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Early Childhood Teacher Educators Perception of Their Own Critical Reflection on Race, Ethnicity, and Culture

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EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER EDUCATORS PERCEPTION OF THEIR OWN
CRITICAL REFLECTION ON RACE, ETHNICITY, AND CULTURE

By

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DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this study to Lola (Shirley) Flint, Lindia Porter and Louis Westbrook,Sr. My grandmother, Lola (Shirley) Flint always encouraged me to be the best. My mother-in-law, Lindia Porter was a constant along this journey prior to her transition. My step-father, Louis Westbrook, Sr. encouraged myself and my siblings to be educated and to always help someone else along the way. My Future Scholars: My children (Curtis II and Ashley) and many nieces and nephews, cousins and relatives, let's have more doctorates to come!

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Early Childhood Teacher Educators Perception of Their Own Critical Reflection on Race, Ethnicity, and Culture

Abstract

by Nicole D. Porter

University of the Pacific
2019

This qualitative study examined three tenured early childhood teacher educators from Northern California community colleges on how they valued critical reflection on race, ethnicity, and culture. A narrative inquiry was conducted to gather information based on in-depth conversational interviews. A timeline identified key experiences, both personal and professional, as well as educational experiences from elementary through high school, undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate if applicable. The data was collected from the conversational interviews and then analyzed using the transformative learning theory by Mezirow (1991) in identifying key themes. The findings yielded three themes (a) exploring race, ethnicity, and culture, (b) understanding self and (c) critical reflection as an embedded practice. These identified themes indicated that early childhood teacher educator's perceptions are related and displayed in how they processed and understood their own experiences around race, ethnicity, and culture.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Background

Our daughter came home from school with a backpack full of papers and projects she had worked on prior to the winter break, in first grade. She gave us a letter she said needed to be mailed to Santa, so he would know what to get her for Christmas. We peeked to read what was on her list. It read, "Dear Santa, I want lighter skin, blue eyes and blonde hair like my friends and teacher at school." As Black parents of a Black child, we were horrified and wondered, "Did we not teach her to love her beautiful brown skin, black hair, and dark brown eyes?" We often talked about similarities and differences in our race and culture compared to other races and cultures with both of our children. We realized her classroom environment did not reflect or have any resemblance of her race, ethnicity, and culture (REC). We wondered how our daughter's teacher critically reflected on REC in her teaching practices and in what ways she was aware of student diversity and the importance of self-identity. I often tell this story when teaching courses to early childhood (EC) teachers in order to explore the importance of critical reflection on REC to inform teaching practices.

The literature described a need for (EC) teachers to consciously incorporate practices and strategies in the learning environment that valued REC diversity (Howard, 2010; Vittrup, Snider, Rose, & Rippy, 2016). The diversity of students in early childhood classrooms in California as well as the United States increased in the last decades, to reflect different races, cultures, languages, backgrounds and abilities (Ed-data.org, 2015; Kayes, 2006; National Center for Education Statistics, 2013; Nieto, 2004; Reid, Kagan, Hilton, & 2015; Sue & Sue, 2013; Whitebook, Bellm, Lee, & Sakai, 2005). Since EC teachers are expected to incorporate practices that value REC it is important to understand how those who facilitate EC courses,

value critical reflection on REC. This study focused on EC teacher educators in Northern California community colleges. The study then explored how three EC teacher educators valued critical reflection on (REC) based on experiences, self-identity and teaching practices.

The terms REC has been used interchangeably to describe diversity within races, ethnicities, languages, belief systems and abilities in regards to both biological and social constructs (Cokley, 2007; Cokley & Chapman, 2008; Lopez, 1994). The interchangeable use of the terms by the research varied along with multiple definitions and constructs within the literature. The following definitions of REC were used to clarify this study. The term race was commonly used to refer to a person's biological characteristics, such as skin, hair and eye color as well as social characteristics, which may be shared amongst similar cultures (Cokley, 2007). Ethnicity was "characteristics of groups that may be, in different proportions, physical, national, cultural, linguistic, religious or ideological in character" (Allport, 1979, p. 15). Nieto (2004) described culture as the beliefs, social customs, knowledge, and behavior by a group which may share the same ethnicity, race, and language. The definitions illustrated how terminology may overlap when discussing REC. This led to exploring the theories about REC diversity.

Moule (2012) described diversity as alike and different based on the following dimensions: gender, race, ethnicity, language, culture, religion, sexual orientation, class, mental and physical ability, and immigration status. Early childhood teacher educators who provide opportunities for EC students and credentialed teachers to critically reflect on REC can influence teaching practices to address diversity within all classrooms (Howard, 2017). Culture within EC classrooms has a significant role in the cognitive and social-emotional development of children (Moule, 2012). In EC settings, children build on their knowledge of culture through daily

interactions with their classmates and especially, EC teachers and other adults (Gay, 2013). If EC teachers ignore addressing race and culture similarities as well as differences in the classroom this can lead to children developing stereotypes and misconceptions about their own culture as well as other cultures (Baumeister & Finkel, 2010).

Critical reflection on REC will increase and enhance knowledge or understanding of self and others for the EC teacher to meet the diverse needs of all learners in the classroom. The ability to examine experiences with REC personally and professionally, by the EC teacher educator will either increase knowledge or provide a narrow view (Nieto, 2004). For example, EC teacher educators who only relied on the textbook as a primary source to discuss racial and cultural diversity presented a narrow point of view. Gay & Kirkland (2003) explored the need for teacher educators to develop curriculum and content within a course based on critical reflection. For example, the teacher educator would facilitate discussions based on the information being presented in the text and allow students to identify missing or key aspects of diversity provided in the textbook. The ability to analyze different types of resources and information about diversity was an important element identified to embed critical reflection. It was also an opportunity to identify missing and incorrect values based on the author's perception of different RECs. This skill allowed the teacher educator to facilitate learning beyond the textbook examples (Gay & Kirkland 2003).

The EC teacher educator also needed to transform learning opportunities to understand self and others to further both intrapersonal and interpersonal knowledge about REC (Mezirow, 1991; Nieto, 2004). The process of critically reflecting about one's REC can challenge one's original thought process. Analyzing one's ideas or perceptions based on interactions with new

and existing experiences is known as Mezirow's transformative learning theory. Mezirow (1991) described the theory as evaluating one's experiences and perspectives about a topic along with understanding different perspectives to make a change in the perceived information. Early childhood teacher educators will be instrumental in furthering this process of incorporating new and existing information by being models themselves. This is where I, as the researcher, identified EC teacher educators as critically reflective cultural practitioners. I used the term practitioners to keep critical reflection about REC as a call to action and not just a passive task.

Chen, Nemmo, and Fraser (2009) identified the shift from teachers viewing diversity in others as a task to critically reflect on how culture affected interactions and teaching practices as a continuous process. This shift of thinking and understanding brought about a change in EC teachers as they began to critically reflect about REC. In order for this change to occur it was important for EC teacher educator to recognize the elements needed to critically reflect about REC (Mezirow, 1990,1991; Nieto, 2004). Mezirow (1990) provided a framework that encompassed the following: understanding belief structures; being objective and open to new ideas and points of view; allowing the experience and recognition of cognitive dissonance to understanding oneself better; and lastly, addressing conflicting information or ideas instead of overlooking or avoiding. These components of critical reflection are actions that eliminated the role of the passive EC teacher educator and created the critical reflective cultural practitioner to further critical reflection about REC in EC teacher educator programs.

The EC teacher educator will have a dual role in participating and facilitating the process of critically reflecting about one's culture and beliefs while also providing opportunities for students and EC teachers to go through the same process (Boutte, Lopez-Robertson, & Powers-Castillo, 2011; Hargreaves, 2003). Early childhood teacher educator's ability to critically reflect

on culture may bring about a transformation in curriculum content and pedagogy (Wang, Castro, & Cunningham, 2014; Wood & Bennett, 2000). Critical reflection allowed EC students, teachers and teacher educators the knowledge needed to develop their own theories and inform teaching practices that valued REC diversity (Sandell & Tupy, 2015). In order for this to occur it was necessary to review the systems, expectations, policies, and organizations to support and inform the EC teacher educator of their practice.

The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) (2016) included a broad description of course content, field experiences, and assessments of curriculum proficiencies of cultural diversity. This framework was created to prepare preschool through high school teachers with the skills necessary to support learning for all students regardless of culture, race, language, gender, socioeconomic status, language or learning ability. In California, the California Department of Education and First 5, Children and Family Commission (2011), developed the California Early Childhood Educator Competencies. Twelve areas of competence were developed, which included the areas of culture, diversity, and equity. These twelve competencies were developed to ensure EC teachers were equipped to provide and establish nurturing relationships as well as activities with families in infant/toddler and preschool settings. Both the CAEP (2016) and California Early Childhood Educator Competencies (2011) are broad in scope which leaves the EC teacher educators the responsibility of interpreting and implementing content which values critical reflection on REC.

The literature supported the development of competencies and expectations to measure and create a standard to assist teacher educators in their personal and professional growth around REC. Garmon (2004) expressed the need to identify how teacher educators introduced concepts

about cultural diversity as well as critically reflect on one's own culture. Critical reflection allowed the EC student and teacher to identify their beliefs about different cultures in order to decrease feelings of prejudice and created culturally responsive teachers (Kumar & Hamer, 2013). Exploring critical reflection as part of learning about different cultures will bring novice EC teachers to identify and incorporate new information to enhance teaching for all children (Mezirow, 1991). Early childhood teachers who critically reflect are more willing to change their behavior in order to improve teaching practices (Hargreaves, 2003).

Some of the research also supported identifying EC teacher educators' beliefs about culture but was limited on critical reflection in understanding the deeper analysis of questioning and identifying racial and cultural origins which may be reflected in teaching practices. The goal of this study was to identify in what ways EC teacher educator's valued critical reflection on REC, particularly in developing course content for EC teachers.

Statement of the Problem

Reflections by teachers must move beyond the categorization and filing of so-called common characteristics of cultures represented in classrooms (Hoffman, 1996). Rather, it required critically reflecting by identifying experiences in order to question and influence teaching practices that valued REC diversity (Fook, White & Gardner, 2006; Howard, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995; MacRuaic & Hardford, 2008; Moule, 2012; Wang et al., 2014). A recent policy which furthered the need to understand how critical reflection on REC influenced EC teacher practices was the suspensions and expulsions of children in EC settings. The recent joint policy statement from the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and United States Department of Education (2016) provided data on the number of children in

preschool programs being suspended. This report included the disproportionate number of African-American boys in preschool being suspended at a higher rate compared to their same age peers (U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2014). Another study of 40 states by Gilliam (2005) also addressed the expulsion of preschool and pre-kindergarten children at a rate higher compared to children in elementary and middle schools in the United States. The Children Defense Fund (1975) first documented the disproportionate number of African-American boys in school settings in the U.S. suspended at a higher rate than their peers back in 1975. What makes these policy statements alarming was the fact it has been over 40 years and now this issue was plaguing African-American students as young as 4 years of age. The recent joint policy (2014) included several recommendations, such as "employing self-reflective strategies and cultural awareness training to prevent and correct all implicit and explicit biases, including racial, national origin, ethnic, sex or disability" (U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2014, p.7). The recommendation to "employ self-reflective strategies" identified the need in understanding the ways EC teacher educator's value critical reflection on REC.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to understand in what ways EC teacher educators from Northern California community colleges critically reflected on REC in order to lead EC students and teachers.

Research Questions

The research questions were developed to understand and explore how EC teacher educators critically reflected about REC. The questions listed below are the main overarching question followed by the sub-questions which assisted with framing the study (Appendix D).

- In what ways do EC teacher educators value critical reflection on race, ethnicity, and culture in their teaching practices?
- In what ways do EC teacher educators critically reflect on their own race, ethnicity, and culture?
- In what ways do EC teacher educators include critical reflection on race, ethnicity, and culture as an embedded practice within the curriculum or course content?

Significance of the Study

This qualitative study assessed and analyzed the ways EC teacher educators valued critical reflection on REC. This study benefited other EC teacher educators by understanding the ways EC teacher educators critically reflected about REC, interpret policies and student outcomes and embed experiences and opportunities for EC teachers and students. This study furthered informed EC teacher education programs by identifying program changes to curriculum and needed professional development for teacher educators. Furthermore, policies and policymakers will be informed about resources and research needed to understand the impact of critical reflection on race, ethnicity, and culture from preschool through higher education.

Terminology

Beliefs. Beliefs were described as an action based on feelings, ideas, and experiences (Dewey, 1910).

Critical reflection. "Critical reflection was the process by which adults identified the assumptions governing their actions, located the historical and cultural origins of the assumptions, questioned the meaning of the assumptions, and developed alternative ways of acting" (Fook et al., 2006, p.12). The literature utilized both critical reflection and self-awareness when describing the process of a deeper analysis of one's personal and professional experiences to bring about change (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Mezirow, 1991; Moule, 2012; Nieto, 2004).

Culture. Culture was defined as the beliefs, social customs, knowledge, and behavior by a group that may share the same ethnicity, race, and language (Nieto, 2004).

Cultural competence. Cultural competence was defined as "the ability to successfully teach students who come from a culture or cultures other than their own; it entailed developing certain personal and interpersonal awareness and sensitivities, understanding certain bodies of cultural knowledge and mastering a set of skills that, taken together, underlie effective cross-cultural teaching and culturally responsive teaching" (National Education Association [NEA], 2008, p.1).

Culturally responsive teaching. Culturally responsive teaching was using familiar experiences or frames of reference to incorporate culture in teaching practices to relate content being taught to reach students of different cultures (Gay, 2013).

Diversity. Diversity was the ways in which individuals are both alike and different and many dimensions of diversity are provided: gender, race, ethnicity, language, culture, religion, sexual orientation, class, mental and physical ability, and immigration status (Moule, 2012).

Early childhood/Early childhood education. Early childhood/early childhood education were programs and services that support the holistic development of children, birth through eight years of age (National Association for the Education of Young Children, [NAEYC]).

Ethnicity. Ethnicity has been defined as the "characteristics of groups that may be, in different proportions, physical, national, cultural, linguistic, religious or ideological in character" (Allport, 1979, p.15).

Multicultural education. Multicultural education was a concept or approach to further an equal and just classroom free of bias and thoughts of discrimination by providing an education that was equal and just to all (Banks, 1993).

Race. The term race was commonly used to refer to a person's biological or physical characteristics, such as skin, hair and eye color (Cokley, 2007).

Reflection. Reflection was the ability to evaluate one's thoughts, feelings, beliefs and values compared to understanding another's point of view and experiences (Schon,1983).

Students. Students were described as candidates in a teacher education program pursuing their degree or teacher credential certification to teach infant/toddler, and/or preschool through higher education (NAEYC,).

Teachers. Teachers were defined as people who currently teach infant/toddler and preschool through twelfth (P-12) students, in class settings or other education settings and have completed a child development associate (CDA) credential, California child development permit and/or certificated teacher education program (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, Child Development Permits, 2016).

Teacher educators. Teacher educators were defined as faculty members of a teacher education program who provide formal instruction, conduct research and participate in the development of educating prospective and practicing teachers (Association of Teacher Educators, 2003, www.ate1.org).

Transformative learning theory. Transformative Learning Theory was defined by Mezirow (1991) as "the process of effecting change in a frame of reference" (p. 5). The main

components within this framework included habits of mind and point of view (Mezirow, 1991).

Habits of mind characterized how one feels or believes, which were developed and filtered

through one's personal experiences based on, but not limited to, culture, socio-economics, and

politics. The second component of transformative learning theory was understanding another's

perspective and allowing constructive feedback to adjust or change one's beliefs.

Dissertation Organization/Summary

Chapter 1 provided the foundation to understand how teacher educators critically reflect

on REC. Chapter 2 reviewed relevant literature on the history of race in education and REC in

EC programs, critical reflection as a practice, and implementing theory to further practice.

Chapter 3 presented a methodology to describe the process by which data was collected,

recorded and analyzed. Chapter 4 discussed themes that emerged from the analysis of data.

Chapter 5 provided a detailed conclusion, discussion based on the literature and

recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

"Human contact, human acquaintanceship, human sympathy is the great solvent of human problems. Separate school children by wealth and the result is class misunderstanding and hatred. Separate them by race and the result is war. Separate them by color and they grow up without learning the tremendous truth that is impossible to judge the mind of a man by the color of his face. Is there any truth that America needs to learn?"
-W.E.B. Du Bois, American sociologist

Historical Overview

The historical context of race in United States history laid the foundation to acknowledge race as both a social construct and social issue that produced policies and laws that discriminated against a group of people solely based on their race. For example, in 1896 the United States Supreme Court upheld a ruling Plessy v. Ferguson allowing segregation in public areas (which included schools) as long as it was equal in quality, this was also known as the "separate but equal" law (163 U.S. 537). The "separate but equal" law was overturned in 1954 with Brown v. Board of Education, making it unconstitutional in the context of public education (Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 347 U.S. 483). Some of the early work by scholars such as Allport (1979), DuBois (1910) and Freire (1970) discussed oppression, racism, and inequalities experienced by people based on their race. The need to understand the historical context of race in the United States was important in understanding the system in which education was developed and identified how the United States valued race, ethnicity, and culture (REC). I was compelled to understand how race played a role in education beyond just my personal experiences and knowledge as well as the three EC teacher educators in the study. The next section explored critical race theory (CRT) in education.

Critical Race Theory in Education

The origin of CRT in education came from critical legal studies in the 1970s which examined the influences of societal, economic and political power structures in law (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). I was able to see the connection between both CRT and critical legal studies in regards to both examining the influences based on social constructs and structures or systems of power. This parallel allowed me to understand the importance of examining race in education and identifying the meanings behind this social construct. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) first described critical race theory (CRT) as untheorized within education. Describing CRT as untheorized was not an attempt to discredit previous scholars, as both Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) articulated, but to "uncover or decipher the social-structural and cultural significance of race in education" (p. 50). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) also discussed how race was demonstrated by the inequalities within educational settings in the United States. For example, John Kozol (1991) an author and activist published "*Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools*" which exposed the racial and economic divide of school districts located Chicago and New York areas. This book brought to light the impact of race and the need to talk and acknowledge how and in what ways REC influenced education. Banks (1995) also conveyed the importance of recognizing race as a socialized influencer that has been deeply embedded and reinvented at various times in U.S. history. For example, during a class discussion for my students about maternal care in the United States, data was presented based on REC. One of the statistics showed African-American women had a higher rate of death and complications during pregnancy and delivery. I asked students what they thought the causes could be related based on the data. One of my students said it must be related to socioeconomics and living in poverty. She stated that since these women were Black they must also be poor. I

then acknowledged the student's comment and thanked her for her candor. We then spent some time identifying those social influencers around race, especially when discussing African-American/Black people. I, as the professor, understood why she made the statement based on her experiences and how race was and is socialized in our history. "An examination of the historical development of race can help students understand how the subjective characteristics of the knower, as well as the objective reality, influence the knowledge the knower constructs, deconstructs and reconstructs" (Banks, 1995 p.23).

Research continued to be developed about CRT in education and has provided a role in identifying social inequities but still has more progress to make (Hiraldo, 2010). The historical context of race in education laid the framework to explore the background and value placed on REC in early childhood (EC) programs within California and throughout the United States.

Early Childhood

The early history of understanding REC in EC programs in the United States was based on influential research of education in the 1960s and 1970s (Cahan, 1989). One of the most influential movements and acts to affect education in the United States was The Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 included additional research to understand equality and access of educational opportunities for "individuals by reason of race, color, religion or national origin in public educational institutions at all levels" Civil Rights Act of 1964). One of the first EC programs that focused on cultural awareness was a federally funded program developed in 1965, known as Head Start (Head Start Act,1965); (Vinovskis, 2005). During World War II, President Lyndon B. Johnson (1963-1969) signed the Head Start Act in order to develop federal guidelines and provide comprehensive services to predominately low-income children and families, prenatal through five years of age, throughout the United States (Head Start Act, 1965).

Section 636 of the Head Start Act states the purpose as "promoting school readiness of low-income children by enhancing their cognitive, social and emotional development (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2007). The comprehensive services included but were not limited to quality education, family and community engagement, and health and nutritional services.

Cultural awareness and responsiveness to diverse communities served were the main tenets on which the federal guidelines and standards were developed. Cultural awareness was described as a proponent in creating comprehensive services that value and acknowledge the diversity of children and families (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2007). The need to address the achievement gap was based on education and economic equality as the driving force in creating programs to reduce the "war on poverty" as addressed by the United States government in the early 1960s. African-Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans were identified as the main ethnicities affected by poverty compared to their Caucasian counterparts. African-Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans were also recognized as having a lower socioeconomic status which was more prevalent in southern states in the U.S.

