachers and administrators being let go which damaged the infrastructure of Black education (Anderson, 2015).

Reardon (2014) revealed causes of these trends in the history of school segregation. The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* led to schools implementing “freedom of speech” desegregation plans that meant Black families were given the option to enroll in white schools which was not particularly a desirable situation. In 1968, the *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County* decision held school districts more accountable for integration. In the mid-1970s, hundreds of school districts faced court-ordered desegregation plans (Reardon, 2014). This was arguably the most important fact that led to the rapid declines in racial segregation. From 1970 to 2009, there has been a gradual re-segregation of Black students due partly to a growth in neighborhood income segregation and what is known as the “white flight response.” This is characterized by white families moving to districts with fewer Black families, a decline in white birth rates, suburbanization, and an increase in white students opting for private schools. Between 1990 and 2010, hundreds of districts were released from court-ordered desegregation plans, which also led to an increase in re-segregation within those schools. In 2007, *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1* made it more difficult for school districts to voluntarily desegregate (Reardon, 2014). While schools have been experiencing a less explicit form of segregation, students are still becoming more diverse racially, ethnically, and linguistically while teachers are remaining predominantly White and female (Clark & Zygmunt, 2014).

This historical overview of race in education is important to this study and serves as a preface to the overview of how race has been discussed by teachers in education because it lays a framework for the barriers present to engaging in race-discussions with students. Educational inequalities have consistently affected Black students, schools have come to be segregated in a way that results in unequal distribution of resources disadvantaging Black and Brown

communities, and the infrastructure of Black education has been altered by the firing of Black educators resulting in a disproportionate amount of White teachers and principals (Anderson, 2015; Reardon, 2014). Without this background, teachers will not be fully prepared to engage in discussions regarding race within their classrooms.

Trends in Education

Ethnic Studies

Ethnic studies were the first steps in the development of multicultural education (Banks, 2013). Black studies were the first program implemented. The use of holidays and heroes became the widespread strategy used by schools to provide “recognition” and “civic equality.” This is known as the heroes-and-holiday approach (Banks, 2013). The advantages to this were that teachers were able to include ethnically diverse content into the curriculum. Ethnic content allowed for students to be able to see their experiences represented within the curriculum and society, and it challenged White dominance and enabled White students to understand how their history and the histories of other races are connected (Banks, 2013). The limitations to this approach were that ethnic content remained separate from the mainstream curriculum and American history and the ethnic heroes that were chosen were ones that could be represented as “safe” and as not questioning or challenging the status quo (Banks, 2013).

Multiethnic Education

Multiethnic education took ethnic studies to the next level and went beyond the heroes-and-holiday approach (Banks, 2013). It realized that reforming curriculum was necessary but not sufficient for educational equality. In 1995, the following were identified as the variables that needed to be reformed: school policy and politics, school culture and hidden curriculum, learning styles of the school, languages and dialects of the school, community participation and input,

counseling programs, assessment and teaching procedures, instructional materials, formalized curriculum and course of study, teaching styles and strategies, and school staff (attitudes, perceptions, beliefs and actions) (Banks, 2013).

Cultural Deprivation Paradigm

The Cultural Deprivation Paradigm was developed in the 1960s and 1970s. It was highly criticized but saw a revival in the 1990s. It was based on the belief that the learning problems of low-income students were a result of the cultures that they were socialized in. If schools were able to compensate for their cultural environment and enable them to gain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to fit into mainstream society, then students would be able to achieve academically. According to this paradigm, the problem was the culture of the students, not the schools' (Banks, 2013).

Cultural Difference Theory

To combat the Cultural Deprivation Paradigm, the Cultural Difference Theory was created. It argued that the explanation of student underachievement was found in cultural conflicts, not deficits. Unlike the Cultural Deprivation Paradigm that deflected blame from schools, the Cultural Difference Theory placed schools accountable. It stated that schools must change by respecting and reflecting cultural strengths and use teaching strategies that match cultural characteristics. This became known as “equity pedagogy” or “culturally responsive” teaching. Studies showed that when teachers used these strategies, the academic achievement of minority students improved. Research supported that being able to connect home and community cultures is one of the most important traits of effective teachers of Black students (Banks, 2013).

Multicultural Education

Multiethnic Education evolved into Multicultural Education. Multiethnic Education focused on racial groups within the United States. Multicultural Education included gender, exceptionality, and social class and how they influence student and teacher behaviors. It was argued that there should also be a social action component included (Banks, 2013).

Anti-Racist Education

Anti-racist Education takes on more than education reform and includes the need to address structural inequities that uphold racism. Where Multicultural Education defines race as a cultural term, Anti-Racist Education sees race as a social and political term tied with class and other forms of discrimination that deny human rights. The goals are to identify systematic oppression, challenge denial of complicity in such oppression and transform structural inequalities (Lynch, et. al., 2017).

Possible Barriers to Discussing Race in Classrooms

Teacher Candidate Programs

Teacher candidate programs contain barriers that must be addressed to adequately prepare teachers to engage in discussions regarding race. According to Buchanan (2015), programs often offer isolated experiences to engage in discussions regarding race rather than offering them throughout and stated that there is discomfort and disinterest by teacher educators as well as pre-service teachers. This discomfort often leads to avoidance and colorblindness. Gerardo and Michael (2018) stated that in the prioritization of content knowledge, pre-service teachers are lacking the learning opportunities for classroom management skills and behavior support, which disproportionately affects students of color. Cicetti-Turro (2007) noted that the strategies that are included in education programs, such as culturally responsive pedagogy and

multicultural education, do not consider the teachers that are implementing them and do not adequately arm pre-service teachers with the skills to engage in discussions regarding race.

Teachers' Experience

According to Castagno (2008), White teachers view the topic of race as being uncomfortable and having the ability to adversely affect them if addressed. While they do want to teach to the diverse student population, there is a fear of being seen as being racist, discriminatory, or unprofessional. Lingras (2021) stated that this is an example of privilege. For White families and teachers, it is easier to not address race, while for families and teachers of color, race is a part of daily life and is more difficult to not talk about. Schools and White families and teachers have commonly utilized an “inclusive” ideology and adopted terms such as: “I don’t see color,” “Under our skin, we are all the same,” and “All people are children of God, no matter what skin color.” While these statements can seem to be inclusive, they can lessen and erase personal identities and show that differences are something that we do not discuss (Lingras, 2021).

Age can also be seen as a barrier to discussing race. Some teachers may think that their students are too young for the topic.

Curriculum

In the era of high-stakes testing, teachers are burdened to teach to the standards, which can serve as a barrier to include discussions regarding race. Teachers may feel as though that they do not always fit into the “real” curriculum. (Milner, 2017) The hidden curriculum serves as a barrier that works to institutionalize racism. It stands in the way of discussions regarding race among teachers and students by limiting opportunities for student self-expression, discouraging active participation, and pressuring teachers to discipline in a certain way. Black male and

females are often the ones not fitting the status quo and falling victim to unfair disciplinary practices under the guise of the hidden curriculum (Langhout & Mitchell, 2008).

Administrative and Family Support

According to Langhout and Mitchell (2008), teachers do not receive enough training on how to understand student behavior and how to combat institutionalized racism. Martell (2018) also added that there is a great need for professional development that helps teachers to be able to discuss race. Castagno (2008) furthers the point by saying that professional developments, school policies, and language surrounding teachers adds to the weariness teachers may have regarding discussing race. Other barriers involving administrators is the need for schools to recruit and retain a more diverse staff and to have strong administrative support. Many teachers also see parents/guardians, and the lack of support from families, as a big barrier to them discussing race in their classrooms (Castagno, 2008).

Strategies for Discussing Race in Classrooms

Teacher Candidate Programs

Teacher candidate programs need to include opportunities to engage in discussions regarding race early and often throughout. Ways in which to do this are through seminars and deliberations, open dialogue around shared pieces of work, experiences within the community, blended classroom tasks with fieldwork, and reflection exercises. Oral, written, online discussions, whole and small group, and questionnaire opportunities should be continual throughout the program (Buchanan, 2015).

The quality of training in classroom management skills and experience working with diverse student populations are important factors in a teacher's ability to address disruptive behaviors. Teacher candidate programs would be wise to include courses focused on behavior

support and student-focused classroom management. These courses could serve as effective tools against school policies that can negatively impact students of color (Gerardo & Michael, 2018).

Dialogue, or conversations about race, should be one of the professional skills included to be taught and expected to master before entering the education field. Outcomes and competencies should be transformed to include dialogue. To do this, more diverse firsthand experiences need to be included often and throughout the program and a faculty of color with diverse views should be recruited and retained (Cicetti-Turro, 2007).

