White teachers teaching black history: a focus on comfort levels and culturally responsive teaching

By

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The aim of this study is to investigate the challenges, successes, resources and comfort levels of white teachers of European descent who teach black history in schools. The research question that guided this study was – How are a sample of white teachers of European descent acknowledging their comfort levels and teaching black history with culturally relevant pedagogy? A qualitative study was conducted with face-to-face interviews that focused on two white high school teachers who identified as committed to but not comfortable with teaching black history. The data was analyzed and compared to literature to yield implications and recommendations for teachers. The findings exposed that the teacher’s commitment levels teaching the history of a group they did not identify with stemmed from identifying and reflecting on their own oppression. Their lack of comfort teaching black history stemmed from the lack of Canadian black history resources, their skin colour, and the immensity of the history itself. This research study provided a deeper understanding between the complex relationship of teacher’s identity, black history, and their comfort levels.

Key words: Teaching black history; white teachers; comfort levels; culturally responsive pedagogy; oppressive history; teaching the history of a group that you do not identify with.
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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Research Study

The oppression and colonization of marginalized groups has been a historical, contemporary and a systemic happening that has caused strife and resistance within the education system (Freire, 1970; Vickers, 2002). White privilege and oppression are heavily intertwined and this connection is one that continues to play out in society and has its roots deeply embedded in the educational institutions today. Without focusing on the origins of white privilege or the history of colonization, I wanted to bring light to the insidious (and sometimes explicit) ways that white privilege continues to be reproduced in contemporary education systems and instructional pedagogies. In my study, I adopted the definition of white privilege articulated by Kendall Clark who defines it as “a right, advantage, or immunity granted to or enjoyed by white persons beyond the common advantage of all others” (Clark, n.d.). In White Privilege and Male Privilege, Peggy McIntosh (1995) reminded society that, while acknowledging the limits of generalization, white people typically believe these privileges are organically provided to everyone and are made accessible. McIntosh added that white privilege really is “unearned power conferred systematically” (p. 82-83). It is often hard for individuals who benefit from white privilege to notice it as it is invisible, ubiquitous and is made to seem normal. In the article White Privilege in Schools, Ruth Ann Olsen addressed how her children benefit from white privilege in their schools. Olsen effortlessly listed examples of her families privilege as she states “my children know that they will always see faces like their own liberally represented in the textbooks, posters, films and other materials in the hallways, classrooms and media
centers of their schools” (Olsen, 1992). To further elucidate how white privilege operates on an everyday level, think about personal access to shopping for skin colour Band-Aids or pantyhose; these flesh-coloured products generally match the white skin tones (McIntosh, 1995). These are small aspects of our lives which demonstrate how society is saturated with white privilege. White privilege can also be embedded within the walls of classrooms and as active learners and educators, we should always challenge ourselves to see where white privilege and any other form of oppression linger.

**Research Problem**

Research has supported the claim that white teachers are generally uncomfortable or do not admit to feeling uncomfortable when teaching the histories of oppressed groups and also teaching race-related topics in the classroom (Kendall, 2002; Landsman, 2001; Tatum, 1999). White privilege and its often invisible nature may greatly influence a white teacher’s tone, comments, and body language when teaching histories they do not identify with. Jane Bolgatz (2005), found that teachers may apoplectically, angrily, or unselfconsciously avoid teaching the history of oppression and of oppressed groups. These three styles of avoidance have at least one commonality, which is preventing students from learning the history of oppressed groups.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative research paper was to clearly identify and understand the comfort levels while investigating the challenges, benefits, and strategies that white teachers encountered when they taught black history. My inquiry was rooted in discovering new knowledge that could be learned from these teachers’ experiences that could support the teaching of not only black history but also the history of other oppressed groups.

It is my hope that the data from this research might contribute to propelling the educational community to rethink, react and unlearn the traditional history teachings of oppressed groups. The education system needs to move beyond tokenizing histories in order to avoid teaching one fraction as the whole story. In addition, the purpose of this study is to collect research that can support the education required for current teachers and pre-service teachers. I hope to discover the ways our education system can better support and train teachers, whether it is more professional development programs, resources or materials that are needed for our teachers to be successful educators of black history and all history.