As research continued, the Office of Head Start under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Administration of Children and Families developed Head Start Performance Standards to measure progress and successes and identify deficiencies in programs throughout the U.S. and as well as territories and tribal programs. However, more emphasis was on content knowledge of children rather than teachers' processing and implementing strategies to address diversity in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2006; McAllister & Irvine, 2000). An identified need to understand how teacher education programs prepared teachers to teach in diverse communities led to additional research in the late 1980s centered on understanding

theory and application to "develop appropriate curriculum for a diverse group of learners" (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, p. 393).

Copple and Bredekamp (2009) and Elkind (1989) created Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP), a framework for EC programs and teachers that provided guidance to further quality services to children, prenatal through eight years of age, and families through the National Association Education of the Young Child (NAEYC). The DAP framework emphasized the importance of understanding the child as an individual, typical and atypical development and age appropriateness based on the developmental domains of physical, social-emotional and cognitive when teaching young children. DAP was developed to be inclusive of all learners and meet the diverse needs of students in EC programs. One aspect which seemed to be missing was culturally appropriate practices. Teachers voiced concern shortly after DAP was created as not including or referencing culture. Hyun and Marshall (1996) conducted a study of educators using DAP and validated the concern. Culturally appropriate was not addressed in the DAP framework as reported by the teachers in the study. Hyun and Marshall (1996) then released the addition of culturally appropriate as part of the DAP framework to becoming Developmentally and Culturally Appropriate Practices (DCAP). The DCAP was not officially adopted by the original authors of the DAP framework but an expanded definition included three core parts of DAP with the understanding that culture is relevant and embedded in DAP. The name, however, did not change.

The early history of EC programs focused on awareness and understanding of cultures (Banks, 1993). As quality research in EC education increased in the United States, an investment in EC education began to flourish in California. In 2003, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation (2003) made a ten-year commitment to increase quality and access to EC

education programs in California. The areas of focus for the funding included: effective

workforce; early childhood education teacher competencies; early childhood education policies;

curriculum development; and teacher credentials and certification (David & Lucile Packard

Foundation, 2014). This initial investment by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation (2003)

led to the development of the California Early Childhood Educator Competencies (California

Department of Education [CDE], 2011) and California Comprehensive Early Learning Plan

(CDE, 2013). The California Early Childhood Educator Competencies (CECEC) utilized a

continuum to identify where the teacher ranked in regards to supporting, planning, creating or

advancing in each of the twelve competency areas (CDE, 2011). Culture, diversity, and equity

were listed as the second competency area and identified the need for EC teachers to incorporate

practices that valued culture, language, and ethnicity. Early childhood teachers were expected to

strengthen and enhance learning based on individual differences by valuing diversity among

children and families within early care settings (CDE, 2011). The CECEC listed expectations of

each ranking but it did not include or describe ways to achieve and move to the next level. For

example, the first level of the ranking was supporting early learning and development, the early

childhood teacher participated in the development of learning activities that were inclusive and

respectful of all families. This first level description does not describe or define the level of

participation by the early childhood teacher as well as the criteria to identify appropriate learning

activities to address inclusion in the classroom.

The California Comprehensive Learning Plan (2013) was developed after the Early

Childhood Educator Competencies (2011) and mainly focused on student outcomes and

achievement. The California Comprehensive Early Learning Plan (CCELP), addressed quality

EC education programs through increased activities and strategies to promote growth within

math, language, and literacy (CDE, 2013). The focus was primarily on student outcomes as a way to decrease or minimize the achievement gap from occurring in the elementary grades as children transitioned to the K-12 system. This plan acknowledged the need for culturally and linguistically appropriate practices but did not provide a definition or steps to address cultural diversity within California EC programs.

Culture diversity as a priority was limited and focused on understanding and providing instruction to dual language learners. The mention of addressing cultural and linguistic appropriateness was vague and did not include details on how the EC teacher valued and incorporated teaching practices in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Another publication which addressed early childhood teaching standards was the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). In 2012 NBPTS, released the third edition of the Early Childhood Generalist Standards. These included ten standards with the third standard titled: *Fostering Equity, Fairness, and Appreciation of Diversity*. This standard expressed the need for early childhood teachers to value diversity by understanding their own culture and appreciating or demonstrating ways to learn about the children in their classroom (NBPTS, 2012).

The NBPTS (2012), CECEC (2011) and the California Comprehensive Learning Plan (2013) all described ways the EC teacher should perform and achieve standards based on implementing programs to support children and families from diverse backgrounds. These documents looked at one piece of the puzzle in regards to valuing critical reflection on REC, which is how the EC teachers demonstrate their own capabilities as culturally competent educators. The implementation of how EC teacher educators lead EC teachers to be critically

reflective practitioners with regard to REC was one aspect missing from all three plans or standards.

In 2014 the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the U.S. Department of Education (ED) released a joint statement referenced as the *Policy Statement on Expulsion and Suspension Policies in Early Childhood Settings*. This statement addressed the increase of young children being suspended at higher rates than high school students as well as the disproportionate number of young boys of color being suspended or expelled at higher rates displaying concerns with racial and gender disparities (HHS & ED, 2014). One of the first points described within the policy statement included the need to "raise awareness about expulsion, suspension, and other exclusionary discipline practices in early childhood settings, including issues of racial/national origin/ethnic and sex disparities and negative outcomes for children associated with expulsion and suspension in the early years" (HHS & ED, 2014,p. 1). The shift from awareness to practicing critical reflection as an embedded skill will be understood by examining the way EC teacher educators valued and practiced critical reflection on REC (Han, West-Olatunji & Thomas, 2011).

Defining Critical Reflection

In reviewing the literature, critical reflection varied in regards to terminology and approach. Some of the literature depicted teachers utilized critical reflection to evaluate the effectiveness of a curriculum or content being delivered to students (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Kumashiro, 2010). A study by Zeichner and Liston (2013) discovered that novice teachers critically reflected on whether the curriculum or content yielded the desired increases in student outcomes to meet overall program and school achievement. This type of critical reflection placed the emphasis on student outcomes which minimized the need for teachers to also

recognize the influence of REC within teaching practices (Assaf, Garza, & Battle, 2010).

Critical reflection as an embedded practice or skill for EC teachers would assist in learning both

the content knowledge needed to facilitate student learning as well as incorporating teaching

practices that valued REC (Gay, 2013). Shandomo (2010) conducted a study of pre-service

teachers in their third year of college and explored the ways to include critical reflection as a

practice that enhanced the learning and knowledge by the student. This study expressed the need

to critically reflect on both the teaching practices and teaching interactions with students in

valuing REC diversity (Shandomo, 2010).

Critical reflection within the literature was also referred to as self-awareness, reflective

practice, reflection, critical thinking, and reflexivity. The terminology fluctuated based on

context and field of study within education, sociology, and psychology. The process of critical

reflection included some or most of the following components: (a) identifying one's values and

beliefs based on experiences; (b) understanding and exploring the origins of these experiences;

(c) comparing experiences to new or existing knowledge; and (d) incorporating or developing a

different way to react or embed the newly learned information (Dewey, 1910; Fook et al., 2006;

Gay, 2013; Schon, 1983).

Dewey (1910) provided the foundation of critical reflection and included elements to

bring about a deeper understanding of thought and process, which included: (a) "state of

perplexity, hesitation, doubt; and (b) an act of search or investigation directed toward bringing to

light further facts which serve to corroborate or to nullify the suggested belief" (p.9). These

elements described the process when reflecting on an experience, topic or phenomena that is new

or existing. The experience could result in cognitive dissonance based on questioning one's

thought process and values and making a change. Further analysis or critically reflecting to

compare previously learned experiences with new experiences and phenomena resulted in the

teacher fitting previous schema to adapt and change the way of thinking (Piaget & Cook, 1952).

Critical reflection recognized an awareness of one's thoughts and values but provided the

process of recognizing how critical reflection on REC influenced teaching practices. In order to

move critical reflection from awareness to change, Schon (1983) described critical reflection as

an action that involved framing one's beliefs based on implicit knowledge in conjunction with

theory to bring about a change in one's practice. This way of reflecting focused on

understanding the situation or experience and identified ways to incorporate new information by

restructuring one's perception or thinking (Schon, 1983).

The ability to critically reflect was not static but a continuous skill to be practiced and

developed to increase awareness and knowledge (Organ, 1965). Garmon (2004) explained

critical reflection as an "awareness of one's own beliefs and attitudes, as well as being willing

and able to think critically about them" (p. 205). Garmon (2004) conducted a study of a

Caucasian female student. Garmon (2004) described the importance of understanding one's self

as a skill needed in critical reflection. This study identified key characteristics to further change

and acknowledged the growth in learning about one's culture as well as different cultures. One

of the key concepts in this study was the ability to critically assess one's attitude and beliefs

about culture especially if coming from a homogenous background. Garmon (2004) highlighted

the student's ability to critically reflect due to his or her understanding and knowledge about the

process of critical reflection in order to assist this student. The understanding, experience, and

knowledge of critical reflection as an embedded practice is essential for the teacher educator.

Critical reflection has also been described as not static but a continuous skill to be

practiced and developed to increase knowledge and inform teaching practices which may bring

about a change in learning (Mezirow, 1991; Organ, 1965). Teacher educators have expressed a connection between identifying one's self-identity with regard to REC and meeting the educational and social development of diverse learners (Howard, 2003). Thus, critical reflection on REC as a continuum allowed the EC teacher educator and teacher the ability to understand the influence of self on content delivery and interactions with diverse cultures (Organ, 1965). Critical reflection by the EC teacher educator must be well thought out and included an understanding of one's self and recognizing differences (Kumar & Hamer, 2013). The process of critical reflection needed to be explored and explained to provide the tools in this continued practice.

Mezirow (1997) developed a framework to implement critical reflection as a practice to include the following: (a) understanding belief structures, (b) being objective and open to new ideas and point of view, (c) allowing the experience of cognitive dissonance and working through this process to understand oneself better; and (d) addressing conflicting information or ideas instead of overlooking or avoiding. Mezirow's (1997) framework assisted the study in understanding and exploring ways EC teacher educators valued critical reflection on REC. In understanding the experiences of three EC teacher educators also provided a way to understand the growth needed to further critically reflective cultural educators. Understanding beliefs structures were listed within Mezirow's framework and were also displayed in other scholarly work in understanding perspectives teacher educators as well as students and pre-service teacher in teacher education programs.

Martin and Dagostino-Kalniz (2015) utilized a framework developed by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education to measure beliefs of the teacher educator, graduate assistant, and students during a graduate course on social justice. Students in this study

expressed how self-reflection allowed them to identify their own beliefs and awareness of certain privileges, of which they may have benefited, based on their culture and background. One similarity shared in the research by both students and teacher educators is self-reflection as a practice in creating a safe environment to understand and listen to different points of view (Abbate-Vaughn, 2006). This example displayed the importance of self-awareness and self-reflection to recognize individual beliefs or values and critically analyze one's biases and prejudices (Garmon, 2010). The ability to understand oneself while comparing your feelings and beliefs with standards being taught is an important skill (Baumeister & Finkel, 2010). Beginning teachers reported the need to experience interactions with other cultures and critically reflect on the new knowledge based on those interactions (Kahn, Lindsrom & Murray, 2014). This assisted teachers in learning to develop what I reference as critical reflective cultural educators. Critical reflection as a tool or skill of action assisted in incorporating teaching practices that valued REC. The literature then described the barriers that prevented or stagnated the process of critical reflection on REC.

Barriers to Critical Reflection

A colleague shared a story about a lesson taught by his daughter's kindergarten teacher about segregation. The teacher read a book about Martin Luther King, Jr. and his experiences with segregation. One of the pictures included a young boy, Martin Luther King, Jr., approaching a water fountain at a park with a sign in front that read "White" and how he couldn't drink from the fountain. My colleague shared how upset his daughter was and she asked him, "Is this why we don't drink from the fountain at the park?" The next day, he contacted the teacher in regards to how his daughter felt. The teacher told him, she didn't think about how the story may have had an effect on not only his daughter but also the other students. This example,

displayed how teachers may not even recognize barriers to critically reflecting when discussing REC in the classroom.

Garmon (2004) conducted a study to identify key characteristics to further change and growth through critical reflection of REC. Students in the study expressed not having feelings either way about REC as they just loved the idea of teaching and helping students learn. This ideology clouded their judgment and ability to critically reflect on REC and led to a colorblind approach to teaching (Garmon, 2004).

Color blindness. Russell and Russell (2014) conducted a study of students in their last year of college and found teachers did not think it was important to identify student ethnicities as they saw all students as the same. McKenzie and Philips (2016) also explored students conveying *we are all the same* approach and not acknowledging different cultures in regards to learning. Students expressed learning could occur if society viewed everyone as human beings who are all the same regardless of REC. These students did not acknowledge the differences and uniqueness each child brings to the classroom. It created an environment based on a deficit model by trying to assimilate culturally diverse students with their mainstream peers (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The belief that we are all the same can also lead to stereotyping and does not equate to improved learning for all students, especially students of color. This way of thinking is unrealistic as children begin to notice differences in REC as early as the preschool years (Assaf, et al., 2010).

Another study included EC teachers who felt it was acceptable to not recognize diversity in classrooms or recognize differences in students because young children are unaware of different backgrounds and diversity (Han et al., 2011). Castro-Atwater (2008) described several

reasons teachers engaged in a colorblind ideology based on not identifying and understanding one's identity as well as not valuing RECs. Self-identity was a missing element when teachers did not acknowledge or relied on the "we are all the same mentality" without considering the need to recognize various cultures and races. Castro-Atwater (2008) also explored the need for teachers to first identify and value their own REC in order to value those different then themselves. The reoccurring theme understanding self is the barrier to critical reflection by teachers and teacher educators.

Milner (2010) identified colorblindness exhibited by preschool through twelfth-grade teachers. Teachers expressed teaching practices should not be based on the diversity of students as all students regardless of race or ethnic background learn the same. In another study, teachers acknowledged not incorporating culture allows the delivery of the curriculum to be equal for all students in order to provide the same education to all students regardless of culture (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Ignoring contributions of culture in the classroom has led teachers to develop misconceptions about being seen as racist or prejudice if teachers maintain the "we are all equal" mindset. Kreamelmeyer, Kline, Zygmunt, and Clark (2016) conducted a study that examined preservice teachers views about colorblindness. This study described preservice teachers viewed themselves as colorblind to denounce feelings of prejudice or unbiased treatment towards students of different RECs. The researchers found that preservice teachers truly felt their need to be colorblind assisted them in providing an equitable class environment and did not see their beliefs as a misconception or denial of valuing someone of a different REC. The colorblind approach exposed within this study of preservice teachers provided insight and understanding of how teacher's beliefs shape their practices about REC.

Another aspect discussed in the literature was evaluating values and expectations teachers put on themselves as a barrier to critical reflection on REC. Wang, Castro, and Cunningham (2014) provided a study that supported and explained "how perfectionism and individualism are related to racial colorblindness and cultural diversity awareness", (p. 211). The study consisted of 239 pre-service teachers enrolled in a teacher education program while participating in cultural diversity courses. Several instruments were used to gather information about students' feelings and personal beliefs about diversity as well perfectionism and individualism. This article synthesized the information in a way that made it easy to read and easily identified the findings as well as the relationships with the findings. One of the main results yielded from this study included the correlation between meritocracy and individualism as a predictor of lower level diversity awareness. The correlation between meritocracy and individualism mentioned by the authors led me to wonder if these teachers felt like imposters in the classroom which led them not to explore and include other RECs as they did not want to look inept as teachers. Another study by Russell and Russell (2014) explored pre-service science teachers' beliefs on cultural diversity. The Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory (CDAI) was used to identify personal and professional beliefs that influenced teaching practices. Some of the key findings of this study expressed how pre-service teachers were aware and understood the importance of cultural competence, however, their responses also identified cognitive dissonance. For example, many of the pre-service teachers reported not recognizing individual cultural differences of their students and feeling all students should be treated the same regardless of ethnicity, which was expressed by Russell and Russell (2014) as a colorblind mentality.

Colorblindness in the literature displayed how educators viewed this as a way to denounce being racist or prejudice as well as not valuing or even understanding the importance

of self in critically reflecting on REC. The next barrier to critical reflection described in the literature is silence.

Silence. Singleton and Linton (2006) developed *Courageous Conversations about Race"* and explored the barriers or concerns in regards to teachers actively engaged in discussions about REC. One of the barriers to these conversations was silence. The reasoning for silence included fear of sounding racist or prejudice or not being valued based on individual experiences and feelings in regards to REC (Singleton & Linton, 2006). Silence hindered teachers and teacher educators from engaging in situations that transformed their thoughts and ideas about REC (Hoffman, 1996). A colleague once said to me that if we don't talk about REC then we are talking about REC. I interpreted this as by not speaking up or discussing REC can lead to other party thinking that you do not care or it is not that important. In my own practice of critical reflection, I began to identify the deficits in remaining silent and not wanting to engage in conversations that may be uncomfortable or lead to suppressed feelings brought to the surface once again. I can also remember it wasn't until my graduate and post graduate studies where REC was discussed and explored in courses. Gay and Kirkland (2003) articulated the importance of critically reflecting as an embedded practice in teacher preparation programs.

Acosta and Ackerman-Barger (2017) interviewed students who shared the lack of conversations about REC and attributed the lack of conversations to silence by both the faculty and students out of fear of sounding prejudiced or racist. This mindset was also discussed by DiAngelo (2018) as the "good versus bad binary" (p. 76). People engaged in silence as a way to not say something which may be deemed racist or show their true feelings or beliefs about REC. Kraehe (2015) conducted a study of two African-American pre-service art teachers who

attended a predominately Caucasian teacher education program. Kraehe (2015) explored each participants ability to critically reflect on their experience based on race. Interviews were conducted to allow the African-American pre-service teachers to identify feelings and beliefs about their teacher education program as well as teaching practices when incorporating opportunities for students to learn about difference races, ethnicities, and cultures. One of the key findings of this study included how the pre-service teachers succumbed to silence when engaged in a project that explored diversity. The pre-service teacher's described feelings of shame about their lack of understanding and awareness around REC as students of color. The pre-service teachers admitted not understanding or thinking about how their training or lack of opportunity to explore their own culture and culture of others could affect students of color in the classroom. This study expressed the need for teachers to be aware and address racial norms to prevent silence during discussions or activities around REC.

Silence on racial and cultural issues in the classroom can lead students to feel devalued and create teachers who do not engage in critical reflection on REC. Silence as a barrier in critically reflecting on REC has led to the development and continuance of curriculum, policies, and systems that do not value or address the need for equity and social justice in the preparation of critically reflective cultural practitioners (Kraehe, 2015; Sue & Sue, 2012).

Apprehension and resistance. Avoidance of critical reflection allowed the student and teacher to be disconnected from learning about different cultures (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). The uncertainty or perception of REC affected student's and teacher's ability to critically assess lived experiences and learned knowledge about culture diversity (Assaf et al., 2010). EC teacher educators shared a feeling of apprehension in regards to facilitating discussions around diversity

and issues about REC (Smolen, Colville-Hall, Liang, & MacDonald, 2006). Smolen et al. (2006) reported teacher educators expressed ambivalence or fear of losing control of the class when discussing current topics related to diversity. This example of cognitive dissonance displayed teacher educators feeling discomfort or ambivalence that may disrupt one's knowledge.

Another study by Myers, Bennett, Brown, and Henderson (2004) interviewed teacher educators who expressed resistance by novice teachers to critically reflect on oneself and other cultures. The study examined the knowledge level by the teacher educator in providing opportunities for students engaged in topics about REC. The lack of opportunities played a role in the novice teacher's resistance to engage in conversations about REC. Research also supported understanding the experience of the teacher educator prior to engaging students in dialogue about REC. It is imperative to understand teacher educator's lack of knowledge or experiences in conversations about REC can ultimately affect teaching practices (Hansen, 1993).

Tatum (1992) also explored feelings of resistance by predominantly Caucasian students during a diversity course. The resistance stemmed from viewing race and multicultural issues as forbidden topics. Students expressed not discussing differences to not be seen as prejudice. Students also did not view racist and discriminatory practices as having a direct effect on their beliefs and experiences. The last belief by students in this study involved seeing the United States as a fair and just society, meaning if one works hard then they can achieve regardless of culture. This study explored feelings of apprehension based on fear and student's previous experiences (Tatum, 1992).

Kumar and Hamer (2013) conducted a study that identified a teacher's apprehension in working with cultures different than their own prior to beginning the teacher education program. Prior knowledge by students provided insights to feelings and beliefs about cultures different.

(Kumar & Hamer, 2013). The ability to understand and recognize how prior knowledge influenced student's interactions can assist in the development of opportunities to explore and critically reflect on REC by the teacher educator (Kreamelmeyer et al., 2016). The teacher educator as the observer also had a role in understanding how those experiences shared by the student affect their own identity and respect of self. The last study addressed in apprehension and fear included teacher educators. Chesler and Young (2016) interviewed teacher educators and explored feelings of apprehension about engaging in discussions around REC which led to conflicts in the classroom. One faculty member described in detail how the conflict made her feel inadequate as a professor and did not want to experience that feeling of not knowing what to do when discussing REC (Chesler & Young, 2016).