Instructional Practices

Milner (2017, p. 88-89) offered suggestions to support race-discussions within a classroom. Step one is to design a classroom environment that is respectful and open to questioning and different perspectives. This should include encouraging dialogue. Step two involves personal reflection and research in order to be able to provide counterviews to provide students the opportunity to grow analytical and critical thinking skills without indoctrinating them into a certain position. This should include utilizing multiple sources and point of views and requiring students to explore different sources and to consider positions different than their initial thinking on topics related to race. Step three is designing for curricular connections that help students understand the connection between race and the subject. Step four comprises of building support networks for student needs by working with counselors, social workers, etc. Step five is to catering to students' socio-emotional side by acknowledging and validating their feelings with sensitivity. Step six is to talk, collaborate, and partner with parents, community members, and administrators to build trust, gain support, and develop strategies for encouraging dialogue. Step seven is to build racial literacy, knowledge and skills and to consider what comes after race discussions, such as what students can do based on what they learn (Milner, 2017).

Lingras (2021, p. 14-15) offered suggestions that are specifically helpful for PK-8 teachers in discussing race with younger students. Teachers should do the personal work first, such as reflecting on personal biases prior to and throughout engaging discussions on race. Differences should be discussed and portrayed as positive to reduce biases. Topics should be discussed in age-appropriate terms and specific student experiences should be considered. The focus should remain on the impact, not the intention, and emotions should be validated. Teachers need to highlight cultural resilience and strength, not just the struggles (Lingras, 2021).

For additional support, Lingras (2021, p. 15) listed the “ABC (DEFG)s” of initiating conversations. Those strategies are to access resources, be proactive, concrete and honest language, developmentally appropriate explanations, ease feelings of distress, find hope and safety, guide the conversation based on student interests and questions (Lingras, 2021).

Curriculum

The reform of the hidden curriculum needs the involvement of multiple stakeholders. There needs to be the support of the school leaders. They can show this support by bringing in guest speakers, putting topics on meeting agendas, discussing disciplinary systems, and creating community-wide conversations. Students need to be involved. This can happen by debating the code of conduct and including the pros and cons of the rules, and how they align with the greater school goals (Langhout & Mitchell, 2008).

Spaces need to be provided for students and teachers to be able to unpack their viewpoints. This can only be done outside of the hidden curriculum. Students and teachers should be encouraged and supported to question, to understand how schools work or don't work for different groups, and to dismantle structures and practices that privilege certain norms over others. Students and teachers who do not fall in line with existing school norms should inspire

the seeking of answers to questions rather than silencing and disciplining (Schaffer & Skinner, 2009).

Administrative Support (Professional Developments)

When training teachers to engage in discussions regarding race, there needs to be an ongoing guided process. The process could utilize a tool such as the Implicit Association Test that would work to show personal biases. There then needs to be targeted responses depending on what those outcomes are. The process will look different for everyone. The goal is to meet teachers where they are and then help them in developing a new lens, taking responsibility, and creating change. Some changes should include looking at classroom materials, eliminating racist language, and transforming school policies and practices (Clark & Zygmunt, 2014).

According to Martell (2018), the things that would support teachers the most in discussing race are more time in the curriculum, professional development opportunities, colleague support, and greater attention to race in the standards. There is a need for professional development training that can help teachers to engage in discussions regarding race on a regular basis by focusing on student learning (not just content) and providing strategies as well as coaching for lesson planning. Administrators should also include race-conscious teachers and scholars as guest speakers and coaches to support staff members often (Martell, 2018). Langhout and Mitchell (2008) adds that professional development needs to include training teachers on how to understand student behavior and ways to assess institutionalized racism.

Administrators should intentionally recruit and work to retain teachers of color. This involves an increase in administrative support. Having a diverse staff benefits the entire school as students, even White students, had more positive opinions of Latino and Black teachers than White teachers according to Cherng and Halpin (2016). Teachers of color can relate to students

across races more easily and can be more multi-culturally aware which is associated with better classroom environments and academic success and can be a tool to lessen the racial achievement gaps (Cherng & Halpin, 2016).

There needs to be attention on administrative beliefs, practices, and decision-making in support of, or not, engaging in discussions regarding race (Milner, 2017).

Family Support

According to Milner (2107), it is important to seek out the level of support and to build trust with parents when engaging in discussions regarding race.

Yull et. al. (2018) described a race-conscious parent engagement program that could work to reverse the stereotypes of families of color in school and to improve teacher and family relations. It is developed with the cooperation of teacher participants, school administrators, community leaders, and parent participants. The program intentionally recruits parents of color that have felt marginalized in their interactions with the school system and provides them training, mentorship, and necessary stipends. Throughout the year, participants get individualized support and meet weekly to discuss their experiences. This program helped teachers and parents to see each other as allies. Parents of color were able to help with the connection of White teachers and students of color. The impact of this program was improved relationships between students, teachers, and parents (Yull et. al., 2018).

It takes the participation of multiple stakeholders to evoke change. This should involve collaboration between the community and systems. There are numerous elements that go into making education more equal for all children such as investments in poverty reduction, health care, early childhood education, adequate nutrition, toxin-free living environments, healthy families, and safe neighborhoods. Each one of these things needs to be assessed and met before

true education equality can be had for all students. Community resources should be intertwined within the school structures and culture, not just additional features. Incentives should focus on fiscal equity, diversification of teaching force, commitment and training to work with certain demographics, teacher collaboration and staff development, and partnerships (across districts, business, universities, and communities) (Weinstein, 2004).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based in Critical Race Theory (CRT) in education and how it relates to preparing PK-8 teachers to engage in discussions regarding race. CRT began in the 1980s by legal scholars to develop best strategies for engaging with racism in structural oppression. Tichavakunda (2019) noted that Ladson-Billings and Tate integrated CRT within education in 1995. CRT provides two very important lenses in which to view this research study: “race matters” and “Blackness matters.” These two lenses will guide the researcher to explore best strategies to prepare teachers to be able to engage in discussions regarding race (Tichavakunda, 2019).

CRT is based on five tenets. The five tenets are counter-storytelling, the permanence of racism, Whiteness as property, interest convergence, and the critique of liberalism. These tenets lay a framework to be able to identify and analyze strategies to support teachers in being prepared to engage in discussions regarding race. Counter-storytelling is the use of stories to illustrate what other people’s lives are like. It challenges traditionally accepted ideas and stereotypes while allowing for marginalized groups to be heard. Within education, counter-storytelling can be utilized through the inclusion of stories and narratives (personal, other people’s, and a combination). The permanence of racism suggests that structures, such as education, privilege White people and treats people of color as different. CRT can be used to

analyze practices that support the permanence of racism, explore school culture, and examine disciplinary processes. According to CRT, schools reinforce the tenet about “Whiteness as property” through their curriculum, policies and practices. It reveals that schools are in many ways re-segregated and students of color do not have equal access to high-quality curriculum and safe and equipped schools. Students of color are also expected to culturally conform more often as school leaders are not as receptive to them. Interest convergence is deeply rooted within education. As discussed in the historical overview, the *Brown v. Board* decision had a limited benefit to the Black population. Black teachers and administrators were laid off, Black neighborhood schools were closed, and other segregation factors, such as tracking, were implemented. Interest convergence is the notion that the rights and opportunities of Black people are to be implemented if they can merge with the interests of White people and are not seen as an interruption to the status quo. The critique of liberalism discounts colorblindness, neutrality of the law, and incremental change in education. It states that colorblindness normalizes Whiteness and works to ignore race, which enables racism to continue. Incremental change suggests that marginalized groups are to experience gains at a slow pace to appease the people who experience power and does not typically benefit those that are directly impacted by inequity and oppression (DeCuir & Dixson, 2021).

Teachers face various barriers to engaging in discussions regarding race while race and racism continue to benefit White students while disadvantaging Black students. This research study is based on the fact that PK-8 teachers are not prepared to engage in discussions regarding race with their students and CRT provides a framework to explore and analyze specific strategies to support teachers.

Summary

This chapter gave a brief outline of the evolution of racial demographics in schools and the relationship to educational equality. Specific educational trends regarding discussing race in schools were discussed. There was also a literature review of barriers and strategies for engaging in discussions regarding race. Themes that emerged from the review pertained to teacher candidate programs, teachers' experiences, curriculum, and administrative and family support. The theoretical framework, based in Critical Race Theory, offers five tenets to be used to identify and analyze best strategies to engage in discussions regarding race. The next chapter will outline the research methodology used for this study. It will defend the qualitative methods used to answer research questions one and two and include the details of the survey and interview questions used. It will describe the sample and setting of the participants, including demographics. This chapter will also provide data analysis from the study.

Chapter 3- Research Methodology

The purpose of this study is to discover practical strategies that can support teachers in being prepared to engage in discussions regarding race as a stepping-stone to advocacy and change. Research question 1 will discover what PK-8 teachers need to be prepared to engage in discussions regarding race with their students. Research question 2 will explore specific strategies to support teachers in being prepared to engage in discussions regarding race with their students. This chapter will illustrate aspects of the research methodology employed for this study. Sections include research design, sample and setting, data collection, instrument and data analysis.