My goal is not to denigrate the work of white teachers of European descent, but to acknowledge the barriers that inhibit the comfort levels and or confidence to teach black history in an anti-discriminatory and culturally responsive way. It is crucial that more teachers learn to become comfortable and competent when teaching controversial histories of oppressed groups as this education can be essential for combatting racism and creating a more aware society.
**Research Questions**

Fundamental research question:

How are a sample of white teachers of European descent acknowledging their comfort levels and teaching black history with a culturally relevant pedagogy?

To support my overarching question and to provide the space for deeper inquiry, the following sub questions will guide this research study:

1. How do these teachers teach black history through culturally relevant pedagogy?
2. What factors and resources support these teachers to do this work?
3. What challenges do these teachers face teaching black history and how do they cope with these challenges?
4. What experience contributes to their confidence to do this work?

**Background of the Researcher**

“No one is born fully-formed: it is through self-experience in the world that we become what we are.” (Paulo Freire, 1921–1997)

I internalize this quotation deeply and hope that educators understand the significance. Freire is telling us to listen: listen to others and listen to their experiences which is a reality we are at times unable to see due to our class, gender, race, or other factors that influence our own experiences.

My interest in this study stems from a personal experience and a systemic reality that I have observed throughout my education. During elementary school, I vividly remember learning about the slave trade in a way that was uncomfortable and unidentifiable. My teacher did not seem relaxed teaching us and I could detect her
discomfort which negatively impacted my feelings. At this young age, I was confused by her discomfort as I did not understand the complexity of teaching histories of oppressed groups, especially when that teacher did not identify with that group. My teacher was a Jewish woman and when the time came for educating the students about the horrific events during the Holocaust, the class atmosphere was revitalized. Our class did ample amounts of crafts, we watched movies, attended assemblies and engaged in moving stories. As a grade four black student, I noticed the immense change in my teacher’s attitude between teaching these two histories. I did not have the language nor the cognitive maturity to verbally express my observations; however, I knew my experience was valid and alive. I was aware of the lack of interest, the lack of resources, the tokenism and ultimately the lack of teaching that was associated with black history. Today, I have the vocabulary to state that my history was taught as a dead concept. I was taught that black history only existed in the past and it was a history that solely involved victims and slavery. As educators, we need to be culturally responsive by critically thinking about the detrimental effects of these static teachings and understand how they can deteriorate the various identities of young black students. The only black representations I recall seeing in school were black people who were picking cotton, walking in the Underground Railroad, and the positive face of Martin Luther King Junior. I also remember being constantly referred to as African American inside and outside of school, although I was born in Canada. I realized that ‘African’ and ‘American’ are perceived as married words to those talking about or trying to label the identity of black people. I cannot claim that this preconceived notion is due to the binary teaching of black history as African American history; however, I can see the influence between the two.
I hope to challenge readers, especially educators and teacher candidates to achieve a level of awareness where we recognize the events within our present reality, and interpret them from a context which does not ignore the historical and contemporary presence of white privilege as a norm in our educational environment. With this knowledge, I want to challenge readers, and particularly those who are teachers, to read this paper with an open humble mind that will allow you to be reflexive in your future encounters with race, oppression, privilege inside and outside of your classroom. As a master of teacher candidate, I know I will encounter uncomfortable moments in the classroom; however, I need to overcome these anxieties. If not, my comfort can be at the expense of students’ having the opportunity to learn about history and the repercussions exhibited today. I am confident that this investigation will be beneficial to communities, parents, teachers, and the identities of students.