Fear or discomfort. In contrast to apprehension and avoidance was displayed feelings of fear or discomfort when reflecting about REC (Howard, 2010). In a study that identified teacher educators and students' beliefs about cultural diversity and multicultural issues, several teacher educators shared fear about diving too deep into conversations about diversity (Assaf et al., 2010). Several teacher educators shared discomfort in addressing and sharing multicultural issues with students during courses. The teacher educators feared their ideas would be seen as negative and did not want to influence students learning about teaching with their point of view. Assaf et al. (2010) expressed how this would be detrimental in the development and growth of teachers understanding and embracing the different issues and concerns in teaching all students. Fear also led to ignored opportunities to communicate with others about differences to avoid situations to remain neutral and not be labeled as prejudiced or racist (Moule, 2012). Russell and Russell (2014) conducted a study to explore pre-service science teachers' beliefs on cultural diversity.

One of the measures that brought discomfort for the teachers was interacting with students and families who were linguistically diverse. Teachers reported not knowing how to engage students or include aspects of language within the curriculum. Artiles, Barreto, Pena, and McClafferty (1998) evaluated the beliefs of two doctoral students while working in an urban school district. The researchers expressed the reason for choosing bilingual education teachers was rooted in the perception that these teachers would be more open to learning new concepts and ways to bridge diversity in the classes that they instructed. While both teachers were further along in regards to cultural competence they expressed discomfort in addressing issues of social justice within their curriculum. The researchers also expressed how this study allowed the participants to recognize their own personal and professional biases working in a diverse school setting. The understanding of fear or discomfort displayed by the two doctoral students emphasized the importance of method and practice of teaching and learning by the teacher educator. Fear and discomfort in discussing feelings about REC may also be displayed as prejudice whether intentional or unintentional.

Prejudice. McIntosh (1998) explored white privilege and prejudice to allow students to understand entitlement around culture and the impact on teaching practices. One study displayed explicit bias by teachers and provided insight to teachers expressing their resentment and labeling of students (McKenzie, 2009). Instead of teachers self-reflecting on their practices, teachers blamed and labeled Black students. It is easy to dismiss these teachers' feelings as just an anomaly or exception to the norm but the feelings displayed by the teachers in the study exhibited feelings of prejudice and behaviors of discrimination (Lesko, 2012). It is important to recognize the barriers to critical reflection in order to bring about a change or better understanding of one's experiences compared to new and existing schemas. Solórzano (1997)

utilized the critical race theory to examine how racism, prejudice, and stereotypes are portrayed in teacher education programs. His study found teacher educators used labels to identify students of color and while they may not use racial terms, terms such as unmotivated, lazy or undisciplined are just as damaging. The use of labels by the teachers put the blame on the students. In putting the blame on the students, the teacher educators did not critically reflect on their own feelings of bias, continued display of microaggressions or displayed feelings of superiority versus inferiority. Solórzano (1997) also discussed teacher educators having a *cultural deficit model* in their beliefs about students of color or students who may not share the same values or beliefs of the teacher educator. Five themes (centrality and intersectionality of race and racism, a challenge to dominant ideology, commitment to social justice, the centrality of experiential knowledge and interdisciplinary perspective) emerged within the study to assist teacher educators in understanding racism and discriminating practices (Solòrzano,1997). McIntosh (1998) and Solórzano (1997) provided a window into a topic which caused people to sigh and gasp in disbelief that this could occur in today's classrooms. I was not shocked but it did bring up feelings which I had suppressed based upon my own experiences. Reading the scholarly work on prejudice and my own experiences have led me to be the educator who assisted students in critically reflecting on REC in order to address prejudice, racist and discriminatory thoughts, and actions. I would be naïve to suggest that I am the driving force in eradicating racism but I will leave my legacy of trying as a critical reflective cultural practitioner.

Another study which displayed prejudice feelings about teachers was conducted by Hachfeld et al., (2011). This study measured multicultural and egalitarian beliefs utilizing the Teacher Cultural Belief Scale. The authors identified the level of understanding around cultural differences in regards to acculturation, prejudices toward immigrants and authoritarianism. The

authors also discussed not being able to identify if the beliefs of the teachers from this study affected teaching practices in the classroom. The purpose of the study was to identify teacher beliefs about diversity and begin the "transformation required for teachers to implement appropriate education", p. 990. A need stated within the research included support in the way of training and professional development on ethical practices and *do no harm* to students to address prejudice practices in the classroom.

  Lack of training. Cochran-Smith (2003) provided research about the history of quality and training to support teacher education programs and teacher educators in preparation of future teachers. This study looked at four teacher educators and areas of need. One of the areas of focus included "unlearning racism", p. 11. This area looked into how the teacher educator prepared and received training and education and engaged pre-service teachers in aspects of understanding REC through reflection and other strategies. Cochran-Smith (2003) was candid in sharing her own process as a participant in acknowledging her strengths and areas of growth critically reflecting with the teacher educators to examine her own values and beliefs on REC. Abdullah (2009) compared how programs valued and incorporated practices around multicultural education within teacher education programs in Malaysia compared to other countries. Abudullah (2009) compared the United States with Malaysia in regards to limited course work as well as opportunities for future teacher educators to critically reflect on their own beliefs and values. Course content along with the development of curriculum allowed the teacher educator to critically reflect on REC as part of the path of transforming teaching to address the diverse needs of children and families (Banks, 1993; Mezirow, 1997). Another study of preservice teachers identified opportunities for students to participate in experiences beyond the textbook or content in the classroom. Preservice teachers reflected of views of colorblindness as a way of

acknowledging their prejudice and bias but seeing it as an asset to decrease racism and microaggressions in the classroom (Kreamelmeyer et al., 2016).

Džalalova and Raud (2012) evaluated pre-service teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and self-awareness within a teacher education program. The study provided a clear format built on understanding "socio-cultural values and values of social development" (p.67) to further diversity training within teacher education programs. The article provided results to enhance programs based on increasing opportunities to practice the newly learned skills from courses as well as additional support needed for students in regards to self-reflection. This study also addressed the need to provide support in order to measure mastery of cultural competence. Džalalova & Raud (2012) expressed the need for teachers to have various opportunities to apply their knowledge but also the benefits of conducting research to bridge theory and practice.

Chou (2007) provided an analysis of the educational and curriculum reform needed to address teacher education in the United States. The author provided a background on the political movement of multicultural education from assimilation theories to cultural competence in regards to teacher education and teacher education programs. Some of the main points identified in the article included the recruitment of faculty and pre-service teachers by institutions of education as well as the development of curriculum and instructional supports in teacher education programs. The author also reiterated the need for both a theoretical and practical approach when presenting culturally responsive teaching to pre-service and teacher candidates.

Unawareness. Chinmamanda Adichie's (2009), Ted Talk, "The Danger of a Single Story", described how assumptions may be created based on what one reads or hears in regards

to REC. This can be a dangerous practice in regards to understanding one's own culture and other cultures especially if the information learned was more of a stereotype or bias than correct knowledge about a group of people. For example, the history shared between Caucasians and Blacks in the United States included enslavement and oppression of Black people which may have expressed weaknesses due to ethnicity and culture during slavery and the Civil Rights Movement (Moule, 2012). This related to stereotyping or developing assumptions about a group of people based on what is read and heard (Moule, 2012). I often expressed to my class when I tell my story that I am not speaking for all Black or African-American culture and there are differences and similarities within and across cultures. I critically reflected on the previous barriers listed within the research, I noticed the omission of anger and began to understand was this done on purpose as not to evoke my own personal feelings or did I just overlook this barrier to critical reflection.

Anger. Sue, Torino, Capodilupo, Rivera & Lin (2009) explored how Caucasian faculty-led discussions on REC. This study examined the emotions displayed by the students based on faculty perceptions. The faculty reported several feelings that were discussed previously, including fear, anxiety, and discomfort in facilitating conversations about REC in the classroom (Sue et al., 2009). One of the emotions faculty did not anticipate was anger. Students expressed physical and emotional signs of anger, including crying, blaming, and even attacking other students. One faculty member expressed a student left the classroom when the conversation became more of an attack then constructive dialogue about a topic or issue on REC (Sue et al., 2009). This study also explored the need for faculty to critically reflect on introducing topics for discussions as well as training opportunities for faculty to explore their own perceptions around REC. Cognitive dissonance is the term that comes to mind when I have explored feelings of

anger. I have never engaged in a physical confrontation but I can remember times of a conversation about REC becoming contentious in a course and the teacher educator not intervening. This may have resulted in a lack of experience by the teacher educator to have the knowledge or skills to lead pre-service teacher's in dialogue or allowed the class to critically reflect on the topic or issue. The identified barriers to critical reflection about REC in the literature provided room in the research to explore ways teacher educators and faculty incorporated and facilitated learning to allow application and practice.

Linking Theory and Practice

Mezirow's transformative learning theory required the adult learner to understand and reflect on one's experiences that identified and defined their lived experiences. Mezirow (1997) defined this as "the process of effecting change in a frame of reference", (p. 5). This means in order to grow or learn, one must constantly self-reflect on their beliefs, values, and feelings, which may have been conditioned by one's own experiences. The main tenets within this framework included habits of mind and points of view (Mezirow, 1997). Habits of mind were described as insight into how one feels or believes based on their personal experiences surrounding culture, socio-economics, and politics. This fits well in understanding how teacher educators critically reflect on REC along with identifying their own culture but also how they catalog or process their beliefs compared to their own experiences. For example, a study of veteran EC teachers expressed ideal that parents should know and conform to mainstream school expectations and culture (Assaf et al., 2010). These teachers utilized their own belief system and educational experiences and held parents to the same standard. The second tenant of transformative learning theory was understanding another perspective and allowing constructive feedback to adjust or change one's beliefs. For example, I can remember talking with a

colleague about the importance of understanding math concepts when working with younger children. The colleague observing my class shared with me how my tone and body language changed when discussing math in my course. This allowed me to recognize and change my behavior in order to not project my own feelings or biases. Both habits of mind and points of view are essential in first understanding teacher educator's ideologies and beliefs and secondly, how these influenced the development of activities and experiences in coursework for students and pre-service teachers.

Teachers expressed a need for more rigorous and in-depth analysis of learning about other cultures of students within the classroom as well as understanding the systems and policies developed around cultural diversity (Gallegos, Tindall, & Gallegos, 2008). The need to embed current federal and state policies around cultural and linguistic support will allow students and teachers the opportunity to apply theory to practical knowledge (Kagan & Garcia, 1991). For example, the policy statement from the United States Department of Health and Human Services and United States Department of Education (2016) provided data on the numbers of children in preschool programs being suspended. This report shared that a disproportionate number of African-American boys in preschool were suspended at a higher rate compared to their same age peers (United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2014). This report could be utilized to discuss the importance of critically reflecting on REC as an embedded practice. Another strategy used within the research to bridge theory to application were the use of dialogue journals. The teacher educator provided reflective comments of the journal entries of students to assist in critical reflection of feelings and beliefs about different cultures (Garmon, 1998). These opportunities to self-reflect and obtain feedback for students created a bridge between theory and practice (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Additional research is needed to identify

how teacher educators relate and understand REC in order to lead students and teachers as critical reflective cultural practitioners.

Race, ethnicity, and culture. I did a report for an English class about race issues in our high school and community. When I read the report to my late step-father, he quickly corrected me and stated, "There is only one race, the human race." Gay (2013) expressed the need to address both race and culture in education and not to dismiss either based on the social constructs of race and culture. It was hard to ignore REC, especially in California as the research provided information to show a declining shift in regards to academic outcomes for African-American, Latino and Native American students compared to their Caucasian and Asian-American counterparts (Clark, Zygmunt & Howard, 2016). Clark et al., (2016) further discussed the importance of recognizing these differences and provided opportunities for EC teachers and teacher educators to critically reflect on REC. Early childhood teacher educators will also have to be willing to make the change or transform their teaching style. This will lead to enhancement of knowledge by both the teacher educator and teacher. One of the key ideas presented within the body of research is being open to learning about oneself and others. The ability to be open in learning about yourself and another REC minimized the barriers experienced in critical reflection and developed a trusting relationship between the teacher educator and student to discuss issues around REC in the classroom and outside the classroom (McAllister & Irvine, 2000). Early childhood teacher educators who created opportunities to critically reflect about REC enhanced the ability for students and teachers to value each other in a meaningful way built on trust (White, Zion, Kozleski, & Fulton, 2005).

Yanhui (2013) first outlined the role of teacher education programs in addressing the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse preschool through high school educators. One

strategy included in the study developed core classes rooted in diversity education to include both theory and practice. The next strategy embedded professional development as a requirement of not just pre-service teachers but also teachers continuing in the field of education. Yanhui (2013) expressed the need to allow teachers to study abroad sometime during their pre-service or graduate studies to foster understanding of other cultures. The strategies listed in this study were developed to bridge the cultural knowledge gap of the pre-service teacher and inform the practices of both the teacher education program and teacher educator. Wang et al., (2014) also provided recommendations to assist teacher education programs in developing strategies and opportunities for students to not only engage in culturally diverse opportunities but also begin developing culturally competent educators. The different practices and strategies were highlighted within the body of research to enhance teacher education programs and assist teacher educators in identifying ways to provide these necessary experiences not based on necessity but based on the desire to assist future teachers in meeting the needs of all students.

Self-awareness. Gay and Kirkland (2003) identified the importance of teachers recognizing their REC in order to positively affect and change their teaching practices in the classroom. Gay and Kirkland (2003) addressed the need for teacher educators to critically reflect on their culture to assist students and teachers in the process of critical reflection. Self-awareness is one of the tenets in critical reflection. Self-awareness allowed for a deeper understanding of not only oneself but also how to incorporate REC in teaching practices. The research identified how teacher educators needed to incorporate concrete examples, experiences and guided practice for students and teachers to build the foundation and further critical reflection on REC (Garmon, 2005; Gay & Kirkland, 2003). In order for teacher educators to assist students and teachers in self-awareness, they must be open to learning not only about

themselves but also about others. This next study utilized a quantitative approach to understand and identify beliefs about diversity.

Chiner, Cardona-Molto, Puerta, and Puerta (2015) utilized the personal beliefs about diversity scale and the professional beliefs diversity scale in a study of 233 teachers from Spain to measure beliefs about diversity as well as the impact to schools where they teach. The authors provided a framework to address this study based on cultural, linguistic and social diversity, ability, gender, sexual orientation, and religion. The teachers were measured to identify which diversity issue showed higher or lower sensitivity. The instruments and analysis of the information collected showed a high sensitivity personally and professionally in regards to diversity.

The next study on self-awareness by Kahn et al., (2014) identified factors that contributed to personal beliefs about cultural competency among general and special education teachers. The authors looked at variables between and within groups that described gender, age, race, and ethnicity differences based on personal and professional beliefs. This research recommended incorporating activities that promote cultural competence, such as immersion programs with other cultures as well as participating in experiences that broaden one's cultural experiences. The last study explored on self-awareness identified cultural norms about REC. Ogbu (1981) studied how other cultures may have been held to standards or norms in regards to their Caucasian counterparts and the importance of social change to influence policy and research. This study described supporting teachers in understanding how cultural norms may influence information learned about diverse student populations. The author provided a model to address human competence through cultural ecology. Cultural ecology included the influences of social

and cultural values in relation to personal behavior (Ogbu, 1981). Self-awareness as a practice by both the teacher educator and student in a teacher education program will lead to a willingness to be open and explore opportunities to practice critical reflection on REC.

Openness. Early childhood classrooms in the U.S. have seen an increase in the last decade in the number of immigrant and non-immigrant children and families of different cultures (Daniel & Friedman, 2005). Banks (2001) defined openness as "being receptive to new information, to others ideas or arguments and to different types of diversity" (p. 9). Banks (2001) conducted a study of students within a teacher education program who participated in a cultural diversity course. This study found students who were open to learning about their own REC were also more willing to learn about difference RECs. This study also identified the professional development needed my novice teachers to critically reflect on REC.

Cochran-Smith (2003) used the term inquiry to evaluate how teacher educators critically reflected on previous knowledge and new knowledge about REC in both theory and practice. Cochran-Smith (2003) as an active participant with teacher educators, examined learned or previous assumptions about RECs in order to "unlearn racism", (p. 11). I found this study to be humbling as a teacher educator, as teacher educators are referenced as content experts but one of the first levels in transformative teaching is being able to honestly reflect that one may not know everything. Early childhood teacher educators need to be critically reflective cultural practitioners to identify ways to value our knowledge but also value and be open to not knowing. This aspect of critical reflection is displayed when teacher educators work through the process along with students in identifying and addressing the fixed versus changed mindset (Dweck, 2006; Mezirow, 1991).

Another study which provided an in-depth and rare opportunity to understand the process and outcome of critical reflection was conducted by Garmon (2010). Garmon (2010) facilitated a case study with a 22-year old Caucasian student as the participant, prior to graduating with her degree in elementary teaching. Six themes (openness, self-awareness/self-reflectiveness, commitment to social justice, intercultural experiences, support group experiences, and educational experiences) were identified based on interviews with the student during her pre-service work at a university in Western Michigan. This study yielded several insights in regards to identifying students' prior experiences working or interacting with other cultures as well as the potential for change based on courses or field experiences in a teacher education program. Garmon (2010) laid the groundwork to create what he identified as an inquiry-based learning environment to increase the knowledge and experience of students in teacher education programs.

Create an inquiry. The Department of Education (2012) described EC teachers as reflective in regards to identifying and addressing personal biases and understanding historical issues that have led to inequitable practices in education as a whole for certain RECs. This description by the Department of Education left me wondering if this is the case then how do we as EC educators address the suspensions and expulsions plaguing preschool-aged students as well as the achievement gap. *What am I missing?* And what other factors contributed to history repeating itself just with younger students. Watt (2007) explored the use of Privileged Identity Exploration (PIE) as a model for faculty. The PIE model allowed faculty to understand their own perceptions about REC through identifying assumptions and acknowledging how those assumptions may feel or how behaviors may be displayed (Watt, 2007). This occurred through experiencing difficult conversations with others about REC. I can recall a time when a student

said to me and the class, that he/she didn't feel they needed to talk about REC in the classroom. This student expressed how they just wanted to teach math, reading and other subjects children needed to learn. I have to admit, I was taken back by the comment as I felt every EC teacher needed to understand the influence of REC in the classroom. I then continued the conversation with the student's permission to explore the feelings behind their statement. In using the PIE model, it is important to recognize defense modes and to assist students in unpacking issues to bring awareness and further exploration of institutional oppression, which may be displayed in teaching practices (Watt, 2007).

Garvis, Fluckiger and Twigg (2012) explored the beliefs and values students bring to the university to understand how these influenced their role as future EC educators and informed practices to, strengthen and enhance the EC teacher education program. This study consisted of two groups of students attending institutions of higher education in Australia. The authors implemented a survey/questionnaire that allowed both a qualitative and quantitative analysis of how students beliefs played a role in identifying perceptions about becoming an EC educator. The two main themes discussed by Garvis et al., (2012) included work environment (hours, holidays, curriculum, child assessments, and paperwork) and helping children learn (behavior issues, professional development, a child with disabilities, parent engagement). One of the main points shared throughout the study was how pre-service teachers seemed to have an unrealistic view of teaching young children. For example, the authors described an emphasis of teachers wanting to help students learn however the teachers also felt concerns about addressing all children's needs. Garvis et al., (2012), stated the need for teacher education programs to provide clear expectations for pre-service teachers with the support of classes that provide both theoretical and practical opportunities prior to working in the classroom

with students and families. Kagan and Garcia (1991) expressed concern about classrooms

providing enriching environments for all students to learn with a focus on early childhood. The

concern addressed in the study was based on the need to intertwine policy, practice, research and

cultural and linguistic support for students. The researchers expressed how both federal and state

policies needed to be based on current research, however limited research has been conducted on

preschoolers and early childhood settings. This study also provided additional guidance in

regards to current research related to the topic and ways to include practitioners and researchers

in supporting young learners and their families. This guidance would allow teacher education

programs to evaluate and develop student outcomes to measure embedded practices.

Evaluating student learning outcomes. Early childhood teacher educators are

responsible for creating a curriculum for a course based on the student learning outcomes. Each

institution of higher education has developed courses that are approved by the curriculum

committee at the institution and must meet requirements to maintain the college's accreditation

for community colleges, set forth by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior

Colleges. Student learning outcomes (SLOs) are required to be evaluated every other semester

and every four to six years during a department's comprehensive program review, this may vary

from institution to institution. The SLOs are developed by faculty and staff to reflect the mission

and goals of the college and department. In looking at my department's course SLOs, the

emphasis was broad and the course objectives provided greater detail in regards to discussing,

identifying or describing the content in relation to race, ethnicity, and culture. The one course

where the SLOs mention REC is in the *Diversity in Early Childhood Settings.* Abbate-Vaughn

(2006) provided a format for evaluating and developing outcomes to measure progress and

implementation of multiculturalism for pre-service teacher programs beyond graduation. This

allowed teacher education programs to follow students from pre-service through the completion

to determine how the teacher education programs yield results to assist teachers in becoming

culturally competent educators. The framework created by Abbate-Vaugh (2006) emphasized

the need to include not only activities to support diversity awareness but also provided support to

pre-service teachers during and after the completion of the program. One of the other key

components included the need to support teacher educators with course evaluations, activities,

and professional development.