Research Design

According to Klehr (2012), qualitative research methods are suited for teachers who are exploring questions about their teaching practices in regard to their individual classrooms, such as engaging in discussions about race with their students. Qualitative methods focus more on the teaching and learning within individual classroom settings, such as the focus of this study (Klehr, 2012).

Two data collection methods were used: survey and interviews. The survey sought to seek information on teachers' comfort levels with discussing race in their classrooms and to elicit feedback on how prepared they felt to do so through their teacher candidate programs and professional development opportunities. Participants were purposefully selected through opportunistic sampling and a homogeneous sample selection.

The interview questions used open-ended questions to seek out specific strategies to support teachers. This part of the study utilized purposeful sampling through opportunistic sampling.

Sample and Setting

For research question 1, 52 teachers were invited via email to participate in the survey. A total of 24 participants completed the survey for a 46% return rate. The sample consisted of teachers from two schools in Omaha, Nebraska. Grades range from preschool through eighth grade. Student demographics for School 1 consist of approximately 87% White, 5% Black, and 6% Hispanic, Asian, or two or more races. For School 2, the student demographics consist of approximately 93% Black, 5% White, and 2% Hispanic and Asian.

For research question 2, ten professionals were invited via email to participate in the interview process. A total of five participants completed the interview for a 50% participation rate. The sample consisted of various professional careers in Omaha. While these individuals work towards educational equality and social justice in various capacities within Omaha, settings reported included assistant principal, mental health practitioner, early childhood, after-school program director, and wellness coordinator/program manager.

Data Collection

Instruments

For research question 2, data was collected using a 16-question, online survey. The survey included four demographic questions. Nine questions used Likert scale responses to assess teachers' current levels of preparedness to engage in discussion regarding race. Choices ranged from never to often for survey questions five through eight. Choices ranged from not at all to extremely for survey questions nine through 12. Three open-ended questions were included for participants to be able to describe their personal experiences regarding their teacher candidate program, professional development opportunities and strategies for discussing race with students. The researcher emailed the consent form and survey link to participants through a password-

protected Qualtrics account, which keeps the participants' identity confidential. A reminder email was sent out to participants who had not yet submitted a survey response. A data report was generated using Qualtrics so the researcher could analyze the data and identify themes from the responses.

For research question 2, data was collected through a 7-question semi-structured interview via Zoom. Questions from the interview were open-ended for participants to relate their personal experiences and provide specific strategies for preparing teachers to engage in discussions regarding race. The researcher scheduled interviews with each participant at his or her convenience. The participants' identities were kept confidential by using a coding system. The first participant was coded as subject 1. That pattern continued for all five participants. The interviews were recorded and transcribed at a later date so that the researcher could identify emerging themes. Data and information collected throughout this study, for both research question 1 and research question 2, were stored on a password-protected computer.

In addition, a literature review was conducted to further discover strategies that would support teachers in being able to engage in discussions regarding race.

Data Analysis

Johnson (2010) outlined that for a qualitative data analysis, the researcher needs to gather the questions and answers that relate to the research questions, read the data, locate different themes, identify appropriate quotes, and review how the literature connects to the themes. Once the data was collected for research question 1 and research question 2, the researcher conducted data analysis on the surveys and interviews. For research question 1, the process included computing the data report, differentiating between School 1 and School 2 responses and coding the data, organizing the data into categories, and identifying themes. For research question 2, the

process included transcribing interviews, coding the data, organizing the data into categories, and identifying themes.

The researcher then identified consistent themes and patterns across the data instruments. According to Carter et al. (2014), data triangulation, more specifically method triangulation in regard to this study, is the use of multiple data collection methods so that the researcher can develop a more comprehensive understanding of the research questions. For this study, data triangulation included the survey, interview, and literature review. The interviews were in-depth individual interviews, or IDI interviews. This type of interview is described by Carter et al. (2014) as being one of the most effective tools to explore topics in depth and to obtain meaningful information about personal experiences and viewpoints (Carter et. al., 2014).

Summary

Chapter 3 described the research methodology for this study. The research design consisted of a survey to gather data for research question 1 and an interview to gather data for research question 2. A literature review was included for data triangulation. Once the data was collected, the researcher then analyzed it for emerging themes. Chapter 4 will state those themes and include the results of the research study.

Chapter 4- Results

Chapter four includes the results for the sample demographics and the data analysis. Data analysis for research question 1 (RQ1) included collecting the surveys, coding the data, and writing up the results. For research question 2 (RQ2), all interviews were transcribed in order to code the data, identify themes, and write up the results.

Demographics

The survey questions used to gather the demographics of participants were:

Survey Question 1 (SQ1): Are you of Hispanic/Latino/Spanish origin?

Survey Question 2 (SQ2): How would you best describe yourself?

Survey Question 3 (SQ3): What school do you currently teach at?

Survey Question 4 (SQ4): Years of teaching experience

These specific questions were included to gather data on the demographics of teachers so that the researcher could analyze results from School 1 and School 2. This would allow the researcher to more deeply identify themes and strategies and the implications on teacher preparedness to engage in discussions regarding race.

Demographics Results

Twenty-four PK-8 teachers in Omaha, NE participated in the survey. Table 1 shows the responses for SQ1-4 regarding survey participants' demographic results.

Table 1**Survey Responses**

SQ1-SQ4		Percentage of Participants
Are you of Hispanic/Latino/Spanish origin?	Hispanic or Latino or Spanish Origin	0%
	Not Hispanic or Latino or Spanish Origin	100%
How would you best describe yourself?	American Indian or Alaska Native	0%
	Asian	0%
	Black or African American	30%
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0%
	White	70%
	Other	0%
What school do you currently teach at?	School 1	46%
	School 2	54%
Years of teaching experience	0-2 years	9%
	3-5 years	23%
	6-10 years	14%
	11-15 years	23%
	16-20 years	14%
	21-25 years	5%
	26+ years	14%

In response to the survey question, “How would you best describe yourself,” 70% of survey participants recorded being White and 30% recorded being Black or African American.

In response to the survey question, “What school do you currently teach at,” 46% of survey participants are teachers at School 1 and 54% are teachers at School 2.

For RQ 2, 5 professionals participated in the interview process. All participants were in Omaha, Nebraska. There were 5 different professional careers impacting education represented by each of the participants. Each of the subjects identified themselves as being Black.

Data Analysis

For RQ1, an online survey was emailed to PK-8 teachers from two differing schools through Qualtrics. The schools were coded as School 1 and School 2. The survey asked participants to answer questions about how prepared they were to engage in discussions regarding race and what helped them. A total of 24 teachers responded to the survey. The survey was comprised of 4 demographic questions, 8 Likert scale questions, and 4 open-ended questions. Survey questions 5-8 ranged from never to often. Participants were asked about the frequency of their engaging in race discussions within their classrooms. Survey questions 9-12 ranged from not at all to extremely. Participants were asked about their comfort and level of preparedness in engaging in discussions regarding race. The 4 open-ended questions helped to identify themes to find strategies that would support teachers.

For RQ2, 5 subjects participated in a semi-structured, one-on-one interview over Zoom. These interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for coding. The researcher then used the transcripts and coding to identify emerging themes. Those themes were then compared to the strategies discussed in the literature review to identify specific strategies to support teachers in being able to engage in discussions regarding race.

RQ1

To discover what PK-8 teachers need to be prepared to engage in discussions regarding race with their students, the following research question was proposed:

RQ1: What do PK-8 teachers need to feel prepared to engage in discussions regarding race?

Survey questions used to answer the research question were:

Survey Question 5 (SQ5): How often do you think about what students of different races experience?

Survey Question 6 (SQ6): At your school, how often are your students encouraged to think more deeply about race-related topics?

Survey Question 7 (SQ7): How often are students given opportunities to learn about people from different races?

Survey Question 8 (SQ8): When there are major news events related to race, how often do you talk about them with your students?

Survey Question 9 (SQ9): How comfortable are you discussing race-related topics with your students?

Survey Question 10 (SQ10): How easy do you find interaction with students at your school who are of a different race than you?

Survey Question 11 (SQ11): How comfortable would you be incorporating new material about people from different backgrounds into your curriculum?

Survey Question 12 (SQ12): In response to events that might be occurring in the world, how comfortable would you be having conversations about race with your students?

Survey Question 13 (SQ13): How well did your teacher candidate program prepare you to engage in discussions regarding race with your students?

Survey Question 14 (SQ14): How well have professional development opportunities helped you to feel prepared to engage in discussions regarding race with your students?

Survey Question 15 (SQ15): What barriers have you encountered when discussing race with your students?

Survey Question 16 (SQ16): Do you have a specific strategy that you use that helps you to feel prepared to engage in discussions regarding race with your students? If yes, please explain.

Survey Results

Research Question One Results

Table 2 shows the responses for SQ5-8 regarding teachers' personal frequency in engaging in race discussions.