Summary

The literature review provided research to understand critical race theory in education,

explore the background and history of EC programs to include policies, competencies, and

frameworks for EC teacher educators and teachers. The next sections explored critical

reflection, barriers and linking theory to practice in valuing critical reflection on REC. Next,

Chapter 3 has outlined the research design and methodology used to conduct a study on

exploring how three teacher educators in Northern California community colleges, early

childhood teacher preparation programs value critical reflection on REC. A description of the

design methodology was included along with the steps taken to adhere to the protocol and

procedures.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Qualitative

I can remember looking over my choices for colleges I wanted to attend as a young Black female with my high school counselor, a middle-aged, Caucasian-woman, and she told me that I should become a waitress or a secretary. Sharing lived experiences provided a way to explore and understand one's perspective and values through lived detailed stories (Clandinin & Huber, in press). Narrative inquiry or storytelling was selected as the methodology in examining the experiences of three early childhood (EC) teacher educators from Northern California community colleges. A timeline of events and experiences, by both the EC teacher educators along with some examples from me, the researcher, identified the process and how the EC teacher educator valued critical reflection on REC. "The stories or narratives are built on both personal, reflecting a person's life history, and social, reflecting the milieu and professional knowledge contexts in which teachers live" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.318). The methodology design provided insight to each EC teacher educator's personal and professional experiences.

Respondent Selection Strategies

Purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990) was used in the selection of three tenured EC teacher educators from accredited Northern California community colleges. The process of selection involved contacting EC faculty coordinators/department chairs and division deans for recommendations. An email was sent and then followed up with a phone call to the dean and/or EC faculty coordinator of the EC teacher education program for personal recommendations of those who met the following criteria: (a) identified as an effective early childhood teacher educator who participated and led in the development of curriculum adoption and

implementation, (b) was a current member of professional groups such as the National

Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), (c) mentored and or coached

adjunct and full-time faculty, (d) participated in course development, (e) understood student

outcomes and reviewed course syllabi and course descriptions; (f) was tenured faculty; and (g)

taught at least one cultural diversity class which displayed an understanding of multicultural

issues and delivery of content to EC students and teachers (Appendix A and B). Communication

in person, through emails and telephone conversations, were also conducted with the northern

region of California Community College Early Childhood Educators (CCCECE) based on the

selection criteria to find qualified EC teacher educators. CCCECE also sent out an email to EC

faculty coordinators/department chairs and tenured faculty in Northern California community

colleges. I requested recommendations within a two-week time frame and followed up with

emails and phone calls as needed. Based on recommendations and emails of interest to

participate in the study, I then sent out an experience survey based on the selection criteria to EC

teacher educators in Northern California community colleges (Appendix C).

Experience survey. The experience survey was created via SurveyMonkey (online

survey) and a link was sent to eligible participants to complete based on the selection criteria

(See Appendix C). I did not ask questions about gender, age, ethnicity, and race on the survey in

order to remain unbiased in my selection.   The experience survey was sent to those EC teacher

educators who were referred by their EC teacher coordinator/department chair, dean or another

source. At the conclusion of the survey, EC teacher educators who wanted to further participate

in the study completed the contact information (name, address, email and phone number) and I,

as the researcher, called the participants as the next step in the process of selection. I also

provided a date to complete the survey to ensure timely completion by the potential

participant in order to maintain interest and to be able to select participants to start the study by February 2018.

Survey ranking. The survey was sent out and about 20 potential EC teacher educators from Northern California community colleges completed it. Fifteen opted to provide their contact information to proceed if selected to participate in the study. The online survey from SurveyMonkey contained the criteria and asked each participant to identify their years of experience based on curriculum development, participation or membership in a professional group, mentored or coached faculty including adjunct faculty, developed student learning outcomes, had tenured status and years of experience teaching diversity courses in EC education. The survey responses were ranked based on the selection criteria from a ranking of one to three, with three being the highest. A copy of the ranking table can be found in Appendix D. The number of rankings were added together to get a total score and I selected one participant from the low range between 10-12, mid-range from 13-16 and high range from 17-18 to participate in the study. I chose three people from different ranges to identify similarities or differences in EC teacher educators based on years of experience per the criteria.

Selection. I selected three EC teacher educators based on the criteria ranking survey. I assumed I would be selecting predominately Caucasian teacher educators, as the National Center for Education Statistics (2016) reported 76% of all faculty were Caucasian, but I actually had diversity within ethnicity, race as well as gender and age.   I then contacted each EC teacher educator individually by phone to schedule the initial meeting to review the requirements of the study and sign the consent form. I also contacted those who I did not select and thanked them

for completing the survey and asked them if they would be willing to be an alternate in the event the original participants declined.

Interviews. Individual in-person meetings were held with each of the selected EC teacher educators. The first meeting began with reviewing the study requirements and obtaining a signed consent form (Appendix E). Each EC teacher educator also chose a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. I also used North, South, East, and West to identify their past experiences instead of providing the names of states where they previously resided as this would lead to identifying each participant by the process of elimination, and since the field is small in regards to tenured EC teacher educators, I did not want to compromise their identities. Next is the interview protocol.

Instrumentation

One-on-one conversational interviews were conducted from February 2018 to June 2018. I utilized a conversational style interview approach to allow for a sharing of information by both the participant and researcher to engage in a two-way interaction as described by Yin (2011). Conversational interviews were the main source of gathering information. This was the most appropriate method to capture the narrative stories based on the lived experiences and events of each EC teacher educator. "Interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings or how people interpret the world around them" (Merriam, 1998, p.72). I used the interview protocol to capture their stories and asked follow-up questions or provided comments to allow for candidness by each of the EC teacher educators. "A researcher tries to understand a participant's world. …and is concentrated on efforts at mastering the meanings of the participant's words and phrases" (Yin, 2017, p. 135). An interview protocol with opinion and

value interview questions was used as described by Patton (2002) as a way to understand and document the events and lived experiences (see Appendix G). I conducted two in-depth conversational interviews with each EC teacher educator, which lasted from one to two hours. A follow-up interview was scheduled to review information or allow the participants an opportunity to revise an answer or expand their narrative stories based on the timeline. Prior to conducting the interviews, I conducted a pilot study of the interview protocol and procedures to revise and increase the validity of this study. Upon completion of the pilot study, I revised the open-ended questions as needed. The conversational interviews focused on three elements to provide a detailed story of events and experiences framed by Mezirow's transformative learning theory (1991) by each EC teacher educator as well as the researcher. These elements were used to develop the overall questions based on critical reflection of race, ethnicity, and culture. A copy of the questions can also be found in Appendix F.

Element 1: Values and Experiences

In what ways do EC teacher educators' value critical reflection on race, ethnicity, and culture?

Element 2: Self Identity

In what ways do EC teacher educators critically reflect on their own race, ethnicity, and culture?

Element 3: Teaching Practices

In what ways do EC teacher educators include critical reflection on race, ethnicity, and culture as an embedded practice within the curriculum or course content?

These overarching questions were used during the conversational interviews with each EC teacher educator. The three overarching questions and follow-up questions were the basis for each element and can be found in Appendix F. In person conversational interviews were conducted to build rapport with each EC teacher educator in order to identify how each EC teacher educator critically reflected on REC. The interviews were conducted at their home or office based on their availability and preferences. Follow-up from each interview was conducted via conference call if needed based on clarification of transcripts. In person, interviews allowed me as the researcher to not only hear their stories but also see their body language and non-verbal cues when answering the questions and describing their experiences. It was beneficial to schedule all three interviews at the beginning of the 2018 spring semester as each of the EC teacher educators had just started the semester and I did not want to infringe on their busy schedules. I was confident in my interviewing skills based on the experiences I have had in the field but I was not sure if I could get three colleagues who I did not know to share with me *how* and *if* they valued critical reflection on REC. I also wondered if I could get them to articulate the process based on their experiences and what this may have looked like in the classes they instructed. I did not want to gather politically correct stories but actually explore how each EC teacher educator valued, viewed and practiced critical reflection individually in preparing future teachers and educators within EC programs.

Data Collection Analysis

Each conversational interview was recorded via iPad and transcribed. I also used chart paper to give me a visual of each EC teacher educator's narratives, as I had 10-12 large (25x30) sticky notes, filled with information on the front and back (for each EC teacher educator) stuck to the walls of my home office to view the information collected from the transcriptions. The

transcriptions and charting assisted me in utilizing Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory as the framework to analyze the data based on narrative stories, timelines, events and experiences shared by the three EC teacher educators and myself. The main components of transformative learning by Mezirow (1991) as adopted by Taylor (1998) included rational discourse, the centrality of experience, and critical reflection. Rational discourse is the ability to understand other people's truths and other views based on their experiences and perspectives. The centrality of experience refers to experiences that have defined the person they have become. Critical reflection was the last tenet to understand how each EC teacher educator transformed learning by understanding assumptions and beliefs based on lived experiences (Taylor, 1998). I utilized Mezirow's (1991) framework adopted by Taylor (1998) to thoroughly understand and identify patterns or themes in the participant's responses, as well as their process in how EC teacher educators, formally or informally, critically reflected on REC based on their shared stories and examples.

Role of the Researcher

My role as an active participant allowed me to be both a participant and observer in the interview and provide a detailed timeline of events and experiences by three EC teacher educators. My focus as a researcher was to provide an understanding of early childhood teacher educators' experiences as critical reflection practitioners as they have transformed their knowledge and the knowledge of EC students and teachers based on in-depth conversational interviews. At times, I may have engaged in the conversational interviews by sharing similar or different experiences without intruding too much into the process, and I found this allowed me to capture the candidness of each EC teacher educator's experiences and beliefs.

Researcher Positionality

My lens was based on a blend of both critical race theory in education and transformative teaching and learning (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995 and Mezirow, 1991). As I critically reflected about REC, I reflected on my own personal and professional experiences and how these shaped the EC teacher educator I have become and will inform my growth as an EC teacher educator. My experiences good, bad or indifferent were related to REC and many times I felt frustrated how I was perceived or not valued based on my REC. I have lived being Black my whole life. The only educational environment outside of my home and community where REC was discussed, valued and celebrated was when I attended a historical black college/university (HBCU) in Alabama, next graduate school and then post-graduate in California. I have finally exhaled in being able to articulate and understand how my experiences have allowed me to critically reflect on REC. I considered myself a reflective person but it wasn't until this study that I have formally defined my position and lens. I have lived it and will always be seen as Black. The research supports understanding oneself and identifying race as a social construct and social issue displayed in government, politics, laws, and education in the United States (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). My positionality in both critical race theory in education and transformative teaching and learning has allowed me to understand how my experiences will further my growth as a critically reflective cultural practitioner. I grew up in the suburbs of Washington State where a large majority of the population was Caucasian. My parents chose to live in the suburbs regardless of the cost as they believed my siblings and I would receive the best education and opportunities to excel in life. I can remember trying to convince my parents to move to Seattle so I could attend Garfield High School. This high school was known for having a large population of Black students and more diversity in terms of students and staff and

teaching staff on the Western side of Washington. Growing up in the suburbs afforded me opportunities to learn about myself and interactions with others who may or may not have shared the same race or culture. I can remember the first time I realized some of my senior high school teachers did not value me as an individual and only saw me by the color of my skin or my culture. I was shocked and upset as I was raised with the idea, "there's only one race, the human race". My parents and family explained our race and culture to my siblings and me, and they also exposed us to other cultures and races. I was also taught to appreciate the differences and find the best in everyone regardless of race or culture. The only time I remembered a teacher including or incorporating different cultures or races within the curriculum was when there was an upcoming holiday or special occasion. This was one of the reasons I chose to attend an historically Black college in Alabama to experience going to school with the same race and similar culture. While the student demographics were predominately Black, the professors were very diverse and some were from countries other than the United States such as the Philippines, China, and England. I also had professors who participated in sit-ins during the civil rights movement and told personal stories about their experience growing up in the south. This was a contrast to the United States Caucasian teachers I had in elementary, junior high and high school, except during my senior year of high school, my English college prep instructor was Black. My path has not been traditional in regards to teaching right out of college, as I worked for school districts and community-based programs teaching and overseeing services for children and families from diverse backgrounds to include different languages, cultures, ethnicities, and learning abilities. These experiences led me to value not only my own culture but also others in bringing people together with sometimes very different and similar skills as well as incorporating aspects of culture in my teaching practices.

Kuhn (1970) discussed the paradigm shift that occurs in acquiring knowledge. I began to understand the need for EC education students to also have this shift in understanding their own culture and critically reflecting on race and culture when working with students in early care settings. I soon realized as an early childhood teacher educator, it first started with those teaching and facilitating learning to model the way. This modeling included providing opportunities for early childhood students and teachers to critically reflect on race and culture and not ignore or avoid the topic (Smolen et al., 2006). Before I started exploring the research on critical reflection of race, ethnicity, and culture, I utilized reflection about diversity in early childhood settings to bring awareness to students and teachers instead of leading them to value different cultures in order to transform learning (Chen, Nemmo & Fraser, 2009). While I provided opportunities to discuss REC, I did not have a full understanding of the components of critical reflection. I have since begun to utilize the elements of Mezirow's transformative learning theory (1991) as the foundation to lead EC students and teachers in understanding the content and themselves. The research required moving EC students and teachers from what could be described as surface, watered down approaches to transforming practices to meet the needs of all learners regardless of race, culture, language and learning abilities (Banks, 1991). I began to see my development and the development of EC students and teachers as not just settling for what is written in the text or memorizing theories but living and incorporating knowledge to further critical reflection as an EC teacher educator.

I am also the mother of two, Black children and have had several interactions with EC educators about my children being seen as aggressive or dishonest. For example, my son came home and told my husband and me that his Kindergarten teacher would not allow him to go to the bathroom, because she felt he was being dishonest like the other Black kids. These

experiences have increased my understanding of the importance of critical reflection of REC. I have observed teacher educators who were revered as experts in EC education, diversity or multicultural education make assumptions about a certain culture and treat cultures different than their own in a demeaning and disrespectful way. As an EC teacher educator, it is my responsibility to lead EC students and teachers in understanding themselves and valuing critical reflection on race and culture to further their teaching practices. I know this is a great responsibility as students often model what they are taught. It was my responsibility to challenge early childhood students and teachers to make the transformation and shift to critically reflective practice as a lifelong process.

Assumptions

There are several assumptions that I have made in exploring values about culture with EC teacher educators. The first was that they may not feel comfortable in the beginning sharing personal stories that may depict biases or feelings of prejudice in order to not be seen as a racist. I think EC teacher educators are politically correct in narrating their stories and experiences. Secondly, I assume respondents are truthful. Thirdly, the methods, framework, and protocol utilized in this study were appropriate for gathering stories, identifying themes individually and collectively to answer the overarching research questions. Lastly, everyone has experienced working with different cultures.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore through narrative inquiry how three EC teacher educators in Northern California community colleges, critically reflected on REC to lead EC students and teachers. Experiences in the form of *stories* assisted each EC teacher educator to critically reflect on REC to transform their knowledge and understanding (Mezirow,1991). I

have learned critical reflection is a continuous process which allows the EC teacher educator,

student, and teacher an opportunity to move from awareness of cultures to valuing cultures.

Chapter 4: Findings

The participants were three selected tenured early childhood (EC) teacher educators from Northern California community colleges. An introduction of each EC teacher educator included met criteria, demographics and other relevant information that provided the foundation of the study and led to the discovered findings. The findings were formed from transcribed and analyzed conversational interviews as the primary methodology. The findings resulted in three themes (exploring race, ethnicity, and culture (REC), understanding self and critical reflection as an embedded practice) and were presented in a narrative format. The narrative format or stories explored how each EC teacher educator valued critical reflection on REC.

Introduction of Early Childhood Teacher Educators

I, as the researcher, did not know any of the EC teacher educators prior to the study. The participants ranged in age from late thirties to early sixties. In addition, two identified as female EC teacher educators and one identified as a male EC teacher educator. The participants were also diverse in regards to how they identified themselves based on REC. Jamie identified as Black, Peter identified as multi-ethnic and Ellen identified as Caucasian. All of the EC teacher educators were born and raised in other states prior to serving as tenured EC teacher educators at Northern California community colleges. Jamie was born and raised in the suburbs of the East Coast, Peter was born and spent the majority of his life in the rural South before coming to the suburbs of California and Ellen was born and raised in the suburbs of the Midwest before moving to California. Since the field of EC education is a small community, in order to protect their anonymity, I did not include the exact state and just referenced the part of the United States (North, South, East or West) based on their personal and professional experiences shared within the conversational interviews. Each EC teacher educator picked a fictitious name of their

 choice to use throughout the interviews. The next section will provide a description of each of the participants tenured status and professional experiences based on the selection criteria (See Appendix C).

Jamie. Jamie has been a tenured EC teacher educator for about three years. Jamie has over five years of experience developing curriculum as an EC teacher educator. She has been an active member of several professional groups, committees and workgroups benefiting children and families for over five years and has at least two years of experience mentoring and coaching adjunct faculty. She also had five years or more experience in developing student learning outcomes for courses. Her experience in facilitating a cultural diversity course was over five years. She attended her undergraduate and graduate studies in institutions of higher education on the East Coast prior to relocating to California. Her experiences prior to becoming a tenured EC teacher educator included serving as an adjunct (part-time) EC teacher educator, as well as over ten years facilitating programs for children and families, developing curriculum, coaching and mentoring EC teachers and EC program development.

Peter. Peter has been a tenured EC teacher educator for over five years. He has over five years of experience in developing curriculum and evaluating and creating student learning outcomes. He has been a member of several professional groups, benefiting EC teachers and children and families, for over five years. He has mentored and coached adjunct faculty over four years. Peter had less than one year of experience facilitating a cultural diversity course during his tenure. His family relocated to California during his middle school educational experience and he attended and received both his undergraduate and graduate degrees in California institutions of higher education. His professional experiences included adjunct EC

teacher educator, child development and early childhood workforce policy work, family engagement, social justice, and equity work, as well as curriculum development.

Ellen. Ellen has been a tenured EC teacher educator in a Northern California community college for over 10 years. She has over five years of experience in curriculum development. She has been an active member of several professional groups benefiting early childhood educators and children and families for over five years. She has facilitated and developed student learning outcomes and has over five years of experience in facilitating the culture diversity course during her tenure. Her background was in pre-kindergarten through third grade and she completed both her undergraduate and graduate work in the Midwest before relocating to California. She has over 20-years of experience in developing and implementing programs for children and families in diverse communities within California. Her experiences included early childhood policy work, quality environments, family engagement, curriculum development and mentoring and coaching EC teachers and educators.

Description of the Findings

The interview data was recorded via iPad and transcribed. The transcriptions of the conversational interviews were analyzed with Mezirow's transformative learning theory (1991) as adapted by Taylor (1998) to identify (a) rational discourse (b) centrality of experience, and (c) critical reflective practices. The conversational interviews allowed Jamie, Peter, and Ellen to describe their experiences based on their educational backgrounds. This was useful as each participant described their experiences as they could remember, based on grade levels (elementary, middle school/junior high, high school, undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate if applicable). Their narrative stories also displayed how they processed past interactions and experiences from early memories as a child to more current as an EC teacher educator. Jamie,

Peter, and Ellen shared values they learned from their family as well as their educational

experiences. This allowed me as the researcher to understand how their earliest memories could

influence their values and perceptions about REC. I created tables to highlight the values,

perceptions, and experiences in order to provide a snapshot of the findings. The findings

provided evidence to show how Jamie, Peter, and Ellen understood their own stories, defined

their roles as EC teacher educators and navigated their own personal and professional lived

experiences. I also discovered similarities with the elements (values and experiences, belief

structures and teaching practices) of the study and the themes (exploring race, ethnicity and

culture, understanding self and critical reflection as an embedded practice). The elements were

created to facilitate the interview protocol and overarching questions of the study. I did not

anticipate or create the themes prior to the study and it was not until I completed the analysis

process that the findings became evident. This analysis process included over 36 large poster-

sized notes (front and back) of each interview and circled and underlined potential themes

discussed in the interviews as I used the framework of Mezirow (1991) and Taylor (1998) to

analyze the transcribed data. This was a very long and arduous process which took weeks to

review. I was able to combine similar themes and narrow the focus to three themes (exploring

REC, understanding self and critical reflection as an embedded practice). In addition to the

themes, other key findings surfaced from the conversational interviews.

At the beginning of the study, my questions were about race and culture. During the

interviews, each of the EC teacher educators also included ethnicity in the discussion. Race,

ethnicity, and culture (REC) were used fluidly throughout the study by all three EC teacher

educators as well as myself. My own critical reflection and the reflections of Jamie, Peter, and

Ellen led to changing the title to include ethnicity. This also led me to include ethnicity in the

interviews as part of the study. These next paragraphs described in detail Jamie's, Peter's and Ellen's experiences based on the first theme: Exploring Race, Ethnicity, and Culture.

Theme One: Exploring Race, Ethnicity, and Culture

Jamie's experiences. "I became a teacher educator because teachers didn't look like me and I wanted to change this narrative." Jamie first described her family structure consisting of her father, mother and older sister. Her father was born in the United States and her mother was an immigrant to the United States. She expressed how her dad attended a prestigious Ivy League college and never discussed with her or her older sister his experiences as a Black man attending a predominate Caucasian university. Her mother attended some college and mainly stayed home to assist in the care of her and her sister. Jamie could recall certain aspects of her educational experiences. She first began describing her early elementary years in Catholic school and then attended public school for middle school and high school. "I can remember attending a Catholic school in elementary and I think my parents thought I would get a good education versus the public elementary school." She could remember her first years of school being taught by nuns who she referred to as "Irish Catholic" in regards to culture. The first time she remembered REC being brought up was when her grandmother on her maternal side treated her differently because her skin tone was darker than her sisters. She mentioned how she didn't fully understand what was happening and her parents seemed upset about the incident but never discussed it with her or her sister. They expressed disapproval of the grandmother's comment by saying "she was speaking nonsense" and "we don't allow nonsense, in our home".

> I didn't grow up tortured about race, ethnicity and culture (REC) but wish my parents would have been more intentional in providing opportunities for diversity and talking about diversity. My parents were a matter of fact, people, when they needed to address something. I intern modeled this behavior as well.

Jamie stated awareness of REC in public school compared to more of a colorblind approach in private school. For example, students would describe classmates by their ethnicity or race, "she's black" in public school and it wasn't talked about at all in private school. The only time she could remember teachers intentionally talking about REC was during holidays, such as Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday Holiday. Jamie expressed how she dreaded the holiday every year as she felt singled out when the discussion about slavery and civil rights was discussed in class, and she was one of two or the only Black student in the class. "Just want to blend and didn't want to stick out, I just wanted to blend and didn't want to have any questions". Jamie further described her overall experience in elementary school with students who did not share her same REC. At times she expressed feeling awkward but since she was a female and deemed as smart and personable she felt she may not have experienced racism or discrimination. One difference she highlighted during our interview was how her hair was styled much differently compared to her Caucasian classmates.

> I often wondered why my hair was different than my classmates, my hair was more coily or tighter curls, or sometimes, my mom would braid and put beads in my hair and this was definitely different hairstyles than my peers." She could remember her parents making passing comments about race and culture and she would just watch and observe their actions or comments.

> My elementary years I can remember being one of three black children in a classroom. None of my teachers or administration looked like me. Most of the teachers were Irish-Catholic. I can remember my parents saying the public-school system wasn't very good and this is why we went to Catholic/private school.

Jamie experienced a little more diversity in high school but also mentioned how she and another classmate tended to be the only Blacks in college prep and advanced preparation classes but the teaching staff was not diverse and were of mostly Italian or Irish background. I asked her about social experiences she could remember with her peers and she stated, "I don't remember dating

and I felt like the boys in my age group may not have found me attractive as a young black

female." "I definitely noticed how classmates would always try to pair me up with the other

black boy in the class if dances were coming up during the school year."

Her college experience also yielded some of the same results as she attended a school with

about 5% diversity of Black and Latino students. She remembered how the college tried to

create events for the Black student population.

> I can remember the school inviting the Black students to a weekend trip and at first, I
> didn't want to go because I didn't understand what the college was trying to do as I had
> developed friendships and had a support network. My dad convinced me to go as he
> mentioned, I didn't want to be the only Black student who didn't attend.

She described her college professors as "middle-aged White men" and though she was in

an institution of higher education, her experiences around REC were about the same in college.

She couldn't recall a time or event when the faculty engaged students in discussions or even

current topics about REC. The only time Jamie remembered learning or exploring REC was

during her doctoral study on preschool teachers practices in the classroom.

Prior to becoming a teacher educator, Jamie had opportunities to work with diverse

families from different cultures as well as socioeconomic backgrounds. She remembered her

father asking her about her work and how she got families to trust her even though she may not

have had the same experiences as them. She mentioned how her father was referencing

differences based on socioeconomics and not based on REC. "Authenticity matters, I have had

experiences working with Caucasians, Blacks or African-Americans, Latinos, and Asians from

diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and each time I have been authentic". I asked her to define

what she meant by authentic and she expressed wanting families regardless of race and culture to

succeed and she witnessed the struggles of families and understood that it was a part of who they

are, "I see that race, culture, and ethnicity is around and it is a part of you, I get it". She also

mentioned that even though her family didn't discuss "it" (REC) she knew the value of

recognizing or critically reflecting on REC. She furthered described her professional experience

working for an agency in California as a trainer and coach. She recalled an incident with one

agency and not being promoted based on her "cultural background". She stated, "I was more

qualified and a better trainer than anyone in the agency and when they passed me up for the

promotion based on my REC, I was upset and disappointed." She expressed how the

organization told her the community wouldn't accept her based on her race and culture and this

is the reason she would not be promoted. She stated she voiced her displeasure with their

decision and acknowledged that the issue was bigger than her and she wasn't going to change the

dynamic or culture of the agency, so she left for another position. Throughout our conversation,

Jamie referred to experiences as "end of one". This was something she voiced throughout her

interview and it gave understanding to the way she defined terms and explained experiences.

She described "end of one" as understanding your experiences and then being able to challenge

those experiences with other points of view. "I think it is important to understand your end of

one but also be able to compare it with someone else's experiences as well". In closing this

conversation, I asked Jamie one last question in regards to her son and how she talked with him

about REC. "I'm raising my son differently than my parents, not that they didn't do a good job,

but I am intentional in giving him early experiences. He is enrolled in a school with different

cultures and languages."

I then asked her about conversations she has had with her son about REC. She

mentioned, " I haven't explicit talked about REC with my son and it's more about noticing

differences with his friends at school as well as family members." She then looked at me and

nodded her head while expressing she felt equipped when the time came to discuss REC with her

son, "when he is ready and can understand". Here are some of the values stated in the interview

with Jamie: honesty, education, success, authenticity, diversity, and family.

Peter's experiences. "I enjoyed learning about families, developing relationships. This

is what was missing in my high school years and I had finally found the connection with early

childhood education". Peter grew up in the southern portion of the United States. His father was

a second generation Mexican-American and his mom was Irish Anglo-Saxon. His education

started in a private Catholic school and then he went to public school in middle school and high

school when his family relocated to California. Peter mentioned how his memory was not very

good but he did remember some events or experiences in regards to REC. The first time he

remembers being exposed to REC was during his early elementary years when a child at school

called him a "Nigger".

> I can remember coming home from First grade and asking my older sister what is a
> Nigger? She asked me why and I told her that the children at my school were calling me
> this and I didn't know what it meant. She told me and I kept thinking that I wasn't Black
> and I didn't know why they would call me this. I don't remember my parents saying
> anything to me and I remember my older brother getting into fights in school dealing
> with prejudice but no one ever talked to me or addressed the issues.

Peter expressed how his parents grew up in an era where they tried to be more

"American". I asked him to explain and he mentioned he did not even know his dad was

Mexican until later in life when he heard him ask for directions in Spanish. "I didn't even know

my dad spoke another language and he never really talked about his childhood." He felt the

experiences in regards to REC made his parents assimilate to American culture to reduce

experiences with racial prejudice. Peter mentioned how REC was not discussed in his family.

Peter vividly described a memory of the Klu Klux Klan (KKK) marching down the street in a

parade and how he wished his skin was lighter. He also described most of his teachers as

Caucasian women. "I couldn't remember in elementary or middle school a time which teachers'

discussed differences or similarities of race, ethnicity or culture in regards to class projects or

topics during my entire school career". In high school, Peter recalled a brief discussion about

affirmative action in history class. "I didn't remember the teacher defining what affirmative

action meant in great detail or if the teacher had shared their feelings about affirmative action in

regards to employment and educational equity." Peter mentioned how he decided to drop out of

school with the permission of his mother and began attending the local community college to

further his education.

> I can remember dropping out of high school even though I had high SAT scores and
> colleges were contacting me. I felt the teachers weren't challenging enough and I don't
> think this was about race, ethnicity, and culture. I really feel school wasn't meeting my
> needs and my mother allowed me to drop out of high school and continue my education
> and get my GED and go to community college.

During the time he completed his GED, his mother opened a childcare center and he

decided to help her get it up and running in the community. It was soon after working with

families, Peter expressed, "I really enjoyed building relationships with families and children and

I returned to community college to take early childhood courses which led to becoming an EC

mentor teacher and then an adjunct faculty". Peter also mentioned how his mother became a

foster parent while he was a student in high school and how this helped him understand the

impact of developing and maintaining positive relationships. Peter then returned to further his

education and received his undergraduate degree and still expressed how critical reflection on

REC was not addressed, especially working with children and families in an early care setting.

Peter described his graduate degree program's focus was social justice and how this allowed him

to critically reflect as part of the core value on REC. He also mentioned a focus on not only

learning theory but also applying theory to understand how one's life contributes to not only

their growth but also the relationships that they will develop.

> My Master's program did a lot of reflection on race, ethnicity, and culture and I have to say it was pretty much rooted in understanding experiences and recognizing biases as well as with a social justice emphasis. This has carried my tenure as a faculty in regards to critical reflection and "unpacking" those experiences which lend to our own understanding.

Peter stated how he utilized the skills he learned in his graduate program to further his role

as an EC teacher educator. He has incorporated critical reflection into the student learning

outcomes (SLOs) as a key component in the teacher education program philosophy.

Ellen's experiences. "I've learned it's more than just teaching content it's about

building relationships, especially with families, that matters in being a teacher." Ellen explained

how her immediate environment was influenced by how her family's socio-economic status

increased. "I can remember my father was the main parent working a full-time job and my mom

either worked or volunteered as me and my four siblings were growing up." Ellen described

how her home life seemed to increase when her father received a promotion or found a new job

which made more money for the household. She described how it felt growing up in a home

where Catholicism was practiced and she and her siblings attended the local parish school in

their neighborhood. "My family was Catholic, we weren't dogmatic but we did have strong

beliefs". Ellen described the neighborhoods she grew up in as segregated and predominantly

Caucasian. Her elementary and middle school experiences were also segregated until high

school. Ellen described her high school as having little diversity, including a few African-

American students as well as some Hispanic/Latino students. The diversity was generated based

on bussing children from other communities who were deemed academically successful as Ellen

mentioned all students had to have good grades to attend the school.

> I went to Catholic schools from First through High School and the only diversity based on race, ethnicity, and culture was when I went to High school, especially my Freshman year. I attended an all girl's school and it was led by some pretty powerful and influential nuns. More diverse as students were bussed into the school. I can remember several African-American and Hispanic students but not many. Nuns did not discuss race and culture. The nuns were pillars in their communities and probably influenced me more on gender than race and culture.

Ellen expressed no recollection of her parents or her siblings talking about or even discussing differences, based on REC even though she remembered growing up at the end of the civil rights movement. She felt her first experience with REC came when she attended college.

> The first time I had experienced RC was when I went to college. I had a roommate from another state on the East coast and she didn't talk to me or engage with me as I was labeled as the blonde-hair turned up nose girl. She was Jewish and I had heard that is how they viewed Caucasian women especially White-Anglo-Saxon-Catholic. I remember feeling hurt as she didn't even try to get to know me and what my likes or dislikes were. She just judged me by my physical makeup and I'm not sure if this relates to race and culture.

Ellen mentioned how she didn't understand bias and never experienced feelings of prejudice growing up in the dominant culture until her undergraduate experience. She stated, "I can remember how some classmates including my first roommate didn't want to engage with me based on me being a white, blue-eyed and Catholic." "I would identify these students as Jewish in regards to culture." She stated how confused this made her and she didn't understand. Ellen expressed how "bias isn't about who you are as an individual but the set of assumptions people make about who you are as an individual, based on how you look and talk". We then discussed if the college allowed for opportunities to dialogue about REC. Prior to becoming an education major, Ellen participated as a research assistant to work with children and described it as "cutting edge research". She mentioned, "I had a faculty who was viewed as progressive on the campus in regards to his beliefs and values would challenge me to examine myself in regards to being in regards to examining who White Anglo-Saxon Catholic". She expressed how this faculty

member was a rarity at the college she attended as he did call out REC. She also discussed a field study job in college, which allowed her to work on current research within EC and child development. As she progressed in her major, she had student teaching in a school that was predominately African-American and labeled as "low income" and remembers hearing Caucasian teachers talk about how "those children didn't want to learn" and "how parents didn't care". "I could remember thinking how could someone, especially a teacher, just give up on a child and their family". Ellen expressed this experience made her pause and reflect on how families and children were being treated and didn't really view the treatment as prejudiced or biased towards a certain REC. "I can remember being really bothered and disturbed by what I witnessed as a young professional entering the field of education at this elementary school with teachers who may have been different in regards to culture." She also stated how her undergraduate degree was not based on developing relationships and understanding or even being aware of other RECs. The focus was more on content specific academics and not looking at the family or how to include backgrounds and cultures in the learning. "I was taught it was about controlling the classroom environment as if this was the only place you could control all variables in a child's learning". She expressed how this was conflicting with her beliefs and values as an EC teacher educator.

Ellen stated this experience allowed her to begin to examine her own beliefs and values as well as how the world viewed not only her but others. We then discussed her professional experiences as she graduated with an undergraduate degree and teaching credential for preschool through third grade. Upon receiving her degree, Ellen relocated to California from the Mid-West. She also expressed how she did not want to teach in the K-12 system but enjoyed team teaching

and developing programs for young children and families. After she moved to California, she

had to obtain a preliminary teaching credential and began teaching preschool.

> I had a great experience working for a pioneer in ECE who focused on family
> engagement. This was when I realized my education and beliefs were changing as I was
> taught families don't have opinions and teachers know best.

Ellen then continued her educational career and received her Master's degree and shortly

began overseeing and developing programs for young children and families. She also began

teaching part-time at the community college level and this is what led her to become a tenured

faculty. Ellen paused for a second and shared with me the death of her father after teaching

preschool for some time in California. She mentioned how she had to go back home and help

with the selling of property and some belongings in the house with her older sister.

> My sister and I met with the realtor at the house and while she was describing the process
> of selling the house and other items, she mentioned she knew someone who could
> appraise some items but he was Black and did my sister and I have a problem with him
> being Black. My sister and I both replied quickly with a no and the realtor continued to
> talk and gave us his contact information.

Ellen expressed how in her head she thought about what the realtor had said and wished

she would have questioned the person on why race or ethnicity would be an issue.

The early experiences shared by Jamie, Peter, and Ellen provide insight to the lack of

opportunities provided throughout their educational careers in exploring REC. While each of

them valued the importance of understanding and exploring their own REC as well as other

RECs. This finding assists in also understanding how they understand self and what experiences

have shaped in how they have become EC teacher educators.

Theme Two: Understanding Self

The ability to understand a different point of view, recognize potential conflicts in

learning about oneself in relation to others furthered centrality of experiences shared by Jamie,

Peter, and Ellen. Each EC teacher educator defined REC based on how they see themselves, which included experiences that tested their values and beliefs, and how these were embedded in their roles as EC teacher educators. A surprising finding was the different experiences and backgrounds involving discrimination based on REC.

Jamie's understanding of self. "I see you", stated Jamie. I see that race, ethnicity, and culture are a part of you and I get it." Jamie defined REC as one term dealing with how one identified oneself based on belonging to a group. Jamie did express having difficulty defining REC without looking each term up as she felt it meant different things to different people.

> I define REC as what group do you feel you belong and how do you identify your ancestry. I don't know, I can look up the definition of each and give you that description but it's sometimes hard to describe REC.

She expressed how "authenticity matters" and this is how she framed her connections with families and children who may have not been the same REC or even those who may have identified as Black, which was how she identified. She recognized differences and allowed herself to be real and develop authentic relationships to show how she valued each person's uniqueness and differences. Jamie also expressed her experience working with various programs and services with families and children from diverse backgrounds. These experiences shaped her understanding of herself and how to truly value each child individually as well as collectively as a family unit. Jamie reflected back to her previous experience of not being promoted as the one conflict she experienced in regards to REC.

> I was hired to facilitate trainings for children and families and teachers and I was told I was Black they were not going to be promoting me to a management position based on my *cultural background.* I can remember feeling a certain dynamic and identifying a bigger issue with this organization.

The ability to identify and recognize differences in belief structures is one of the elements Mezirow (1995) expressed in the ability to critically reflect. Jamie expressed feelings of disappointment and decided to leave the organization she had a conflict with. "I did think about what my next option would be and felt it was best to just find another position, which valued me and my skills." Previously Jamie mentioned how her parents really didn't discuss REC and it was "just a way of life" and I think this is how she has processed it as well.

Jamie's experiences growing up included how her family handled situations of conflict dealing with REC, were similar to Jamie's actions. She addressed the issue and decided to move on. Jamie recognized a difference in belief structures and not that she avoided the situation but she understood herself and realized the organization was not the place she would grow or thrive and she left. Part of Jamie's experiences also lied with how she felt her current students may not understand how to critically reflect the degree needed to examine one's beliefs and values. She expressed understanding underline connotations or microaggressions in regards to her own experiences based on how or what is said to her. For example, she mentioned the phrase "You are so well spoken" comment in regards to meeting another faculty for the first time or speaking to a large audience/workshop. "I understand these underlined connotations and what they mean." "I consider these throw-away comments." The conversation then shifted and we began talking about how she would handle conversations with her son about REC.

> I will definitely be having conversations with my son as he gets older and I'm not sure how the conversations will be as he is multi-ethnic and his experiences will definitely be different, I think and I'm not sure but we will talk in the future.

This led me to ask about the types of conversations which occurred in her courses around REC. Jamie mentioned being able to critically reflect at a fast rate and "it is so embedded in my thinking and the way that I am, that I don't really think about it when I'm doing it." Jamie

mentioned how even in her undergraduate program the ability to critically reflect on situations or

experiences was a driving force and she does not really think about it rather that it is part of who

and what she does on a continual basis. Jamie admitted some apprehension in regards to

engaging in critical reflection with students due to how REC has been used interchangeably

which may cause confusion.

> I'm not sure if students are even ready to begin reflecting based on REC as they have
> only had their own experiences and based on the examples they have shared with me
> during classes, no one has ever challenged their ideas.

Peter's understanding of self.

> I have been very interested in the theoretical framework of what REC means and I don't
> know if I unpack REC through critical reflection". I have been reflecting on our last
> interview meeting and realized that I may not be providing opportunities for students to
> apply or challenge what they have learned about REC in a practical way.

Peter reflected with me out loud and described how his graduate degree, was "embedded

in social justice theory," Peter disclosed how he personally felt a close connection to social

justice and how it aligned to his values and beliefs as a reflective person. "I'm able to look at

things differently and through the lens of another person's point of view, in order to understand

but also assist them in identifying and acknowledging their beliefs and values." Two events

Peter shared with me included interactions with students in the classroom setting. The first

involved a student who went to the dean about feeling attacked when learning about

microaggressions and bias related to REC in the *Diversity in Early Childhood Settings* course.

"I'm going to drop out of this program if we have to talk about culture at one more of these ECE

class, she really said it just said like that, in class." Peter expressed the student felt attacked in

having to talk about REC. He mentioned some students may have exhibited feelings of guilt in

understanding their biases and prejudices and discussing in an open forum can bring a feeling of

anger and discomfort. This same student also expressed frustration in the *Child, Family and Community* course. "I'm shutting down, I'm done. I don't want to talk about culture, I don't want to talk about race or ethnicity", repeated Peter. Peter shared his frustration with the student and how she wouldn't address her biases. He also expressed how difficult the work in allowing a student to understand self takes. "I want to assist students as well as my colleagues but I'm not sure of how much of self, do I allow students to share." Another situation shared by Peter was during his first year of tenure. "I had a student in class who had her undergraduate degree and made a comment about how she didn't think she would have to work with *those people*". He described how the environment in the class felt tense as her fellow colleagues were visually and vocally expressing disapproval of her statement. Peter then began to describe how he explained to the student her word choice "those people" may express bias and prejudice, and this may affect how you are perceived by the class. Peter provided an opportunity for this preschool teacher to explore her own bias and actually identify why and how she felt. Here's what he expressed to the preschool teacher during the discussion.

> I need you to understand what people think when you say *those people* and understand who you're targeting. Looking back, I don't know that I would do that, but it was a new teacher and this is where I went. I said when you say *those people* and you're talking about a certain neighborhood or area while using a condescending tone. It's insulting people in this room. I need you to hear their voices. So, I kind of did that. I don't know how much of that I think I would certainly still explore it, but I think I interjected a lot more than I would certainly say like we can talk about this or not.