Table 2***Survey Responses***

SQ5-SQ8	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often	
	School 1	School 2	School 1	School 2	School 1	School 2	School 1	School 2
	Percentage of Participants							
How often do you think about what students of different races experience?	8%	0%	8%	8%	67%	0%	17%	92%
At your school, how often are your students encouraged to think more deeply about race-related topics?	9%	0%	55%	0%	36%	62%	0%	38%
How often are students given opportunities to learn about people from different races?	0%	0%	33%	0%	50%	46%	8%	54%
When there are major news events related to race, how often do you talk about them with your students?	8%	0%	50%	8%	33%	62%	0%	31%

In response to the survey question, “At your school, how often are your students encouraged to think more deeply about race-related topics,” 55% of participants from School 1 selected that students are rarely encouraged and 62% of participants from School 2 selected that students are sometimes encouraged to think more deeply about race-related topics.

In response to the survey question, “When there are major new events related to race, how often do you talk about them with your students,” 50% of participants from School 1 reported that they rarely talk about them and 62% of participants from School 2 reported that they sometimes talk about major news events related to race with their students.

In response to the survey question, “How often do you think about what students of different races experience,” 67% of participants from School 1 revealed that they sometimes think about what students of different races experience and 92% of participants from School 2 often do.

In response to the survey question, “How often are students given opportunities to learn about people from different races,” 50% of participants from School 1 said that students are sometimes given opportunities and 54% of participants from School 2 said that students are often given opportunities to learn about people from different races.

Table 3 shows the responses for SQ9-12 regarding teachers’ personal comfort level in engaging in race discussions.

Table 3**Survey Responses**

SQ9-SQ12	Not at all		Somewhat		Moderately		Extremely	
	School 1	School 2	School 1	School 2	School 1	School 2	School 1	School 2
	Percentage of Participants							
How comfortable are you discussing race related topics with your students?	0%	0%	30%	15%	70%	38%	10%	46%
How easy do you find interaction with students at your school who are of a different race than you?	0%	0%	0%	0%	55%	15%	45%	85%
How comfortable would you be incorporating new material about people from different backgrounds into your curriculum?	0%	0%	0%	0%	55%	8%	45%	92%
In response to events that might be occurring in the world, how comfortable would you be having conversations about race with your students?	9%	0%	27%	8%	45%	23%	18%	69%

In response to the survey question, “How easy do you find interaction with students at your school who are of a different race than you,” 55% of participants from School 1 reported that they find such interaction moderately easy and 85% of participants from School 2 find it extremely easy.

In response to the survey question, “How comfortable would you be incorporating new material about people from different backgrounds into your curriculum,” 55% of participants from School 1 selected that they are moderately comfortable and 92% of participants from School 2 selected that they are extremely comfortable with incorporating new diverse material into the curriculum.

In response to the survey question, “How comfortable are you discussing race-related topics with your students,” 70% of the participants from School 1 reported that they are moderately comfortable with discussing race-related topics with their students.

In response to the survey question, “In response to events that might be occurring in the world, how comfortable would you be having conversations about race with your students,” 69% of participants from School 2 said that they are extremely comfortable with having conversations about world events with their students.

In response to SQ13, “How well did your teacher candidate program prepare you to engage in discussions regarding race with your students,” 16 out of the 20 (80%) responses stated that their teacher candidate program did not prepare them at all. Two participants mentioned the race of their professors. One subject commented, “None of my professors looked like me.” The other comment was, “My professors (all white in the education department) did what they could.” Two participants said that there was one class throughout their program

offered that addressed human relations. One subject stated that there were no experiences offered in diverse schools.

In response to SQ14, “How well have professional development opportunities helped you to feel prepared to engage in discussions regarding race with your students,” 15 out of the 20 participants (75%) did not believe that there have been professional development opportunities offered that have helped them. Among the subjects that reported having beneficial professional development opportunities, two participants commented that they found reading books, as part of PD was helpful for them.

In response to SQ15, “What barriers have you encountered when discussing race with your students,” 8 out of 20 (40%) participants articulated that student experiences served as a barrier. Participants believed that their students did not truly understand due to their geographical, racial, and class experiences. Another common note was that participants worried how talking about race would affect students that are the minority within the class. One subject stated, “I sometimes worry that students of different races (other than White) feel uncomfortable discussing race-related topics as those students might be the only Black or Brown student in an all-White class.” There were 6 (30%) participants who saw parents as a barrier. There were 3 (15%) participants that reported school expectations such as administrative support and pertinence to the subject being taught. There were 5 (25%) participants that mentioned personal experiences as being a barrier for them. Two subjects listed their white privilege explicitly. One subject commented, “I feel hypocritical teaching from my white middle-class viewpoint.” Two subjects mentioned their uncertainty with what language to use, for example, when to use Black or African American. There were 3 (15%) participants who saw their students’ ages as a barrier to discussing race. One participant noted, “I teach a younger grade so in all honesty discussing

race isn't something that happens often. However, I do a lesson on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and my students love it!"

In response to SQ16, "Do you have a specific strategy that you use that helps you to feel prepared to engage in discussions regarding race with your students? If yes, please explain," 4 out of 17 (24%) of the participants commented that researching helped them. This included fact-checking, getting informed, and studying information. One subject offered this advice, "Try and learn as much as possible prior to the conversation. If I don't know, then I say that and we together try and figure it out." There were also 4 (24%) participants that discussed knowing your audience. This involves knowing how much your students know about a topic, how to read the room, knowing the comfort level of your students and what they would be willing to engage in, letting students know that they are in a safe place, and listening to them to gauge how they feel. One subject stated, "Relationship building comes first." There were 2 (12%) participants that mentioned talking and listening to others and experiences with all races. There were also 2 (12%) participants who stated that using resources, such as *Teaching Tolerance*, novels, short stories, and videos, helped them to start discussions.

RQ2

To discover what PK-8 teachers need to be prepared to engage in discussions regarding race with their students, the following research question was proposed:

RQ2: What specific strategies are there to support teachers in feeling prepared to engage in discussions regarding race?

Interview questions used to answer the research question were:

Interview Question 1 (IQ1): Please tell me a little bit about your experience working with diverse students and advocating for racial justice.

Interview Question 2 (IQ2): What led you to doing this work? What have you found is the most important aspect of your work?

Interview Question 3 (IQ3): What experiences have you had that have helped you understand the impact of race on teaching and learning?

Interview Question 4 (IQ4): What communities are most affected and how?

Interview Question 5 (IQ5): What should teachers know about feeling prepared to engage in discussions regarding race that they may not already know?

Interview Question 6 (IQ6): Are there any specific strategies that can be used to support teachers in feeling prepared to engage in discussions regarding race?

Interview Question 7 (IQ7): What are some additional resources you recommend using?

Interview Results

Research Question Two Results

In response to IQ1, “Please tell me a little bit about your experience working with diverse students and advocating for racial justice,” 4 of the 5 (80%) participants discussed the role of representation. Subject 3 and 4 discussed how seeing someone that looks like you enable you to see more possibilities for yourself and others that look like you. Subject 4 stated that not too many professionals look like him in his field, young, Black, and cultured, and that he is able to relate to many different perspectives. Subject 2 shared her son’s experience, who in having his first Black, male teacher, saw his grades and outlook on school improve due to being able to see himself in his teacher and having shared experiences. She stated, “Research shows that Black children that have at least one Black teacher in elementary school are most likely to graduate high school and go to college.”

In response to IQ2, “What led you to doing this work? What have you found is the most important aspect of your work,” 4 of the 5 (80%) participants mentioned resources. Three of those subjects spoke about the need to provide and increase access to resources for families and students. Subject 5 said, “Schools are not just learning facilities, but are hubs of resources for the community.” There were 3 of the 5 (60%) participants that talked about future impact. Subject 1 stated, “If we don’t teach, encourage, and aid these kids we are looking at repeating history.” Subject 5 spoke about addressing issues and being proactive in preventing them.

In response to IQ3, “What experiences have you had that have helped you understand the impact of race on teaching and learning,” 4 of the 5 (80%) participants mentioned that their personal experiences with diverse populations have helped them understand the most. Two subjects mentioned their upbringing. There was one subject that listed their internship and practicum in graduate school. Subject 2 stated, “This work is personal to me.” There were 2 of the 5 (40%) participants who talked about experiences with listening to how teachers talk. Subject 1 saw that Black and Brown students were often seen as a disruption and that she often heard teachers talk about why they dislike students. Subject 3 claimed, “I have heard teachers say things. Things that could traumatize a young person, further implying that their worth is less than in society.”

In response to IQ4, “What communities are most affected and how,” 5 of the 5 (100%) participants reported that Black and Brown communities are most affected. Three of the 5 (60%) participants discussed that school conditions, resources, and funding were different in the Black and Brown communities of Omaha compared to the areas of town that are more highly concentrated with White students. Four of the 5 (80%) participants spoke about school culture.

This involved disproportionate rates of representation and discipline and negative teacher biases.

In response to IQ5, “What should teachers know about feeling prepared to engage in discussions regarding race that they may not already know,” 4 of the 5 (80%) participants stated that teachers should know that conversations will not always be pleasant and that they will find themselves uncomfortable. Three of the 5 (60%) participants mentioned vulnerability and humility. Subject 3 recommended that teachers approach conversations regarding race with “cultural humility.” Five of the 5 (100%) participants emphasized the importance of educating oneself. This included reading literature, gathering historical context, self-reflection, listening to others, including students, and being open to learning. Two participants said that in educating oneself, change would begin to show in every aspect of the classroom. Subject 3 noted that this is a continuous effort by saying, “Taking a training and thinking you’ve got it now is going to do folks a disservice.” Five of the 5 (100%) participants mentioned collaboration. Participants commented that listening and asking for help are essential to feeling prepared to discuss race. There were 3 of the 5 (60%) participants that discussed action. Subject 2 stated, “Teachers are waiting for district leaders to guide them in discussions about race, but that day may never come.” Subject 4 and 5 also noted that it didn’t appear that much change appeared to be happening on the bigger scale.

In response to IQ6, “Are there any specific strategies that can be used to support teachers in feeling prepared to engage in discussions regarding race,” 4 of the 5 (80%) participants reported learning from community members. Subject 4 discussed the importance of being involved in the community for relationship building and personal development. Four of the 5 (80%) participants stated relationship building with students is vital. Subject 3 said, “Teaching

from a relational and strengths-based approach is paramount.” Subject 2 emphasized self-reflection and starting with getting to know students and their families, and then infusing their interests into the classroom environment. Two participants mentioned professional development opportunities. Subject 5 shared the following professional development and learning opportunities that his school has provided: the purchase and use of diverse books, events, performances, art, and guest speakers; the creation of a “Black Lives Matter” committee; professional development opportunities such as watching a film about racial issues, reading and discussing a book as a staff, meeting to discuss curriculum reform, and mini lessons about race.

In response to IQ7, “What are some additional resources you recommend using,” 5 of the 5 (100%) participants recommended online resources and books. Five of the 5 (100%) participants emphasized that community members are the most recommended resource to have a dialogue with and listen to. Subject 5 added experts and professors from local colleges. Subject 2 mentioned an early childhood program that focuses on closing the race-based achievement gap.

Summary

The survey and interview results showed consistent themes with the literature review and illustrated the importance of establishing strategies to better prepare PK-8 teachers to engage in discussions regarding race. For RQ1, “What do PK-8 teachers need to be prepared to engage in discussions regarding race,” two themes were that teacher candidate programs and professional development opportunities did not prepare teachers adequately. There were three themes that emerged as barriers to engaging in discussions regarding race: student experiences, parents, and personal experiences. There were also three themes that emerged as strategies for being prepared: researching, relationship building, and dialogue. For RQ2, “What specific strategies are there to support teachers in being prepared to engage in discussions regarding race,”

emerging themes were: representation, personal research, collaboration, dialogue, relationship building, and professional development opportunities. Chapter five discusses the findings from this chapter and will relate them to the literature review and theoretical framework. Leadership implications and recommendations for future research will be provided and discussed.

Chapter 5- Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to discover what PK-8 teachers need to be prepared to engage in discussions regarding race with their students and to explore specific strategies to support teachers. Previous chapters discussed background information on race discussions in education, the research questions and methodology, and the findings of the study. This study revealed barriers to engaging in discussions regarding race in classrooms and illustrated strategies to prepare PK-8 teachers and education leaders. Chapter five will summarize and discuss the findings from the research study and relate it to the literature review and theoretical framework. Leadership implications will be discussed as well as recommendations for future research.

The research objective for this study was to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. What do PK-8 teachers need to be prepared to engage in discussions regarding race?

RQ2. What specific strategies are there to support teachers in being prepared to engage in discussions regarding race?

Data collection was performed through an online survey for research question 1 and interviews for research question 2. The researcher then used thematic coding to analyze the data. Six themes emerged for research question 1 (1) teacher candidate programs (2) professional development opportunities (3) administrative and parental support (4) personal experiences and research (5) relationship building, and (6) dialogue. Six themes emerged for research question 2 (1) representation (2) personal research (3) school culture (4) dialogue (5) relationship building and collaboration, and (6) resources.

Theoretical Connection

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Critical Race Theory (CRT) in education developed by Ladson-Billings and Tate in 1995 (Tichavakunda, 2019). CRT began to develop best strategies for engaging with racism in structural oppression. It provided two lenses that guided the researcher and that this study should be viewed through, “race matters” and “Blackness matters” (Tichavakunda, 2019). CRT is based in five tenets, which are counter-storytelling, the permanence of racism, Whiteness as property, interest convergence, and the critique of liberalism.

Numerous participants identified using literature and having dialogue to facilitate discussions and be better prepared to engage in race discussions. Supported by CRT’s first tenet, counter-storytelling, stories allow us to see events from a different perspective, give a voice to marginalized groups, and challenge traditionally accepted ideas and stereotypes (DeCuir & Dixson, 2021).

Various participants discussed how education privileges White students, treats Black students as different, and commented that they have experienced how school culture and disciplinary processes support racism. These points are also described by the second tenet of CRT, permanence of racism (DeCuir & Dixson, 2021).

Several participants took note of unequal access to resources and a high-quality school environment that is discussed in the third tenet of CRT, Whiteness as property. Also mentioned both by participants and CRT, were how school leaders are not as receptive to Black students, forcing them to conform or face disciplinary actions more often (DeCuir & Dixson, 2021).

Tenets four and five, described by the CRT, interest convergence and critique of liberalism, are more explicitly illustrated by the literature review. The literature showed that the rights and opportunities of Black students are implemented more when not seen as an

interruption to the status quo and the hidden curriculum. The literature, as well as CRT, discounts colorblindness (DeCuir & Dixson, 2021).

Research Question 1

The researcher identified themes for research question one and research question two based on similarity of responses. Six themes emerged for RQ1, “What do PK-8 teachers need to be prepared to engage in discussions regarding race?” Those themes are teacher candidate programs, professional development opportunities, relationship building, administrative and parental support, personal experiences and research, and dialogue.

Theme 1: Teacher Candidate Programs

Teacher candidate programs are not adequately preparing teachers to engage in discussions regarding race. Diverse experiences are not offered enough throughout programs, often only being offered as isolated opportunities, and with discomfort from teacher educators and pre-service teachers (Buchanan, 2015). These programs are failing to equip pre-service teachers with the skills to engage in discussions regarding race, provide diverse firsthand experiences often and throughout the program, and recruit and retain a faculty of color (Cicetti-Turro, 2007). Eighty percent of the survey participants confirmed that their teacher candidate programs did not prepare them at all to engage in discussions regarding race. Two of the participants noted the impact race had on their programs, such as not having any professors of color.

The survey question associated with this emergent theme was, “How well did your teacher candidate program prepare you to engage in discussions regarding race with your students?”

Select answers relevant to this theme include:

Participant 1: My teacher candidate program did not prepare me to engage in discussions about race. I would hope that due to the increasing number of race incidents, that programs would be more proactive in offering coursework to better prepare future teachers and educational leaders in having these important discussions with students.

Participant 2: Not well at all. We had no experiences in diverse schools and none of my professors looked like me.

Theme 2: Professional Development Opportunities

Teachers do not receive enough training on student behavior and the impact of racism (Langhout & Mitchell, 2008). There is a need for ongoing-guided training on how to self-reflect on personal biases, improve classroom materials, eliminate racist language, and transform school policies (Clark & Zygmunt, 2014). Professional development opportunities that focus on student learning and provide strategies and coaching for lesson planning would support teachers. Recruiting race-conscious scholars as guest speakers and coaches would provide additional support to teachers in being prepared to engage in discussions regarding race (Martell, 2018). Seventy-five percent of the survey participants confirmed that there have been no professional development opportunities offered to them that have prepared them to engage in discussions regarding race.

The survey question associated with this emergent theme was, “How well have professional development opportunities helped you to feel prepared to engage in discussions regarding race with your students?”

Select answers relevant to this theme include:

Participant 3: Upon reflecting on the professional development opportunities over my past 13 years as a certified teacher, I do not feel that there were many opportunities for growth in these areas.

Participant 4: I do not know that I have ever felt that a professional development opportunity has better prepared me for discussions regarding race.

Theme 3: Administrative and Parental Support

A strong sense of support from administrators is vital for teachers to engage in discussions regarding race and the recruiting and retaining of teachers of color (Cherng & Halpin, 2016). There needs to be more attention paid to administrative beliefs, practices, and decision-making in support of, or not, events regarding race (Milner, 2017). It is also important to seek out the level of support and build trust with parents and families when engaging in race discussions (Milner, 2017). A race-conscious parent engagement program would reverse stereotypes of families of color in school and improve teacher and family relations (Yull et al., 2018). Fifteen percent of the survey participants reported on the lack of administrative support. Thirty percent of the participants mentioned parental support as a barrier to engaging in discussions regarding race.