He also described how having this conversation was difficult and he often questions if he handled the situation correctly.

> I feel like I may have interjected my opinion and values as a newly tenured faculty, instead of allowing the student to work through the process and get them to realize their own beliefs and identity around REC. I think I would have done things differently now by allowing the student to unpack their feelings as well as what does that mean and how

does that impact the way we interact with others who may not share the same race, ethnicity and or culture.

Peter expressed how his intentions were to bridge values with practical knowledge about a person's REC. He stated the difficulty and felt it was important to understand how people think and the way these ideas translated into their lives whether consciously or unconsciously. Peter and I then discussed how he explained issues or concerns with REC with his own children. He mentioned that he and his wife did not really discuss REC but have had discussions about gender. "It hasn't come up."

Peter acknowledged that he has his own biases and was able to acknowledge that he does experience bias. Peter discussed utilizing himself and identified his privilege as a male, and commented, "sometimes it is hard to look inside and making myself vulnerable".

> I think talking about REC is growth and there's not a cultural competency which is achieved. I even wrestle with the terms being used and being intentionally reflective about REC is a journey. I don't feel we reach competency as it is a journey. I think creating meaning is helpful in the journey and understand the process. I think I have always been a reflective person and my experiences and education reflect.

Ellen's understanding of self. "I want to help students to see their lens." Ellen defined REC in terms of thinking about values, beliefs, and roles within a family. Ellen mentioned how her educational background did not really emphasize REC and mainly focused on teaching the content and less on family dynamics or incorporating strategies to support and strengthen the family unit. It wasn't until she met her mentor as an EC teacher educator that she then began to understand and recognized families' strengths and challenges with regard to REC. Ellen mentioned, "This impacts a child's growth and development beyond just getting them to learn math, STEM, reading, the writing and so on." One experience she shared previously and

acknowledged she did not first see as prejudice or bias was during her student teaching experience.

> I did my student teaching at a predominantly African-American elementary and the teachers were predominantly middle-class white women. The teachers on campus said negative things about the Black student body in regards to them not wanting to learn and families not caring about their child's education. I can remember several conversations of even teachers talking within the teacher lounge about how they didn't want to be at that school.

Ellen expressed how this was the first time she had witnessed prejudice and bias. "I didn't know what to do or how to react as it was obvious the teachers had biases and feelings about the Black students and their families in the elementary school based on REC." She continued by describing her training in her undergraduate and graduate work, "We didn't discuss REC in regards to understanding and reflecting on one's own beliefs about REC it was more about subject content." Ellen also described how her undergraduate work was when she realized differences in regards to how she viewed others or how others may have viewed her.

> I was a little naïve in regards to my thinking but, also, I didn't have the experiences to know there were differences. It was in college(undergraduate) that I began to examine my beliefs and how I viewed the world.

Ellen expressed reflecting more about culture and did not really look at issues or experiences related to race and ethnicity.

Theme Three: Critical Reflection as an Embedded Practice

The findings from exploring REC and understanding self-assisted in identifying the last theme of critical reflection as an embedded practice. Jamie, Peter, and Ellen each shared being reflective individuals and also shared disparity in training as well as the intentionality of critical reflection as an embedded practice in all EC courses. The strategies, activities and or course

content utilized by each EC teacher educator are similar and provided insight to both an important value as well as the limited opportunity to bridging theory to practice.

Jamie's teaching practices. Jamie mentioned not having a particular REC training or remembering any REC classes in her undergraduate and graduate courses. She reiterated and expressed always being a reflective person and understood the importance of understanding oneself especially what she referred to as "challenging your end of one". She explained how students may have had limited opportunities and no one has "challenged their end of one" in regards to beliefs about REC.

> I can definitely relate as many times students make assumptions based on the content and due to their limited experiences with others who may be different than themselves this could cause cognitive dissonance and limited experience to critically reflect on not only how they value their own REC but also other RECs.

Jamie referred back to her family up bring in regards to understanding REC as "it just was and you knew it". She expressed how her experience as an EC teacher educator allowed her to understand and recognized that students may come from similar or different backgrounds. "I'm aware that many students may not reflect on understanding their own REC based on their experiences, let alone critically reflecting to understand others".

One course, Jamie referenced in our interview where she initially embeds discussions on REC is the *Diversity in Early Childhood Settings* course. "I don't have students critically reflect at the deeper level of critical reflection as I fear students may not know how to reflect beyond their end of one."

> I then asked how she would teach students how she self-reflects or critically reflects and she mentioned, "When I really think about it, it happens at such a high speed that I'm not sure how to convey this to students. I'm not sure if they are even ready to critically reflect as the level you and I are discussing. I think this will come later as they continue to take classes and have experiences. I feel students may just be learning more about their own REC and valuing and identifying their own beliefs in regards to themselves. I think I can

start the process but I don't think I will be able to see them achieve this higher way of critical reflection until later in their educational and professional career."

One of the discussions in which Jamie engaged her students was to identify "what group do you feel you are a member of based on ancestry or the school application/census report." She also used this discussion in the *Child Development* course as well. Jamie stated, "I use strategies and activities to help students be authentic (understand who they are), thinking of culture as responsive and not a passive task and having students identify how REC connects to them and their community or family." One area Jamie mentioned she struggled was having students "challenging assumptions and biases". "Students need to acknowledge their own. I know this isn't occurring in all the courses and mainly occurs in *Child Growth and Development* as well as *Diversity in the Classroom*." Another aspect Jamie shared included social justice.

> I don't know how to get students fired up or emotionally charged about REC, I feel like they don't care or even have a thought one way or another. I think if I could get them to recognize injustice and inequality then they would begin to value critical reflection on REC. But how do I get them there?

She feels many times she just has to tell students about REC as their experiences and ideas are limited. She also mentioned a disconnect and struggle in pointing out critical reflection and having students answer, "How does this relate to me". I agreed with Jamie in regards to some students having limited experiences and ideas about REC, and since the literature and EC teacher educators utilized the terms REC fluidly, it may have created some confusion for students. It was not until I began to do this study, that I found literature that expressed using REC interchangeably as well as identified the differences to allow for a deeper understanding of the terms and how they related to valuing REC. Another idea Jamie shared was being reluctant to and struggling with teaching about diversity in regards to REC. "I explore stereotypes as a surface approach in critically reflecting on REC when it is discussed in the content or chapter

discussions." I then asked Jamie whether this same approach occurs every semester or if it differs based on the student population in the course. She expressed she does not have a defined approach and each class may be different based on the students for that term. "I also include discussion about the savior mentality in looking at REC in regards to a deficit model versus understanding differences based on REC." Jamie mentioned students tend not to read the chapters and she doesn't require additional supplemental reading such has scholarly peer-reviewed journals so their discussion is limited. She also recognized a gap in the literature in regards to teachers assisting children in understanding REC.

Peter's teaching practices. Peter expressed no particular classes or training during his undergraduate degree and no purposeful classes that discussed valuing critical reflection as a teacher on REC. His graduate education and experience embedded reflective practice and used the foundation of social justice to explore issues, beliefs, and values about REC. "My undergraduate studies were in alignment with my beliefs and values personally about critical reflection." Peter identified himself as a naturally reflective person, "my graduate work allowed me to explore on personal and professional level differences and similarities of values about REC".

Peter also mentioned how he does not intentionally embed critical reflection as a practice in the courses he instructed with more of a focus on the *Diversity in Early Childhood Settings* than any other course. "This course has more of an in-depth exploration about race and ethnicity." I then asked him about how he felt his early experiences contributed to activities and skills to explore REC. He explained how his family did not discuss REC.

> It wasn't until I was a pre-teen that I realized my father spoke another language other than English. I feel like my parents tried to fit into the main culture (Caucasian) in order to survive in the United States.

We then discussed the strategies he used in his classes. Peter expressed having

opportunities for students when taking the *Diversity in EC Settings* course to identify and

"unpack" their feelings and trying to identify why they feel a certain way. He provided journals

"this allows students to write their feelings and hopefully allows them to process what they feel

in words." He also described the use of cases studies, "I use cases studies to open the dialogue

as a way to identify surface level stereotypes, perceptions, and discrimination based on the topic

being discussed in class."

Another aspect discussed was the inclusion of "critical reflection" as a student learning

outcome for almost all of the courses. "I think I struggle with making students understand how

critical reflection is embedded in the courses and we definitely don't talk about valuing critical

reflection on REC as a student learning outcome."

The last aspect we discussed included times he felt conflict when discussing REC in

courses. Peter expressed he has definitely grown since his first tenured year as an EC teacher

educator.

> A student who had taken the Diversity in ECE settings course went to the dean because she felt another instructor was picking on her since she was Caucasian and the topic was about how Black people were discriminated against in a journal article. Myself, the student and dean met to discuss the issue. The student kept expressing how she was feeling attacked in the class. Then a couple of months later, the same student was in my class and a discussion of REC came up and she began to voice her opinion about how she did not want to discuss this again and seemed to not participate or shut down during the conversations.

Peter discussed helping students not only identify their perceptions but also recognized

balancing and processing guilt or vulnerability through reflective journaling. "I tell students that

critical reflection is a journey and not something you can achieve". Peter also mentioned how at

the beginning of his tenure he tended to inject his perspective instead of allowing students to

unpack their values and perceptions. I also expressed that many times I interjected my opinion

or thoughts to allow students to understand the vulnerability in sharing and how it helped in

exploring REC, understanding self to critically reflect on REC. I have also encouraged students

to share their ideas and values to begin the process of critical reflection. Other ideas shared by

Peter was the importance of introducing critical reflection and scaffolding the process to allow

the student to understand the steps needed to embark on this skill.

Ellen's teaching practices. Ellen expressed the need to be authentic in working with

children and families and expressed this as an essential belief or value conveyed to students in

her courses. Ellen voiced how she did not receive any coursework that focused or even

discussed REC during her undergraduate and graduate experience.

> I have attended training and professional development opportunities as a tenured faculty
> around diversity, "white privilege" and understanding bias. I found these workshops very
> informative but they definitely didn't stress critical thinking the way we have been
> discussing throughout these interviews."
> Ellen described supporting students to "identify their lens and how they see the world as
> well as how the world may view them.

Ellen also expressed the need for "being more intentional in other courses besides the *Diversity*

in EC Settings." Some of the practices and strategies utilized by Ellen were similar to both Jamie

and Peter.

> Ellen stated, I use reflective journals, this is where I mainly let students personally reflect
> on their feelings and I don't usually comment as this is more for them and not about me
> sharing what I think. I also using anonymous polling especially in "Child, Family and
> Community" course in having students answer questions and recognize their own values
> in regards to REC as well as identify differences. I also bring in guest speakers,
> especially EC teachers to share their own story and perceptions about education.

> I have also had students identify their feelings and values from their families and

communities in regards to their educational experience. I related as I have students find an

aspect of their story to share with their colleagues. Students developed a timeline and shared

their own story as a critical reflective activity in the *Child Growth and Development* course as

well as *Child, Family, and Community* courses. In the Curriculum course, I have students

develop their teaching philosophy as a way for them to tell their story and identified key areas to

highlight skills, abilities and incorporated their experiences to explain why they have chosen

education as a career.

     Ellen also mentioned, "it's important to create an environment to have students share

where they feel safe". She expanded and discussed how part of the environment included

assisting students to be more self-reflective and not just about the content being taught but why

they may teach a certain way and how that may be viewed by the communities they serve. This

examination is a deeper analysis of one's teaching practices and how they may affect students

and families. Ellen also expressed the need to allow time to understand, process and transform

thinking and learning.

> I feel many times students just begin this journey and it's time to move on to the next
> course and unless I have them in other courses, I may not be able to follow-up and view
> their progress, regress or growth. This is a concern for me.

Table Summaries

I began to chart the data captured from each theme based on the stories and narratives shared by

each of the EC teacher educators. A description of each theme included key experiences and

topics, and an explanation of each category/column header is listed that explored, identified and

assisted in the development of the themes.

Table 1. Exploring Race, Ethnicity, and Culture

Teacher Educator	Grade school experiences	Undergraduate/graduate experiences	Values	Additional REC experiences
Jamie	Catholic school and public education Not part of dominant ethnicity	Undergraduate school developed activities for African-American Students to bond and feel connected to school. Undergraduate/ graduate studies did not discuss REC Post graduate studies investigated perceptions about race and ethnicity	Education Critical reflection Family Honesty Social justice/ activism	Stereotypes/prejudice Lack of REC conversations Personal beliefs
Peter	Catholic School and public education Not part of dominant ethnicity	Undergraduate classes didn't discuss REC Graduate studies heavily emphasized social justice, critical reflection and REC	Education Critical reflection Family Community connectedness Relationships Social justice/ activism	Stereotypes/prejudice Assimilation Personal beliefs Lack of REC conversations Privileges
Ellen	Catholic school Schools were pretty segregated Part of dominant ethnicity	Undergraduate classes did not discuss REC Graduate studies heavily emphasized content to teach children and less on community and diversity	Education Relationships Religion Critical reflection Community	Privileges Stereotypes/prejudice Bias Lack of REC conversation

Table 1 displays experiences and explored each participants' educational backgrounds and other experiences with and surrounding REC. Each participant shared and recalled experiences from their educational background as well as other experiences in elementary through high school and undergraduate through graduate and post-graduate (if applicable) studies as well as other profound experiences. This table displayed the similarities and differences of each EC teacher educator's experiences and values based on the following timelines: (1) elementary/high School, (2) undergraduate/graduate and (3) other REC experiences.

The first column included the educational experiences by Jamie, Peter, and Ellen. All three had experienced attending Catholic/Parochial schools sometime during their elementary through high school education. Ellen was the only participant who had attended Catholic school from first through twelfth grade. Jamie and Peter experienced Catholic school in their early elementary years and then attended public school in middle school and high school. This column also highlighted experiences around race and ethnicity by having them recall the demographics of their peers, compared to school staff and the communities where they lived. This column also described how they identified based on REC as well as how others may perceive them. Jamie and Peter expressed being the minority in their schools in contrast to Ellen who was part of the dominant race and culture in her elementary and high school years.

The second column displayed undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate (if applicable) experiences shared by each participant. All three shared how their undergraduate coursework did not focus on or discuss REC. All three had different experiences within their graduate studies. Jamie's experience was similar to her undergraduate work with no focus on REC, and it was not until her post-graduate work that the focus changed and she studied teachers' perceptions about

REC in the classroom. Peter expressed a strong focus on social justice and reflective practices, especially around REC. Ellen highlighted a greater focus on content and less on community and cultural diversity. Ellen also shared the discovery of understanding her privileges and began to identify beliefs and values.

The fourth column displayed the values I heard within each of the participants' narratives. The last column included other experiences based on REC shared by each participant. Jamie and Peter both expressed experiencing prejudice on different levels. Jamie first experienced it within her immediate family and Peter experienced it at school and in the neighborhood where he lived. Peter also shared seeing the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) march in a parade in his neighborhood during his elementary years. Ellen described her interaction with prejudice from her first roommate during her undergraduate studies. The next table examined theme two, understanding self.

Table 2. Understanding Self

Teacher Educator	Understanding belief structures	Being objective	Cognitive dissonance	Addressing conflict
Jamie	Vague definition and used terms fluidly and referenced belongingness	Knowing oneself	Education and employment	Critical Reflection (CR) as self, observer and advocate
Peter	Difficult to describe and used terms fluidly and referenced families	Understanding self and families	Education and employment	CR as self observer and advocate
Ellen	Vague definition and used terms fluidly and referenced families	Understanding family's values	Education	CR as self observer and advocate

Table 2 displays understanding self. Column two described how each EC teacher educator described and defined REC. Column three identified how each EC teacher educator described objectivity in understanding self. Column four identified experiences of cognitive dissonance in either education, employment or both by each EC teacher educator. The last column identified the role each EC teacher educator took in addressing a particular time or event when REC was a factor with a student and/or colleague from a different culture. The EC teacher educator described using critical reflection to understand and identify concerns with REC. The observer role was described as listening and watching an event and facilitating dialogue to bridge understanding and awareness of bias or feelings of anger or frustration when addressing REC. The last role of advocate meant the EC teacher educator was seen as a practitioner with an active role in social justice and equity.

The understanding of identity and critical reflection of oneself provided understanding of how each EC teacher educator utilized different strategies and teaching methods to assist students in critically reflecting on REC. This next theme explored different teaching strategies used by Jamie, Peter, and Ellen.

Table 3. Critical Reflection as an Embedded Practice

Teacher Educator	Strategies	Values/Beliefs	Critical Reflection
Jamie	Tell your story (narrative) Journaling	Authenticity Fear Respect	Understanding self Intentionality Direct approach
Peter	Reflective journaling Tell your story (narrative) Case studies	Authenticity Fear Open-mindedness	Intentionality Direct approach
Ellen	Reflective journaling Tell your story	Authenticity Fear Humility	Understanding self Intentionality

Table 3 represented teaching strategies conveyed by each teacher educator. Column two identified strategies and techniques used by each EC teacher educator to assist students in understanding REC. Column three identified values expressed by each EC teacher educator in regards to apprehensions or beliefs about students critically reflecting on REC. The last column identified current ways the EC teacher educator views critical reflection as a practice in current courses and future courses.

Summary

The themes were generated based on analyzing the conversational interviews from Jamie, Peter, and Ellen. Mezirow's transformative learning theory (1991) as adapted by Taylor (1998) included rational discourse, the centrality of experience, and critical reflection was a framework that allowed me to understand and explore each of the EC teacher educator's experiences and how they valued critical reflection on REC. The first theme *exploring REC* provided lived

experiences from grade school through high school, graduate school and postgraduate if applicable to understand how these experiences shaped their views and opinions about REC. The second theme *understanding self* provided an intimate reflection on how the three EC teacher educator's processed and defined REC. The last theme of critical reflection as an embedded practice explored the practices and strategies utilized by each EC teacher educator. This last theme provided examples to support students valuing and actively practicing critical reflection on REC as a skill. These themes documented each EC teacher educator's experiences and stories. This study showed how three EC teacher educators, valued critical reflection and identified the need to embed the practice or skill in all courses. I valued each participant's candor that allowed me to explore their values and experiences, understanding of self and teaching strategies, to better understand how EC teacher educators critically reflected on REC.

The next chapter provided conclusions drawn from the study, discussions on relationships and differences in the literature compared to the study and recommendations for further research around critical reflection on REC by EC teacher educators, teachers, and teacher education programs.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Discussions, and Recommendations

"I cannot be a teacher without exposing who I am."
-Paulo Freire, Brazilian educator

When I began this journey to become a scholar, I knew I wanted to focus on beliefs and values about race and culture within early childhood (EC) teacher education programs. I did not know this journey would lead me to discover how three EC teacher educators, valued critical reflection on race, ethnicity, and culture (REC). As the researcher, I conducted in-depth conversational interviews with each EC teacher educator to understand how they valued critical reflection on REC. The conversational interviews allowed me as the researcher to build rapport and explore each participant's personal and professional stories. This chapter provided the answers to the main questions of the study in the conclusion, compared the finding to the greater body of literature and provided recommendations for further research.

Conclusions

At the beginning of the study, I thought I was going to be more of an active participant. I engaged in conversation but was more engaged in listening to the three EC teacher educators. I captured similarities, differences and times of conflict or understanding as I explored how they valued critical reflection on REC. I found myself in each of their stories and was able to inquire about their process in thinking and reacting to personal and professional situations around REC. I also changed my practice and understanding about critical reflection on REC by participating and listening to the narrative stories from Jamie, Peter, and Ellen. There wasn't one specific story or experience which shocked me as a novice researcher when engaging each participant. I was more honored and humbled that they would share with me a glimpse of their rich narratives

from early memories as children to their current status as tenured EC The one thing that did resonate with me was the importance of identifying the process in order to provide guidance and direction for all EC teacher educators. The three main questions of this study allowed me to begin the exploration of the EC teacher educator's lived experiences and how they each critically reflected on REC.

In what ways do EC teacher educators value critical reflection on race, ethnicity, and culture? Jamie, Peter, and Ellen valued critical reflection in different ways. Each early childhood (EC) teacher educator did not have a step by step process, specific theory, theorist or framework which informed their critical reflective practice. They expressed their own practices around critical reflection individually as well as to assist students in their courses and prepare EC teachers for working with diverse populations teacher educators. The experiences described by the EC teacher educators shaped how they personally and professionally valued critical reflection on REC. For example, Jamie expressed she valued critical reflection in understanding self and others and sees it as part of her practice. Her goal was to assist students in understanding how their experiences compared or contrasted to those who may be different from themselves, also known as what she stated as the "end of one". Peter expressed his critical reflective practice through the awareness of one's privileges and experiences and assisted student teachers in understanding their own privileges based on their values and beliefs. Ellen then described valuing a community as her lens in critical reflection on REC. She expressed her awareness of self and community in understanding and valued differences and similarities. I felt each EC teacher educator expressed why they valued critical reflection in different ways and also included the need to understand self as well as others. In exploring each of their reasons for valuing critical reflection on REC, I also noticed each EC teacher educator mentioned being natural observers and

reflective people. For example, I recall the stories shared by Jamie and she described her experiences around REC "it was something that just was" when reflecting on how her parents addressed REC. All three EC teacher educators mentioned how none of their parents or teachers discussed REC and they just observed or watched to understand situations and developed their own understanding and ways to critically reflect on REC. The experiences shared by each EC teacher educator gave insight into how they valued critical reflection based on self, others, family and community. I was not shocked by their stories and understood how they valued critical reflection in different ways. I think this also speaks to the expectation of EC teachers being equipped to value REC without defining how this will occur and with what preparation by the EC teacher education program (CDE, 2011). I identified additional questions in regards to valuing critical reflection by both the EC teacher educators as well as myself.