The survey question associated with this emergent theme was, “What barriers have you encountered when discussing race with your students?”

Select answers relevant to this theme include:

Participant 2: Some parents feeling it is inappropriate or as if their children should not know.

Participant 13: I am aware that some students’ parents seem to equate movements (such as Black Lives Matter) with a “liberal agenda” and are sharing those beliefs with their children. It takes some time to un-do misinformation that is shared at home.

Participant 20: I am always worried that students will misinterpret something I say that gets back to the students’ parents who will then complain about something I said.

Theme 4: Personal Experiences and Personal Research

Without relevant experiences and research, there is a common fear of being viewed as racist, discriminatory, or unprofessional (Castagno, 2008). For White teachers, it can be easier to just not address race while for families of color, race is a part of daily life and is more difficult to not talk about (Lingras, 2021). Doing the personal work first is critical. Teachers need to reflect on personal biases prior to and throughout discussions and access resources (Lingras, 2021). For teachers, it is important to reflect on personal viewpoints and to be able to provide counterexamples to provide students the opportunity to grow analytical and critical thinking skills without indoctrinating them into a certain position (Milner, 2017). It is also important to be able to build support networks for student needs that the teacher may not be prepared to handle. This involves collaboration with counselors, social workers, parents, community members, etc. (Milner, 2017). Twenty-five percent of survey participants discussed their personal experiences as a barrier to engaging in discussions regarding race. Twenty-four percent of participants listed doing personal research as a strategy they use to being prepared to engage in discussions regarding race.

The survey questions associated with this emergent theme were, “What barriers have you encountered when discussing race with your students?” and “Do you have a specific strategy that you use that helps you to feel prepared to engage in discussions regarding race with your students?”

Select answers that are relevant to this theme include:

Participant 3: My level of comfort in discussing race with students came from my own background and perspective as a person of color.

Participant 8: Research, I try to be informed so I have accurate answers to their questions.

Participant 9: When it is something I can prepare for, I try and learn as much as possible prior to the conversation. If I don't know, then I say that and together we try and figure it out.

Participant 11: I would say most of my experience regarding race was learned in growing up going to diverse schools. I also did my practicum teaching at diverse schools as well.

Participant 14: I'm honest with the experiences that have happened in my own life. I also let students know that we're in a "safe place" and what gets said in discussions are sacred.

Participant 15: I feel hypocritical teaching from my white middle class viewpoint although I try my best.

Theme 5: Relationship Building

Students need to be and feel involved (Langhout & Mitchell, 2008). In the prioritization of content knowledge, teacher candidate programs lack learning opportunities for student-focused classroom management skills and behavior support, which disproportionately affects Black and Brown students (Michael, 2018). Spaces need to be provided for students and teachers to be able to unpack their views by being encouraged and supported to ask questions, to understand how schools work or do not work for different groups, and to dismantle structures and practices that privilege certain norms over others (Shaffer & Skinner, 2009). Classroom environments should be open to different perspectives and encourage students' questions, and should recognize and treat the socioemotional side of students, acknowledging and validating their feelings (Milner, 2017). Teachers should also consider the experiences of their students and discuss topics in age-appropriate terms that frame differences as positive. The focus should be on the impact, not the intention. Cultural resilience and strength, not just the struggles, should be highlighted. Teachers should ease feelings of distress and find hope and safety (Lingras, 2021). Forty percent of survey participants mentioned student experiences as being barriers to engaging in discussions regarding race. Fifteen percent of participants listed student age as a barrier. Twenty-four percent of participants discussed knowing and having a dialogue with students.

The survey questions associated with this emergent theme were, “What barriers have you encountered when discussing race with your students?” and “Do you have a specific strategy that you use that helps you to feel prepared to engage in discussions regarding race with you students.”

Select answers relevant to this theme include:

Participant 3: I think that knowing your audience is the first step. You also have to know the comfort level of your students and what conversations they are willing to engage in and knowing how to read the room. It also helps to get an idea of what students know and don't know about a topic.

Participant 6: It's sometimes brought up and I will listen just to get a gauge on how they may feel about the subject.

Participant 7: Relationship building comes first when discussing race.

Participant 11: I teach a younger grade so in all honesty discussing race isn't something that happens often. However, I do a lesson on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and my students love it!

Participant 13: I sometimes worry that students of different races (other than white) feel uncomfortable discussing race related topics as those students might be the only black or brown student in an all white class.

Participant 14: I think it is very difficult to have conversations about race with a bunch of middle class white kids. I'm also not willing to put the few non-white kids on the spot to give their thoughts on opinions. That would definitely require a one-on-one conversation before I asked questions in class.

Theme 6: Dialogue

White teachers and schools have adopted inclusive language. However, by not using actual terminology, this language can lessen and erase personal identities, as well as model that differences are not okay to discuss (Lingras, 2021). Dialogue, or conversations about race, should be one of the professional skills taught in teacher candidate programs and included as an outcome that is expected to master before entering into education (Cicetti-Turro, 2007). Teachers

need to build racial literacy, knowledge and skills to encourage dialogue from their students, and consider what comes after discussions regarding race, such as what can students do based on what they learn (Milner, 2017). Students who do not fall in line with existing school norms should seek answers to questions through dialogue rather than silencing and disciplining (Schaffer & Skinner, 2009). Strategies to incorporate discussions regarding race often and throughout teacher candidate programs, professional development training and classroom lessons are by seminars and deliberations, open dialogue on shared pieces of work, experiences within the community, blended tasks with fieldwork, reflections exercises, online, oral, and written discussions, whole and small group, and questionnaire opportunities (Buchanan, 2015). Education reform involves multiple stakeholders. To encourage dialogue among stakeholder groups, school leaders need to bring in relevant guest speakers, put meaningful topics on meeting agendas, discuss disciplinary systems, create community-wide conversations, and involve students (Langhout & Mitchell, 2008). Twelve percent of survey participants mentioned talking and listening to others as a strategy to be more prepared to engage in discussion regarding race. Twelve percent of participants also discussed using resources such as novels, short stories, and videos to start discussions in their classrooms.

The survey questions associated with this emergent theme were, “What barriers have you encountered when discussing race with your students?” and “Do you have a specific strategy that you use that helps you to feel prepared to engage in discussions regarding race with your students?”

Select answers relevant to this theme include:

Participant 1: Making sure the language I’m using is correct. For example, questioning if I should use “black” or “African-American” and what circumstances I should specifically use one or the other. Teaching history in a way that is

honest but doesn't continue the issue but gives kids the power to rise above.

Participant 11: I really like using materials from "Teaching Tolerance." Also, it is helpful to use literature to start discussions about difficult topics, including race related issues.

Participant 13: I use novels, short stories, and videos. They tell the story much better than I can.

Participant 16: When to say African American or when to say black.

Six themes emerged for RQ2, "What specific strategies are there to support teachers in being prepared to engage in discussions regarding race?": representation, personal research, school culture, dialogue, relationship building and collaboration, and resources.

Research Question 2

Six themes emerged for RQ2, "What specific strategies are there to support teachers in being prepared to engage in discussions regarding race?" Those themes are representation, personal research, school culture, dialogue, relationship building and collaboration, and resources.

Theme 1: Representation

Students are more diverse racially, ethnically, and linguistically while teachers remain predominantly White and female (Clark & Zygmunt, 2014). According to Cherng and Halpin (2016), students, including White students, had more positive opinions of the Black and Latino teachers than the White teachers. Teachers of color can relate to students across races more easily and can be more multiculturally aware which is associated with better classroom environments and academic success (Cherng & Halpin, 2016). Eighty percent of interview participants noted the impact of representation.

Interview questions associated with the emergent theme were, “What led you to doing this work? What have you found is the most important aspect of your work?” and “What experiences have you had that have helped you understand the impact of race on teaching and learning?”

Select discussions relevant to this question include:

Participant 2: This work is personal to me and I think it’s more of what I’ve been taught outside of my career that I bring to whatever position that I’m in.

Participant 2: I work in an Omaha Public School building and my son went to a school within Omaha Public Schools for five years. I’ve had to navigate the system as a parent and professionally. I know if I didn’t work for the district my son’s schooling experience would have been different. He had his first Black male teacher at his current private school. His grades improved and his love for school increased because he was able to see himself in his teacher. My son’s teacher understood where he came from and shared so many of his interests.

Research shows that North Omaha and South Omaha are the most affected. These communities are most affected because most of the educators in buildings within these communities do not look like the students. Research shows that Black children that have at least one Black teacher in elementary school are more likely to graduate high school and go to college.