- In what ways do EC teacher education programs support critical reflection on REC in courses and throughout the program?
- How do EC teacher educators address the fear and apprehension of students when discussing REC?
- In what ways do courses move beyond the awareness of REC and explore similarities and differences beyond the surface level of diversity awareness?
- How do EC teacher educators teach critical reflection as a skill or competency and build upon the skill from course to course?

These questions will further research to implement, evaluate and identify a framework or theory to use as the foundation in critical reflection as a learned skill. The next main question dealt with identity in regards to REC.

In what ways do EC teacher educators critically reflect on their own race, ethnicity, and culture? Jamie had looked at me with her head tilted to the side, Peter's eyebrows were raised and Ellen put her hand under her chin as they all shared not having a clear definition for the terms race, ethnicity, and culture. All three EC teacher educators found it either difficult to

give a definition or were vague in giving a definition of REC. Jamie referred to belongingness and Peter and Ellen referenced families in regards to providing a definition. I also related to each of the EC teacher educators in providing a definition. Before reading the research of such scholars as Allport (1953), Cokley (2005) and Nieto (2004), I used the terms race, ethnicity and culture interchangeably. I explained culture in regards to ethnicity and identified similarities in regards to how one's genetic makeup or race was influenced by other factors including religion, language, and customs. Jamie expressed the importance of knowing oneself in order to recognize perceptions and values. Peter referenced not only understanding oneself but also recognizing families may differ from how you critically reflect on ideas or issues around REC. Ellen expressed learning the values of individual families in understanding herself and the way she valued and defined REC. Ellen also described a deeper awareness of self and differences when she began college. Ellen experienced confusion when her first roommate requested to move out of their room. Ellen later realized the roommate had labeled her as stuck up and privileged due to her being white, Catholic, blue-eyed and a blonde hair female. Ellen told me she was puzzled by this assessment as her roommate did not even try to get to know her before making a judgement about her based on her physical appearance. Jamie expressed feelings of wanting to *fit in* and not be the only person of color or minority throughout her educational career. Jamie and Peter also expressed being the minority in their schools in contrast to Ellen who was part of the dominant race and culture in her elementary and high school years.

I related to Jamie and Peter when they described wanting to fit as they were one of the few or only person of color in elementary through high school. There were three teachers in my whole elementary through high school career who looked like me, with black hair and brown skin. One was my 4th-grade music teacher who was a Black woman. The other was the

detention and sports coach, and my senior year I had a Black English teacher. It was not until I

was older that I realized my parents, similar to these three participants, put me and my siblings in

schools with little diversity. I do not think my parents were trying to keep us from diversity

purposely but more they wanted us to have access to better education as this was the perception.

Jamie, Peter, and Ellen did not have a concrete reason for why their parents chose to send them

to a Catholic school and I as well as each of participants just assumed it was due to the reputation

of Catholic schools in the 1950s, 60s and 70s as having high standards in regards to education.

Another aspect discussed by all three EC teacher educators was the lack of intentionality

within their undergraduate studies to provide opportunities that discussed and explored issues or

current topics around REC. No one could recall any specific courses related to REC. All three

participants had different experiences within their graduate studies. Jamie experienced, similar

to her undergraduate work, no focus on REC and it was not until her post-graduate work that the

focus changed and she studied teachers' perceptions about race in the classroom. Peter

expressed a strong focus on social justice and reflective practices, especially about REC. Ellen

highlighted a greater focus on content and less on community and cultural diversity. Another

aspect of this question exposed various degrees of exposure to racism and discrimination. Jamie

and Peter both expressed experiencing prejudice on different levels. Jamie first experienced it

within her immediate family around skin color. Peter experienced it at school and in the

neighborhood where he lived. Peter shared seeing the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) march in a parade

in his neighborhood during his elementary years. He also remembered being called a "Nigger"

by a classmate at school. I could remember asking both Jamie and Peter how their families

addressed racism and neither could recall but felt it was addressed and also felt parents ignored

issues of racism. I recalled an incident in high school which involved REC. There was an

incident with incoming underclassman calling each other "niggah". The popular and well-known Black students were called into a meeting to talk with the other Black and Filipino underclassman about their word choice. I remembered thinking, "why are we doing this," and it did not feel right. As I looked around the room, the Caucasian principal, vice principal and counselor were seated at the end of the table and all the students were in the middle of the table. In retrospect, this was highly inappropriate and insensitive as the administration of the school used one group of students to facilitate a discussion on REC without guidance or training. These incidences would be classified as microaggressions. Sue (2015) describes microaggressions as implicit and explicit experiences that may bring discomfort or feelings of being stereotyped or bias by the oppressor. Jamie, mentioned learning not to give "it energy" and separating yourself from the incident or issue. Peter discussed addressing the issue but was not sure if he handled it in a way that was productive. Ellen stated, "At times, I feel I may talk too much which may hinder students from the opportunity to share their values and beliefs about race, ethnicity, and culture".

I also remembered some experiences I found encouraging about understanding REC, and with some experiences, I wouldn't want anyone to have to experience the prejudice or bias whether intentional or unintentional. I mentioned before how my parents preached to me and my siblings that there's only one race, the *human race* but they also told us as Black children that we would have to be better academically and professionally than our Caucasian brothers and sisters in order to get ahead in this world. The experiences shared by Jamie, Peter, and Ellen assisted in understanding how they defined REC. Here are the next set of questions that explored understanding and making meaning of REC.

- In what ways do EC teacher educators prepare to become critically reflective practitioners?
- In what ways do EC teachers share their experiences on REC with students and assist students in critically reflecting?
- How do EC teacher educators describe situations and experiences around REC to address racism and discrimination?
- In what ways can EC teacher education programs assist students in practicing reflectivity around REC?

The experiences and questions further the need to understand how lived experiences play a part in how EC teacher educators critically reflect on REC individually as well as teach students to critically reflect. There are times as an EC teacher educator, I focused on the content being taught and forgot to allow time for students to process and understand how their experiences shaped their understanding of their own REC as well as other RECs. The next question explored teaching practices.

In what ways do EC teacher educators include critical reflection on race, ethnicity, and culture as an embedded practice within the curriculum or course content? Jamie, Peter, and Ellen all described practices that increased and included critical reflection in EC courses. All three mentioned strategies or activities such as having students tell their story and included reflective journaling. The inconsistency was not the activities but more about when and how the activities were used. All three EC teacher educators shared a lack of consistency and skill building of critical reflection across all EC courses. Jamie and Peter mentioned how they tended to do more critical reflection in the *Teaching in Diverse Society* course with students. Jamie expressed apprehension with students and at times expressed how she wasn't sure if this was a skill which could be fully taught in the community college setting. I observed conflict in regards to Jamie and how she first described understanding and valuing the student as an individual, "I see you, I see that race, ethnicity, and culture is around you and a part of you, I get

it." But she also shared, how her experiences in the classroom have led her to think that students may not understand how to really critically reflect about REC. She provided activities such as *journaling* and *telling your story* but felt students lacked experiences to see beyond their self and she was uncertain on how to bridge that gap. Jamie expressed telling students the answer when addressing topics about REC. For example, she mentioned a student stating that if a teacher talked about same-sex parents in the classroom then this could make the students turn out gay. She told the student, "that is not true, that is not how it works". She felt that many times she needed to tell students what to think as their lens or experiences are narrowed and lacked the understanding to critically reflect. While she provided opportunities for students to reflect on REC she also struggled with the how to assist students in critically reflecting on REC. She also described not knowing the appropriate strategies that allowed students to see how the information they learned and experienced connected to them. Peter described incorporating case studies to "unpack feelings" about REC. Peter used case studies to open the dialogue as a way to identify surface level stereotypes, perceptions and discrimination based on the topic. Peter also used *journals* to allow students to write their feelings and assisted them in processing what and how they felt in regards to REC. Peter like Jamie also struggled with helping students see the connection of critical reflection and how it applied to all course content. Ellen described utilizing reflective journals and anonymous polling to identify differences and perceptions about REC. These strategies provided students a way to share without the fear of saying the wrong thing or being labeled racist or prejudice. Ellen also mentioned creating an environment to have students share in a safe space. where they feel safe. She also mentioned assisting students to be more self-reflective and not just about the content being taught but why they may teach a certain

way and how that may be viewed by the communities they serve. I found it interesting that

Jamie, Peter, Ellen and I used similar strategies for students to critically reflect about REC.

EC teacher educators have learned and incorporated similar strategies into our own

teaching pedagogy based on valuing critical reflection on REC. During the interviews of Jamie,

Peter, and Ellen, I also noticed it depended on the students in the course in regards to how and

what was used to engage, explore and unpack their own feelings and values about REC. As I

looked at the beginning of my tenure, compared to Jamie, Peter, and Ellen, I agreed with the

difficulty of assisting students to critically reflect on REC in a semester (16-18 week course)

before they moved on to the next course. I found myself wondering how I impacted and

introduced critical reflective practices on REC to prepare future EC teachers. This led to the

development of questions to further understand.

- How do EC teachers measure the effectiveness of critical reflection on REC as an embedded practice?
- What professional development opportunities do EC teacher educators need to facilitate discussions around REC?
- In what ways do EC teacher education programs incorporate social justice and equity within all course content and student learning outcomes?
- In what ways do EC teacher educators critically reflect on REC? How do EC teacher educators support each other in understanding and transforming thinking and learning around REC?
- In what ways do EC teacher educators assist students in building the skill to incorporate critical reflection on REC from course to course?
- When should EC teacher education programs begin to teach critical reflection as a skill?
- How do we measure progress and success in creating strategies and activities which value critical reflection on REC?

In looking at each of the questions, I also realized the complexity involved in critically

reflecting on REC. The need to take time identifying how one's personal and professional

experiences influenced their perceptions and understanding about REC to bring about a change

(Mezirow, 1991). My hope in exploring the questions was to identify how the EC teacher educator recognized their ability to critically reflect on REC to ultimately bring about a change in the way they taught and informed the EC teacher. These questions allowed me to explore the process by each EC teacher educator including myself and understand the findings in order to develop EC teacher educators as critically reflective cultural practitioners.

The main questions and follow-up questions helped in expanding this current study and provided a foundation for additional studies about critical reflection on REC. These questions also allowed for follow-up with the three EC teacher educators in regards to how did their practices change after being participants in this study. I plan to follow-up in the future with each of the EC teacher educators to find out if the study impacted the way they introduced, facilitated and incorporated critical reflection on REC. Did they identify any additional strategies since our interviews in 2018 and how has their teaching been enhanced, changed or remained the same since participating in this study of critical reflection on REC. I would also inquire to how would they inform their colleagues about what they learned about themselves. I think the questions I asked assisted each EC teacher educator in continuing the path as critical reflective cultural practitioners. These narratives provided insight into how they navigated their own lived experiences around RECs, evaluated self and interactions with others of similar and different RECs and lastly how their teaching practices incorporated critical reflection. Next is the discussion in regards to the findings and literature.

Discussion

In looking at each of the questions led to analyzing the recorded and transcribed data to identify key findings and themes based on Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory as

adapted by Taylor (1998). This process of developing themes took several weeks as I began to narrow the focus based on the ideas, concerns, deficits, and successes described by each of the EC teacher educators. The themes compared to the literature assisted in identifying similar, missing and next steps in regards to continuing the study in the future.

       Theme one: Exploring race, ethnicity, and culture. The literature described learning about cultures as becoming culturally competent. Competency gave the idea that one has achieved a skill with no changes and everything remains constant. Berger (2009) described development as either static or continuous based on early theorist. Jamie, Peter, and Ellen discussed allowing students to understand critical reflection about REC as a journey. The literature used terms such as cultural competence and this term may be perceived as a skill which is learned and mastered. Another finding related to the literature was the presence of silence when discussing REC. Jamie discussed students not adding to the discussions about REC. She described this as the "end of one". This was the inability to articulate and understand their own experiences compared to others. Silence could also be attributed to the lack of opportunity to explore one's own culture and share within a space of learning (Kraehe, 2015). Peter expressed how he had several students who felt discussing REC was not needed as they just wanted to learn about teaching content to children. This displayed resistance in understanding the benefits of discussing and exploring other RECs (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Another aspect of the literature displayed in each of the EC teacher educators experience included the lack of training to engage students in discussions about REC. A study by Cochran-Smith (2003) identified the level of quality and needed training support for teacher educators to understand and reflect on REC that assisted students in teacher education programs. Jamie, Peter, and Ellen all discussed a lack of training during their undergraduate studies and this was the foundational time of each of their

educational careers. While Jamie also experienced the same outcome in her graduate studies, Peter and Ellen's was rooted in social justice and diversity in understanding children and family's diverse needs. McAllister and Irvine (2000) developed a co-learning approach with both the teacher educator and student engagement in discussions around REC. This co-learning approach fostered trust between the teacher educator and student in exploring REC. The research is clear about teacher educators who are more open to understanding and learning about other cultures and their own, assisted in leading teachers to critically reflect on REC (Banks, 2005).

Theme two: Understanding self. In analyzing the interviews, one of the first themes I identified was the need to discuss feelings or as Peter said, "unpack your values and beliefs" about REC. This was missing, especially in high school and undergraduate studies, for all three EC teacher educators. The lack of conversation and opportunities to explore values and beliefs about one's own culture but also other cultures may have allowed someone to think it's not important or relevant to acknowledge. Based on the narratives shared by each participant, one similarity each experienced in their elementary through undergraduate studies was the lack of discussions about self, let alone others who may have shared or differed in regards to REC. The research discussed how silence occurred as a reaction to the fear of sounding or identifying bias and prejudice (Singleton & Linton, 2006). The act of being silent was seen as a way to not value others in identifying and acknowledging the differences shared in regards to backgrounds, REC, and this produced the opposite effect and made one feel not valued as a person (Hoffman, 1996). This explained how the literature examined apprehension or fear to discuss REC in a class setting especially if one did not experience it in their educational journey (Howard, 2010). Early childhood teacher educators explored ways to include opportunities for EC students in

identifying their beliefs and values. One of the first courses I taught as an EC teacher educator was *Child Growth and Development*. As I was going through the content with students, I remembered having conversations with my fellow colleagues about how the content was affecting students in ways I didn't anticipate. The content discussed became an opportunity for students to reflect on their own upbringing and identified aspects of their own development and allowed them to discover and recognize themselves. Understanding self has been described by the research as a component in understanding and critically reflecting on REC (Mezirow, 1991). Jamie, Peter, and Ellen also mentioned the need to have students understand their feelings and beliefs around REC. Garmon (2005) and Gay and Kirkland (2003) described the curriculum incorporating concrete examples and guided practice to understand self to further awareness of REC. The practice of understanding self was complex and was difficult at times. The research provided a limited view on how EC teacher educators supported the understanding of self and how it was portrayed in EC teacher education programs. Garmon (2005) conducted a study with one student and listed characteristics and experiences needed to assist students in the awareness of self and the process of critical reflection. While each of the EC teacher educators have expressed the importance of self, the process is a journey and not something that can be achieved in a 16-week course. The journey to critically reflect on self can begin in lower division courses. These courses need to be fully articulated and modeled by the EC teacher educator. While the research included students in teacher education programs, research is limited in regards to teacher educators, especially early childhood teacher educators as well as critical reflection on REC. The research identified several factors that keep teacher educators from engaging students in discussions around REC. While the participants agreed that the understanding of self is a component in critically reflecting on REC, there were also displays of avoidance, cognitive

dissonance, fear, and even anger when looking at their own experiences as well as experiences within the classroom. The process of assisting students to recognize their feelings of avoidance, cognitive dissonance and even anger facilitated growth for both the student and teacher educator in critically reflecting on REC. The research explored students' uncertainty and learned knowledge and how teacher educators lack or can build upon creating opportunities for students to discuss and explore themselves as well as others (Kumar & Hamer, 2012). For example, when Jamie explained she had been told by a company that she would not receive a promotion based on her ethnicity, she was angry about their decision and lack of understanding of diversity, as they preached this in their mission as well as when they hired her. This fueled Jamie to accept and eventually find another position that valued and preached diversity as well as equity and social justice. I remember asking Jamie if she discussed this experience with students and she said she does not think it has come up. Jamie provided a good example of understanding self and critically reflecting on your goals and mission as an educator. Jamie also mentioned not knowing the impact EC teacher educators have. EC teacher educators can influence students' thoughts, perceptions and conflicted information on REC. Jamie also highlighted how she may not embed critical reflection on REC as a skill or practice across all EC courses.

Peter gave an example of students who expressed anger toward comments by a fellow student. Peter shared how he explained the situation to the student to allow them to understand the power of words. He mentioned not knowing if that was the right approach but he also realized the comment brought up emotions and feelings for him. He mentioned that sometimes it is difficult to be aware of your own feelings while trying to lead a class in a discussion about uncomfortable dialogue in regards to REC. Peter recognized the importance of identifying and addressing bias or prejudice to allow students to understand where these feelings developed and

how they impacted the interactions and teaching of young children. This was also expressed in

the research by Solórzano (1997) to identify labels and acknowledge microaggressions or

feelings of superiority versus inferiority. I also learned that while each participant chose a path

to become an EC teacher educator, their experiences around REC also varied in regards to self-

actualization. This was described by each participant, and each of their stories led to how they

viewed not only themselves but also how they felt others perceived them, including their peers

and other teacher educators. The experiences and stories shared by all three EC teacher

educators helped me identify similarities and differences and compared to the research. It also

made learning the value of experiences and sharing those feelings with students to not only

benefit their growth but also the teacher educator's growth in learning and continuing the journey

as critically reflective cultural teacher educators. I also learned confronting those feelings may

bring cognitive dissonance or even anger. These feels and emotions of uncertainty furthered

questions in identifying what spaces teacher educators get to share these feelings and with

whom. The parallel to understanding oneself is also being unaware of assumptions developed,

based on ideas one reads or hears. Adichie (2009) described the danger of the single story and

knowing you may share REC with someone does not mean your story is the same. Ellen

discussed her experience with growing up with the "we are all the same" ideology. Her first

experience which tested this way of thinking was during her freshman year in undergraduate

studies. She expressed how her first roommate did not want to be in the same room as she felt

Ellen was stuck up based on her being "Caucasian, with blonde hair and blue eyes". Ellen

expressed how she did not at first understand how this young woman could judge her based on

her appearance without getting to know her. Castro-Atwater (2008) described self-identify was

the missing link when one relied on the "we are all the same" mentality. The research and the

findings within this element displayed the importance of recognizing, understanding and valuing

one's REC. The last theme explored critical reflection as an embedded practice.

       Theme three: Critical reflection as an embedded practice. The literature supported

inclusivity of exploring diversity in all EC courses which allowed students to critically reflect on

REC. EC teacher educator needed to be intentional in linking theory and practice within and

between courses to allow time to understand, process and transform thinking and learning.

Another aspect of being intentional is looking at developing expectations for each course to build

consistency and an expectation of critical reflection in regards to REC. Developing expectations

for all EC courses will display the importance of practicing and developing skills as critically

reflective cultural practitioners. All of the EC teacher educators in this study, including myself

as the researcher, expressed the importance of critical reflection. While this is valued, the

process of teaching others to critically reflect and not just use the term but actually model critical

reflection is an underlined theme. Each EC teacher educator defined critical reflection as a

different process. It was described as a way to examine one's teaching strategies and address

content that needed to be further explained in the classroom. It was also described as looking at

one's biases in regards to delivering the content and examining feelings or beliefs about a

particular topic. Mezirow (1995) provided a framework to embed critical reflection. This

framework or any framework was not used by the EC teacher educator as they just used what

they knew about critical reflection. I can remember, Jamie mentioned she critically reflects fast

and processes information quickly that she does not really think about how she critically reflects.

I asked her how she would teach students about critical reflection and she mentioned, "I really do

not have an answer as I haven't thought about teaching them this skill as I understand it." Jamie

then reminded me of our early conversations about how students only understand their "end of

one" and not having the capacity to actually critical reflect on the level we have been discussing during this study. Jamie mentioned, "Sometimes, I feel I have to tell me about comments they may make about REC as being incorrect or explain how their thinking could be problematic and bias compared to someone else. Jamie mentioned students having a limited scope of view and she was not sure if they were able to identify their beliefs and perceptions about REC. Jamie does feel community college can assist in building the foundation, "I just feel, we as EC teacher educators may not see critical reflection as a practice in the two or three years we may have students in our programs."