Participant 3: I know that representation is ever important, as many teachers in elementary school and middle school are white. Having someone who may have a similar background, at least from a racial standpoint, gives you an opportunity to see someone who looks like you and help you envision that you can do it too. It is no different than Black and Brown boys and girls now realistically envisioning they can be president or vice president of the United States. Now they have a model to embody and that is what we need more of in the teaching world.

Participant 4: Not too many therapists look like me; young, Black, and cultured. I bring a perspective that can relate to many who didn’t have access or comfort to the field of mental health before.

I think just growing up in such a diverse community and being subject to discrimination and de facto segregation has made me really aware of these things. Seeing gentrification in neighborhoods how it happens in the larger

cities. Also, just experiencing “it’s more than just this” for myself and seeing how that has expanded my field of vision as far as possibilities for myself and others that look like me.

Theme 2: Personal Research

Self-reflection is a vital component of engaging in discussions regarding race. According to Clark and Zygmunt (2014), teachers out-scored non-teachers when tested for racial bias. Teachers often resort to silence, silencing, and colormuteness when faced with discussions regarding race which models to students similar “rules” about talking about race (Castagno, 2008). How teachers interact within the education system carries a significant impact on their students. They need to be prepared to do so in an anti-racist way to not perpetuate similar actions and inactions. One hundred percent of participants discussed the importance of doing personal research.

Interview questions associated with the emergent theme were, “What should teachers know about feeling prepared to engage in discussions regarding race that they may not already know?”, “Are there any specific strategies that can be used to support teachers in feeling prepared to engage in discussions regarding race?”, and “What were some additional resources you recommend using?”

Select discussions relevant to this question include:

Participant 1: Ask questions. Listen. Don’t judge. Read. Engage. It is okay to be ignorant as long as you are willing to learn from it.

Be open to being uncomfortable, wrong, and empathetic. Be open to understanding anger and hurt that has been passed down from generation to generation before judging someone.

Participant 2: Start educating yourself and it will begin to show in every aspect of the classroom.

Understanding yourself will guide you in the direction of the courses necessary. There are so many books and virtual professional developments out there to support.

Participant 5: The first thing they should know is that it will be uncomfortable. I don't really think any change, certainly not on a large scale, can take place while operating from a comfort zone. You have to really make yourself vulnerable and accept challenges in order to make an impact. The second thing is to do your homework. Be a knowledge junkie. Arm yourself with as much literature, information, and historical context as you can.

Theme 3: School Culture

Race is institutionalized within the education system in various ways. School discipline practices have become associated with what is called the school-to-prison pipeline for Black students at a disproportionate rate (Moreno & Scaletta, 2018). The hidden curriculum reprimands behaviors that are seen as going against the status quo, which particularly impacts Black and Latino males, and pressures teachers to prioritize student discipline (Langhout & Mitchell, 2008). Eighty percent of interview participants discussed school culture aspects such as discipline practices, negative teacher bias, and lack of representation. Sixty percent of participants mentioned having a future impact.

Interview questions associated with the emergent theme were, "Please tell me a little about your experience working with diverse students and advocating for racial justice?", "What led you to doing this work? What have you found is the most important aspect of your work?", and "What experiences have you had that have helped you understand the impact of race on teaching and learning?"

Select discussions relevant to this question include:

Participant 1: Something I notice about working with diverse students is that the typical classroom is tailored to cater a specific type of student's needs. Therefore, when people from other backgrounds come around and are different,

hands on learners, loud, or expressive, they are seen as a disruption. We need to tailor schools to fit all different backgrounds.

The impact we have on the youth is my most important aspect of working. If we don't teach, encourage, and aid these kids, we are looking at repeating history.

Listening to other teachers explain why they dislike students. When you listen, you can understand what someone is thinking.

Participant 2: The teachers in the building I work in do not address race and how it plays a part in education. The classrooms all look the same and all children are expected to fall in line with the building wide rules.

I'm currently reading a book called, "Belonging Through A Culture of Dignity, The Keys to Successful Equity Implementation." This book discussed getting away from random acts of equity, but supports creating a culture within schools.

Participant 3: In my professional experience, I have heard teachers say things that immediately cause you to turn up your eyebrows in regards to race. Things that could traumatize a young person, further implying that their worth is less than in society.

Participant 5: Our school is predominately African-American. There have been many things put in motion to address cultural diversity within the school. To name a few; the purchase of diverse books in our library, events, performances, mini-lessons, purchase of art, and guest speakers. We also started a "Black Lives Matter" committee to discuss ways to address the best way to educate and advocate for racial justice. This committee has already done an advocacy walk, created a professional development day to view a film centering around the issue, hosted a "Black Lives Matter" themed week with mini-lessons about racial identity, purchased a book titled "Teaching for Black Lives" for the staff to read and discuss, and continues to meet to discuss curriculum reform centered around the issue of racial justice.

Theme 4: Dialogue

Dialogue is an important skill that needs to be included in teacher candidate programs along with diverse firsthand experiences often and throughout the program (Cicetti-Turro, 2007).

One hundred percent of interview participants noted that community members are the most recommended resource to have dialogue with.

Interview questions associated with the emergent theme were, “What should teachers know about feeling prepared to engage in discussions regarding race that they may not already know?” and “Are there any specific strategies that can be used to support teachers in feeling prepared to engage in discussions regarding race?”

Select discussions relevant to this question include:

Participant 3: I think that teachers need to know the conversations are not always going to be pleasant and they must approach them with cultural humility. Although White teachers have subliminally and unconsciously been taught that they might have all the answers, they certainly do not.

Participant 4: Being intentional with the community you work with. Understanding that your experiences and look on life might not relate to the youth that you serve. If it doesn't be willing to listen and take an extra step to engage and understand those you serve outside of you just being a teacher.

Participant 5: With all of the events taking place in 2020, both locally and nationally, we could see our community was suffering from the injustices taking place. We started by meeting with staff and community members and getting their perspective. We began to brainstorm ways to address these issues and be proactive in preventing these issues from happening in the future.

I have learned the most from listening to others. Hearing the stories from people I work with, talking with folks about their personal experiences, and empathizing with their personal feelings has helped shape my perspective. All of these feelings and experiences are carried by people in our community. It would be foolish to ignore the impact it has had on their lives, their daily operations, their educational experience, and their ability to relate to people.

I would suggest they know that not everyone will be on board. Everyone brings their own personal biases and perspective on every issue. In the process, you will meet many who challenge you. You will come across a few people who don't agree with you, or don't want to take part in the effort to change. You can't let them get in the way of the progress you could be making. You can still communicate with them and learn from their indifference, but do not let them prevent you from moving forward.

Theme 5: Relationship Building and Collaboration

To create change involves the collaboration between the community and systems, such as the education system (Weinstein, 2004). Schools and teachers should have networks to meet student needs by working with counselors, social workers, etc. Teachers need to recognize and treat students' socioemotional side by acknowledging and validating their feelings, not silencing or disciplining them. Then, they need to consider what comes after discussions regarding race, what students can do based on what they learn (Milner, 2017). One hundred percent of participants discussed relationship building with students. One hundred percent of participants mentioned collaboration.

Interview questions associated with the emergent theme were, "What led you to doing this work? What have you found is the most important aspect of your work?", "What should teachers know about feeling prepared to engage in discussions regarding race that they may not already know?", and "Are there any specific strategies that can be used to support teachers in feeling prepared to engage in discussions regarding race?"

Select discussions relevant to this question include:

Participant 2: The most important aspect of my work is supporting Black children in finding self-love and learning more about their true identity.

I don't believe you have to be Black teacher to learn about your students and add some of their interests in the classroom.

Teachers need to know that belonging is a need. Students want to be a part of the classroom and feel represented as well. Discussions around race must be had. Teachers need to start by getting to know their students and adding who they are to the classroom.

There is no one size fits all in discussions around race. I would start by getting to know your students and families one by one. Add what your

students and families enjoy within the classroom. As you're learning about them, also learn about the community you serve in.

Know that you're not in this alone. The school system as a whole has a lot of work to do regarding race. What that means for educators is that others have tools that may work for your students and families.

- Participant 3: Treating students as devoid of skills and as they always need to be helped are also part of the problem. Teaching from a relational and strengths-based approach is paramount and seeing the humanity of all students is the most important factor for effective teaching practices.

I think referring back to cultural humility is important. Taking a training and thinking you've got it now is going to do folks a disservice. The idea of knowing you won't know and can't know everything about someone else's experience can be daunting. However, it can be an opportunity for learning as well. Just as many teachers impart knowledge on their pupils, they too learn from them and this is a golden opportunity to learn from them and their daily lived experiences, especially ones that they as teachers may have not directly gone through.

- Participant 4: A big proponent of racial justice I focus on is self-sufficiency. At this point, it doesn't appear as if much justice is going to be handed to the youth so creating new messages to insight high self-esteem as opposed to inferiority syndrome.

Teachers, if they are not living in a community they are working with, or are not comfortable with the cultures they engage should find different ways for a few hours out of the week outside of school or teaching to engage with the community and culture they are a part of so that the identity and relationship can become more familiar outside of an expert pupil role. It gives a perception of seeking genuine understanding.

Being intentional with the community you work with. Understanding that your experiences and look on life might not relate to the youth you serve. If it doesn't, be willing to listen and take an extra step to engage and understand those you serve outside of just being a teacher.

- Participant 5: You have to really get to know your audience. Involve as many people as you can in the process of planning. Make sure you really know the group you are teaching.

Make sure you have a lot of background knowledge. If you don't have it, ask for help. Collaborate. Be sure that you enter the conversations with as much information as you can get.

Be sure that you allow a large portion of the time to involve listening to your audience. You don't want to be the person shoving your perspective down their throat. You have to be able to hear them to truly understand.

Theme 6: Resources

There are multiple elements that go into making education more equitable such as investments in poverty reduction, health care, early childhood education, adequate nutrition, toxin-free living environments, healthy families, and safe neighborhoods. Community resources should be intertwined within the school structures and culture. Incentives should focus on fiscal equity, diversification of teaching force, commitment and training to work with certain demographics, teacher collaboration, staff development, and partnerships (across districts, businesses, universities, and communities) (Weinstein, 2004). PK-8 teachers need to be aware of these elements and be fully prepared to engage in meaningful discussions regarding race within their classrooms. One hundred percent of interview participants reported that Black and Brown communities are the most affected. Eighty percent of participants discussed the inequity in resources, funding, and school conditions.

Interview questions associated with the emergent theme were, "Please tell me a little bit about your experience working with diverse students and advocating for racial justice.", "What communities are most affected and how?", and "What should teachers know about feeling prepared to engage in discussions regarding race that they may not already know?"

Select discussions relevant to this question include:

Participant 2: The conditions of the school buildings and funding are different in these communities (North Omaha and South Omaha) compared to West Omaha schools.

Participant 3: I was a director for an after-school program that primarily served Black and Brown students. For the past six years, I have worked tirelessly to

provide resources, support, and increase access to resources for the families and students I work with.

Participant 4: I started working with diverse students in a traditional setting. Something that I noticed is that many times they are underserved and many times looked down upon as charity cases when majority of the time, resources and implementation don't necessarily match their experiences in life.

Black and Brown communities for sure. Least amount of resources from education to community centers and resources for kids that are up to par in parts of the cities that are now heavily concentrated with people of color.

Participant 5: Schools are not just learning facilities, but are hubs of resources for the surrounding area.

Conclusions

Through surveys, interviews, literature review, and gathering and coding the results, the researcher draws the following conclusions from this study:

1. Teacher candidate programs appear to be ineffective in preparing PK-8 teachers to engage in discussions regarding race.
2. Professional development opportunities appear to be a commonly used strategy in PK-8 education but are not being offered to better prepare teachers to engage in discussions regarding race.
3. Representation appears to have a significant impact on students but lacks in the education field.
4. Acquiring relevant personal experiences and dialogue within diverse communities and cultures appears to benefit teachers in being better prepared to engage in discussions regarding race.
5. Building relationships and collaboration appears to be commonly used strategies to being better prepared to engage in discussions regarding race.

6. Resources appear to be inequitable across communities, mostly impacting Black and Brown communities.

Leadership Implications

The results of this study show that PK-8 teachers are not adequately prepared and supported to engage in discussions regarding race with their students. These results are important because teachers do not have the tools to have race discussions, which disadvantages students who may also be unprepared to face the issues challenging society. Participants of this study identified barriers that prevented them from being prepared to engage in discussions regarding race. Additionally, participants discussed strategies to support teachers. Through a review of the collected data, the research generated the following leadership implications.

Conclusion 1: Teacher candidate programs appear to be ineffective in preparing PK-8 teachers to engage in discussions regarding race.

Implication: Teacher candidate programs are responsible for preparing teachers for situations that they are going to face as teachers; however, PK-8 teachers are reportedly unprepared to engage in discussions regarding race with their students. Teacher candidate programs may consider including dialogue as an outcome and competency expected to master for program completion. Teacher candidates may also benefit from a more diverse faculty with diverse viewpoints. Ways to support teachers in being prepared to engage in discussions regarding race may include more experiences working with diverse student populations and training in student-focused classroom management skills and behavior support.

Conclusion 2: Professional development opportunities appear to be a commonly used strategy in PK-8 education but are not being offered to better prepare teachers to engage in discussions regarding race.

Implication: Professional development opportunities are meant to further prepare teachers to engage with current situations in their classrooms post teacher candidate programs. Therefore, it is the school leaders' responsibility to organize and offer relevant and meaningful opportunities to teachers' and students' experiences. PK-8 teachers reported not being offered any professional development opportunities that have prepared them to engage in race discussions. Administrators may consider including ongoing guided processes as a part of professional development training. Teachers may also benefit from non-traditional professional development opportunities such as viewing films on racial matters, purchasing race-conscious books for the staff to read and discuss, and encouraging involvement in community events. Ways to support teachers are by providing race-conscious guest speakers and coaches.

Conclusion 3: Representation appears to have a significant impact on students but lacks in the education field.

Implication: Administrators have a responsibility to recruit and retain a diverse staff to not only meet legal implications, but also to better serve all students. Administrators and teachers may consider including the purchasing of diverse books and art, organizing multicultural events and performances for the school community, inviting guest speakers of color, and teaching relevant mini-lessons.

Conclusion 4: Acquiring relevant personal experiences and dialogue within diverse communities and cultures appears to benefit teachers in being better prepared to engage in discussions regarding race.

Implication: For teachers to be adequately prepared to engage in discussions regarding race, it has to be personal to them. For teachers to be willing to make uncomfortable changes in their lives and teaching practices, it has to be personal to them. To make it personal, they need to

acquire experiences and have meaningful dialogue with their students and members of the community they serve. Administrators may consider providing opportunities for teachers to engage in the community as part of professional development and organizing community-wide conversations. Teachers may benefit from having more opportunities and courses required through their teacher candidate program that provides diverse experiences and teaches dialogue skills. Ways to support teachers are by providing incentives to encourage teachers to pursue experiences and dialogue with diverse communities.

Conclusion 5: Building relationships and collaboration appears to be commonly used strategies to being better prepared to engage in discussions regarding race.

Implication: Relationships is at the heart of true education and change. When relationships are genuinely built and teachers incorporate the interests and lived experiences of their students into their classroom environments, students and teachers will be more comfortable and prepared to engage in discussions regarding race. Teachers have the responsibility to meet each student where they are and provide them with the tools they need to be prepared for the challenges presented in society. This involves collaborating with others. Ways to support teachers are by creating school networks of support that include counselors, social workers, and community members. Administrators may consider creating a parent engagement program that fosters and supports relationship building between teachers, families, and students.

Conclusion 6: Resources appear to be inequitable across communities, mostly impacting Black and Brown communities.

Implication: Schools have the responsibility of providing a safe environment for students to be able to learn. When resources are allocated inequitably and Black and Brown communities are impacted disproportionately, teachers and students receive negative messages about their worth.

School leaders and teachers may consider ways for advocating for a more equitable spread of resources at the higher levels. On the ground level, ways to support teachers are by collaborating with community systems and programs in order to bring the most amounts of resources, opportunities and support possible to students and their families outside of school. Students need to be thought of as more than just students. Administrators and teachers must realize and understand that there are basic needs that must be met in order for a child to commit to being a student, and often, the meeting of those needs is out of their control. Teachers need to be seen as more than just teachers as well. Teachers should be active in the advocacy of racial justice because it impacts the lives of the students that they teach. Teaching is not a profession in which they can refuse to serve those that end up in their classroom. It is their responsibility to meet students where they are, equip them with the tools they need, and advocate for their human rights.

Recommendations for Future Research

More research is needed to further discover what PK-8 teachers need to be prepared to engage in discussions regarding race with their students and explore specific strategies to support teachers in being prepared to engage in discussions regarding race with their students. Additional research is necessary with a larger sample size of survey and interview participants to validate and add to the findings of this study. Including teachers in different areas and school districts might yield different results that did not come up in this study. Additionally, further research could include case studies of specific strategies used to support teachers.

Summary

Chapter five discussed the emergent themes from the research study. The six themes that emerged for research question 1 regarded teacher candidate programs, professional development

opportunities, relationship building, administrative and parental support, personal experiences and research, and dialogue. The six themes that emerged for research question 2 regarded representation, personal research, school culture, dialogue, relationship building and collaboration, and resources. Points discussed by participants and supported by the theoretical framework based Critical Race Theory (CRT) in education fell under the first three tenets, counter-storytelling, permanence of racism, and Whiteness as property. Points illustrated by the literature review and supported by CRT in education fell under tenets four and five, interest convergence and critique of liberalism. Six conclusions from the research study, along with leadership implications for each, and recommendations for future research were shared.

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