Peter mentioned asking students questions to assist them in critically reflecting on information without using a particular framework or steps to assist students in achieving this practice. Ellen mentioned how sometimes she may talk too much and give students her opinion which may keep them from sharing but also minimize discomfort or apprehension toward sharing a statement that may be viewed as prejudiced or biased. Before doing the research and understanding of critical reflection as an EC teacher educator, I was just reflecting and not critically reflecting. I have always thought of myself as a reflective person and once I determined what that meant based on the research and scholarly body of work, I needed to fine-tune my critical reflective practice. I also realized that I needed to teach the skill to my students. Defining the steps in critical reflection created an understanding and expectation of what the skill is in theory and how to apply it to practice. The literature described variances in regards to practice and process as expressed by each of the ways Jamie, Peter, and Ellen described how they critically reflect. (Dewey, 1910; Fook et al., 2006, Gay, 2013 & Schon, 1983). The identification of the process in regards to the steps is a missing factor for each of the participants. This may lead to how it is taught as a value to students. Thus, the valuing of critical reflection is just as

important as the process of how one critically reflects. When I interviewed for a tenured faculty position, one of the first questions on the application requested information about relevant field experience in working with diverse populations. However, neither the application nor during the interview asked how I, as an EC teacher educator, critically reflected on REC to bridge theory with practice (Saltman, 2014). I purposely made critical reflection as an embedded practice the last theme to capture the practices and strategies used by each EC teacher educator in their courses. In putting this element last allowed me to understand and explore how each EC teacher educator valued and critically reflected on REC individually to inform their practice as critically reflective cultural teacher educators. Jamie, Peter, and Ellen described similar strategies embedded within their courses to include reflective journaling, telling your story and utilizing case studies. I learned each of the participant's utilized different strategies to engage students in critical reflection on REC. These strategies were predominantly emphasized in the diversity course than other courses. The resounding finding from this element study was the lack of intentionality in discussing and incorporating critical reflection on REC as an embedded practice. All three EC teacher educators believed they lacked in this area and during our interviews reflected on the absence of this as a standard practice across all the courses and not just the diversity course. The EC teacher educators expressed how exploring and understanding REC was mainly embedded or taught as a separate class for EC teacher and this is also similar to the research of other teacher education programs (Whitebook, et al., 2005). Another aspect I learned from this study was the way EC teacher educators introduced the strategies to begin discussions around REC. For example, Ellen expressed giving what she referred to as "trigger warnings". If the EC teacher educator opened discussions or topics with the notion that this discussion may bring feelings of discomfort or anger then this may be construed as a problem and keep students

from truly sharing or even participating in the activity. Another aspect learned from this element

is the development of student learning outcomes (SLOs) and how critical reflection is described

and measured based on each course. This was the part of the study where each of the EC teacher

educators described how the SLOs had been developed prior to their tenure and only one

program actually included critical reflection as a standard outcome and expectation in the

diversity course. I learned that the discussion around critical reflection as a skill and expectation

needed to occur within EC teacher education programs and more specifically within all courses.

In reviewing the research, I also noticed differences amongst institutions of higher

education in regards to how REC was embedded and even talked about in courses. For example,

the terms used to talk about REC included cultural competence, diversity, multiculturalism,

equity and social justice (Banks, 2001; Moule, 2012; & Nieto, 2004). In California EC teacher

education programs, the diversity course is an elective and not a required course, which means

students in the program may not take this course. The courses at the majority of Northern

California community colleges compared to other institutions, listed one course which may last

16 weeks and cover topics such as diversity in the classroom, race and equity, social justice and

collaboration and inclusion (Muniz et al., 2010). This study showed how three EC teacher

educators, value critical reflection and identify the need to embed the practice or skill in all

courses. I valued each participant's candor in allowing me to explore their values and

experiences, understanding of self and teaching strategies, to better understand how EC teacher

educators critically reflect on REC. This study further explained the complexities and variances

EC teacher educators bring to instruct, encourage and facilitate learning for students who will

teach some of our youngest minds in various settings. While the research includes students in

teacher education programs, research is limited in regards to teacher educators, especially EC

teacher educators. The research was limited to critical reflection on REC by EC teacher educators. This study has demonstrated that these three EC teacher educators valued critical reflection but the process each reflected was different from teacher educator to teacher educator based on their values and experiences. The EC teacher educator holds a vital role as a facilitator in assisting students to become critically reflected cultural educators. The last section of this chapter explored the research recommendations.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings from this study displayed the need for additional research to better understand and identify how EC teacher educators and EC teacher education programs, as well as their institutions, support, create and further the development of both the EC teacher educator and EC student.   I, as a new scholar, want to further the growth of the EC teacher educators and introduce the title of developing and supporting *critical reflective cultural practitioners*. A critical reflective cultural practitioner is consistently reviewing and analyzing their practices around REC to transform their teaching. I used the term practitioner to describe the mindset in understanding how critical reflection on REC is a journey which takes work and it's not an achievement or competency you can check the box and say you have. It is constant evaluation and transformation in understanding and application as an EC teacher educator. This skill needs to be practiced and supported. EC teacher educators need support to implement and evaluate the progress of their own critical reflective practice along with other colleagues. This is not a one-stop training and then each EC teacher educator gets a binder which could collect dust and no follow up occurs. The EC teacher educator needs to conduct an analysis to determine how their department implements practices to support critical reflection of REC as an embedded skill. The EC teacher educator(s) need to do an analysis of their department to include courses,

professional development, student learning outcomes, and goals and objectives. This analysis

will allow the EC teacher educator(s) to develop a framework to support training, professional

development as well as evaluation and sustainability measures to embed critical reflection on

REC as a program requirement. The main areas to begin the focus of a future research

framework are (a) EC teacher educators, (b) Leadership and (c) Policies, these were chosen as

the foundation in creating and furthering critical reflection on REC.

Recommendations for EC teacher educators. This framework needs to be embedded

in the Curriculum Alignment Project (CAP) courses which all California Community College EC

teacher education programs participate. This initiative was developed to assist both the

California Community College (CCC) and California State University (CSU) in aligning content

and the EC educator competencies with the CAP aligned courses. The EC teacher educator will

develop an instructional guide and CAP course(s) crosswalk to embed this skill with other EC

teacher educators instructing courses for students. EC teacher educator should pilot this

framework with their own district as part of the goals and equity funds before presenting to the

California Department of Education/Early Childhood Education Faculty Initiative Project funded

by the California Department of Education (CDE). This would be the best platform to introduce

and facilitate the critical reflective cultural practitioner framework. This framework will

enhance previous work in California to develop, (a) critical reflection as an embedded skill

within all of the EC educator competencies and not just *culture diversity and equity competency*

area, (b) create supports and professional development opportunities for EC teacher educators to

network and share best practices, and (c) identify the skills needed to implement critical

reflection on REC. The next part of the framework includes gaining the support of the

leadership with statewide partnerships who inform practices and policies around early childhood to assist in informing EC teacher education programs within institutions of higher education.

Recommendations for leadership. In addition to CDE, there are several organizations within California to assist with developing and furthering the critically reflective cultural practitioner's framework. California Community College Early Childhood Educators (CCCECE) and Partnerships in Education, Articulation and Collaboration in Higher Education PEACH. Both of these organizations are active forces in creating policies and standards to support quality services for children and families that includes resources for EC teacher education programs and the development of highly qualified EC teacher educators. As a member of one or both of the CCCECE and PEACH, the EC teacher educator(s) would present the critically reflective cultural practitioner framework to inform their policies and practices in providing recommendations to CDE. This would allow the framework to be presented to not only the community college but also state, universities and private institutions of higher education. This would create regional contacts and networks to inform EC teacher educators on supports, best-practices and continued professional development ranging from implementation of the framework to sustainability. The next needed area supports the recommendations for EC teacher educators and leadership in furthering the development of policies.

Recommendations for policy development. In previous recommendations, the EC teacher educators will conduct a program analysis to assist in identifying successes, challenges, and opportunities for growth in furthering the critical reflective cultural practitioner framework. This analysis and framework will inform the practices and student learning outcomes developed for the EC department and EC teacher education program. EC teacher educators both tenured

and adjunct will develop a continuum of skills and practices for EC students and EC educators as

participants in the EC teacher education programs. EC teacher education programs can present

their findings and recommendations to CCCECE and PEACH to develop a joint white paper

across community college districts as a component of the critical reflective cultural practitioner

framework. This joint white paper will be a follow up to addressing the concerns of

discrimination and bias of young boys of color being suspended and expelled in early childhood

settings by the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Education (ED).

This white paper would include California data on suspensions and expulsions of preschool

students (if available), implementation of the critical reflective cultural practitioner framework

and other recommendations in regards to support and professional development for EC teacher

educators. This would assist in informing practices and standards developed by EC teacher

educator programs to bridge the theory of critical reflection on REC to successful and sustainable

practices in EC teacher education preparation. Next steps involve working with national

organizations such as National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and

Birth to Zero to adopt the practices outlined in the critical reflection cultural practitioner

framework to embed critical reflection on REC to the field of early childhood.

Summary

The main questions explored the personal and professional narratives of three EC teacher

educators. This exploration included identifying processes, barriers, and strategies to further

understand the ways EC teacher educators critically reflect on REC. This study further

explained the complexities and variances EC teacher educators bring to instruct, encourage and

facilitate learning for students who will teach some of our youngest minds in various settings.

This study made me examine my own teaching practices, strategies and how I provide

opportunities for pre-service teachers and students in EC to critically reflect on REC. The need

for additional research to support, create and further the development of the EC teacher educator

is necessary for developing critically reflective cultural practitioners.

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APPENDIX A: TELEPHONE SCRIPT

"Hello **(Name of Faculty Coordinator or Dean)**, my name is Nicole Porter and I am a doctoral student completing my dissertation from the University of the Pacific. The reason I'm calling is to obtain referrals of potential tenured faculty to explore ways early childhood faculty, from a Northern California Community College, critically reflect on race and culture as part of their teaching practices. I am wondering if you would be interested in hearing more about it.

(IF NO) "Thank you for your time, good-bye."

(IF YES)
"This study is called Early Childhood Teacher Educators Perception of Their Own Critical Reflection on Race and Culture**.** This study involves exploring and identifying ways early childhood faculty value critical reflection, facilitate and understand self-awareness and implement curriculum and course content which values race and culture diversity. Since you have expertise in supervising and working with tenured faculty, I am looking for early childhood faculty who meet the following criteria:

a) identified as an effective faculty-teacher educator participates and leads in the development of curriculum adoption and implementation, member of professional groups such as the National Association Education of the Young Child (NAEYC) and
b) has mentored and or coached adjunct and full-time faculty; participated in course development and understands student outcomes and reviews course syllabi and course descriptions;
c) must be tenured faculty; and
d) faculty must have taught at least one cultural diversity class which reflects an understanding of multicultural issues and delivering content to early childhood students and teachers."

"Participation in this study will take approximately 2-3 months, from completion of the first survey based on your referral, acceptance of participation in the study by the faculty and myself (the researcher) and participation in at least 3 interviews (approximately 1-1.5 hours)."

"I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and approved by the Human Subject: Institutional Review Board of University of the Pacific."

"Could you recommend any faculty who meet the criteria and may be interested?"

(IF NO): "Thank you for your time, good-bye."

(IF YES): "Thank you; and I appreciate your time and can I please have the contact information of the faculty and is it ok to mention we have talked?

"Before we hang up, I want to emphasize that this study will maintain confidentiality and there is no guarantee the referred faculty you provide will be in the study and I will not be notifying you

if a faculty member from your institution is selected. I want to thank you for your time and assisting me in identifying faculty who meet the initial criteria."

APPENDIX B: EMAIL SCRIPT

Dear **(Name of Faculty Coordinator or Dean)**, my name is Nicole Porter and I am a doctoral student completing my dissertation from the University of the Pacific. The reason I'm emailing you is to obtain referrals of potential tenured faculty to explore ways early childhood faculty, from a Northern California Community College, critically reflect on race and culture as part of their teaching practices.

This study is called *Early Childhood Teacher Educators Perception of Their Own Critical Reflection on Race and Culture*. This study involves exploring and identifying ways early childhood faculty value critical reflection, facilitate and understand self-awareness and implement curriculum and course content which values race and culture diversity. Since you have expertise in supervising and working with tenured faculty, I am looking for early childhood faculty who meet the following criteria:

a) identified as an effective faculty-teacher educator participates and leads in the development of curriculum adoption and implementation, member of professional groups such as the National Association Education of the Young Child (NAEYC) and

b) has mentored and or coached adjunct and full-time faculty; participated in course development and understands student outcomes and reviews course syllabi and course descriptions;

c) must be tenured faculty; and

d) faculty must have taught at least one cultural diversity class which reflects an understanding of multicultural issues and delivering content to early childhood students and teachers."

Participation in this study will take approximately 2-3 months, from completion of the first survey based on your referral, acceptance of participation in the study by the faculty and myself (the researcher) and participation in at least 3 interviews (approximately 1-1.5 hours).

Can you please provide contact information for early childhood faculty who you feel meet the above criteria and I would be happy to further discuss the study if needed? I also want to assure you that this study has been reviewed and approved by the Human Subject: Institutional Review Board of University of the Pacific.

I am available on (**insert dates and times**) to further discuss and please let me know if this date or time works for you or provide an additional date and time which works for you.

I want to emphasize that this study will maintain confidentiality and there is no guarantee the referred faculty you provide will be in the study and I will not be notifying you if a faculty member from your institution is selected. I want to thank you for your time and assisting me in identifying faculty who meet the initial criteria.

APPENDIX C: EXPERIENCE SURVEY/CONSENT

Hello, Early Childhood Faculty, you were either referred by your Dean or Faculty
Coordinator as an experienced early childhood tenured faculty with professional
experience with cultural diversity.
The purpose of this research is to understand in what ways early childhood faculty from
Northern California Community Colleges critically reflect on race and culture in order to
lead early childhood students and teachers. This survey will take approximately 5 minutes
to complete and asks questions about your professional experience in developing
curriculum, student learning outcomes and continued professional development.

The survey results will be downloaded and stored on a password protected SanDisk
Cruzer Glide 3.0 USB Flashdrive (64GB) which will be locked in a file cabinet in a locked
home office. This will reduce the minimal risk of loss of confidentiality. Any psychological
or sociological risk will also be minimized as I (the researcher) have provided the purpose
of the research study to allow you to be informed and make the best decision in
completing the online survey.

By checking yes and providing an electronic signature, you understand and consent to
participate in the first phase of the study, the online survey.
If you select no, thank you for your time.

☐ Yes
Electronic Signature
Date

☐ No

Please select only one answer per question.
1. What is your months or years' experience in curriculum development?
o Less than or equal to 1 year and 11 months
o Less than or equal to 2 years to 4 years and 11 months
o Greater than or equal to 5 years

2. How long have you been a member or participant in a professional group (NAEYC, Zero
to Three, Black Infant Health, local education committee)?
o Less than or equal to 1 year and 11 months
o Less than or equal to 2 years to 4 years and 11 months
o Greater than or equal to 5 years

3. What experience do you have mentoring or coaching another faculty including adjunct?
o Less than or equal to 1 year and 11 months
o Less than or equal to 2 years to 4 years and eleven months
o Greater than or equal to 5 years

4. What is your experience developing student learning outcomes?
o   Less than or equal to 1 year and eleven months
o   Less than or equal to 2 years to 4 years and eleven months
o   Greater than or equal to 5 years

5. How long have you been tenured or fulltime faculty?
o   Less than or equal to 1 year and 11 months
o   Less than or equal to 2 years to 4 years and 11 months
o   Greater than or equal to 5 years

6. How many academic months or years have you facilitated a cultural diversity course?
o   Less than or equal to 1 year and 11 months
o   Less than or equal to 2 years to 4 years and 11 months
o   Greater than or equal to 5 year

Thank you for participating in this brief survey.
Please provide your contact information as this will only be used by the researcher, Nicole Porter, to contact you for the next steps.
Name:
Address/City/Town State/Province ZIP/Postal Code Country:
Email Address:
Phone Number:

APPENDIX D: RANKING TABLE OF CRITERIA

Participants Name: _____	Rank one: Less than or equal to 1yr and 11 months	Rank two: Less than or equal to 2-4yrs	Rank three: Greater than or equal to 5 year
Curriculum Development			
Please identify Professional Organizations: _____ _____			
Mentored or Coached faculty including adjunct			
Developed Student Learning Outcomes			
Tenured Faculty			
Facilitated a Cultural Diversity Course			

Total Score:_____

APPENDIX E: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY

Title of Study: <u>**Early Childhood Teacher Educators Perception of Their Own Critical Reflection on Race and Culture**</u>

Researcher: Nicole Denise Porter, Doctoral Candidate

Introduction
- You are being asked to be in a research study.
- You were selected as a possible participant because you met the criteria based on history and experience as an early childhood teacher educator.
- We ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Purpose of Study
- The purpose of the study is to document the events and experiences of three early childhood teacher educators with critical reflection concerning race and culture.
- Ultimately, this research will be presented as a paper and published within the University of the Pacific as a doctoral study.

Description of the Study Procedures
- If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things: Participate in 3 informal conversational interviews with the researcher, Nicole Porter. Each one-on-one interview will last approximately one to one and half hours long.
- If the questions precipitate recall of feelings or emotionally distressing events and/or result in emotional distress, please do not hesitate in contacting your medical or mental health professional. Please also refer to your employee assistance program for additional counseling and I will also provide you with resources in your county/city.

Benefits of Being in the Study
- The benefits of participation are to explore the process early childhood teacher educators experience when becoming critical reflective practitioners in order to assist novice teacher educators as well as inform the field of early childhood teacher education.

Confidentiality
- This study is anonymous. We will not be collecting or retaining any information about your identity.
- The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password protected file. The interviews will be recorded with your permission and you will be provided with a copy of the transcribed notes. The interviews will be used to gather accurate and detailed events and experiences as shared by the participant. We will not include any information in any report we may publish that would make it possible to identify you.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw
- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study *at any time* without affecting your relationship with the researcher of this study or University of the Pacific. Your decision will not result in any loss or benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely from the interview at any point during the process; additionally, you have the right to request that the interviewer not use any of your interview material.

Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns
- You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact me, n_porter1@u.pacific.edu and or by Nicole Porter telephone at 209-401-3263. If you like, a summary of the results of the study will be sent to you. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the researcher, you may contact Valerie Andeola, IRB Administrator at University of the Pacific at (209) 946-3903.

Consent
- Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep, along with any other printed materials deemed necessary by the study investigators.

Subject's Name (print): _____

Subject's Signature: _____   Date:

Researcher's Signature: _____   Date:

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Topic questions based on elements and overall questions

Element 1: Values and Experiences

In what ways do early childhood teacher educators' value critical reflection on race and culture in their teaching practices?

1.   Tell me about your experiences working with children and families.

2.   Tell me about your experiences around critical reflection as a teacher educator?

3.   Tell me your first experience(s) critically reflecting on culture?

Element 2: Self Identity

In what ways do early childhood teacher educators critically reflect on their own race and culture?

1.   How do you define race?

2.   How do you define culture?

3.   Tell me about your experiences with cultures different than your own?

4.   Tell me about a particular time or event where you may have experienced conflict with a student or colleague from a different culture?

5.   In what ways do you critically reflect on your own race and culture? and biases?

<u>Element 3: Teaching Practices</u>

In ways do early childhood teacher educators include critical reflection on race and culture as an embedded practice within the curriculum or course content?

1. What training or classes have you taken in regard to racial and culture diversity?

2. Describe courses in which you include or have included critical reflection for students and teachers.

3. Describe critical reflection as an embedded practice in your courses.

4. Describe the ways you have included critical reflection in developing and delivering curriculum to further cultural competence in the courses you instruct?

5. Please describe any other events or experiences relating to critical reflection as part of your teaching practices.

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The first informal conversational interview process will include:

Introductions

Researcher and Early Childhood Teacher Educators will provide individual introductions. Researcher will provide consent forms including confidentiality, permission to record via tape or video and ask the teacher educator to provide a pseudo name for the study.

Professional and Personal Background

Researcher will interview each early childhood teacher educator separately and ask each teacher educator for background and personal information which will assist in the collection of stories and understanding the lived experiences.

- Ethnicity
- Race
- Age range
- Professional background (first educational job, experience in early childhood)
- Present course assignment
- Education background (degrees, professional development)
- Family structure

The second informal conversational interview will include:

Review and clarify information provided in interview one.

Researcher will ask questions based on the elements and overall questions. All responses will be recorded and transcribed. Please see attachments for guided open-ended questions (Interview Questions).

Transcripts will be sent to each early childhood teacher educator to review and provide clarification on the follow-up interview.

Follow up interview

Researcher and early childhood teacher educator will ask additional questions and provide any clarification to information collected in prior interviews.

Early childhood teacher educators' will be thanked for their participation.