Overview

In Chapter two, I review the literature on culturally responsive teaching, black identity in the classroom and the comfort levels of white teachers who teach black history. Chapter three describes the methodology, specifically the qualitative research design, the data collection procedure and the participant information. Chapter four identifies the participants in the study and describes the findings from the data collected. Chapter five includes the implications, limitations of the study, conclusions, recommendations for practice, and further reading and study. References and a list of appendixes proceed at the end.
Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review is divided into themes that acknowledge and plunge into the different pillars that shape the teaching of black history teaching. The predominant themes include Eurocentric education and white privilege in schools, the benefits of teaching black history in the classroom, the relationship between white voices and black history, the notion of not identifying with the history you are teaching and culturally responsive teaching. All of these themes provided me with a strong foundation to create my interview questions which were designed to answer my research question: How are a sample of white teachers of European descent acknowledging their comfort levels and teaching black history with a culturally relevant pedagogy?

**Eurocentric Education: White Privilege**

**Eurocentric Education: The Hidden Curriculum**

Freire (1970) taught us that formal education was introduced as a tool for white people to use to maintain levels of power while not allowing people of colour access. White privilege is woven into the institutional practices throughout many schools and because the western education system was created for the success of white people, there has been limited room for the representation of black histories, voices, perspectives, and positions of authority (administration, teachers, school board, Ministry) in schools or in policy. The curriculum is a great example of an educational tool that has been formed with a lens of white privilege. Henry Giroux coined the term “hidden curriculum” and Behm (2008) stated that Giroux along with Michael Apple, Pierre Bourdieu, and Jean-Claude Passeron, all argued that this hidden curriculum validated and praised the people who belonged to the “wealthy’ and
“powerful” groups. Those who did not fit this norm, the “Others”, were simply disenfranchised (Behm, 2008). The information in the curriculum caters to the history of the dominant class of white, high socio-economic status individuals, with a sprinkle of Indigenous teachings. Teachers who do not teach the curriculum in ways that are responsive to their student body and to the multicultural society at large, can easily perpetuate an oppressive and exclusionary education system. Katz (2005) argued that it is important to deconstruct this Eurocentric-based system, if we are serious about building an ‘inclusive’ educational system.

The curriculum does not tell teachers how to teach, but does guide them on what to teach. The expectations outlined in the curriculum are typically general and are supported by specific expectations; these drive and influence the material and knowledge a teacher includes or does not include into their class.

The content from the curriculum is established from information that educators and stakeholders deem as important and valuable for developing future citizens. Regardless of intentions, the ways in which the curriculum plays out in practice can perpetuate racism and oppression. Ghosh supported this claim as she stated that although “racist and sexist materials have largely been removed from formal curricula”, the curriculum thrives off of Eurocentric education which generates effects of racism as specific stories and resources are deemed more valuable (2010). The curriculum promotes Eurocentric knowledge which organically takes precedence over other groups of people, histories, and ways of knowing. This power is simply exercised as the worksheets, textbooks, events, histories, and learning styles are founded upon Eurocentric education, thus teachers are more likely to use and bring in Eurocentric- infused education because of the accessibility. Those teachers, who
are aware of the hidden curriculum or the lack of space to teach non-Eurocentric education, often struggle to find information that does not perpetuate the oppression or stereotypes of those groups of people.

An educational transformation is required and it needs to stem past changing the curriculum. Ghosh affirmed that the change required is larger than the curriculum as it is a representation of the societal problem. Ghosh then summarized the intertwined relationship between school and society and stated: “The school is a microcosm of society, and a racist society will exhibit power struggles in school” (2010). Teachers may be the final piece of the puzzle between society and schooling which could explain why the curriculum is a tool used to maintain power of European people and their stories. Ghosh mentioned that “as products of contemporary times in the Canadian context, very few Canadian teachers are blatantly racist” (2010). Although I agree with this claim, we have to be cognizant of the fact that teachers can still be carriers of racist knowledge by teaching from the curriculum without a critical eye.

**White privilege in education**

White privilege was discussed earlier and to further this discussion, a conversation about the disproportional racial bodies in the schools needs to be addressed. The racial and ethnic makeup of students has become less homogeneous throughout the years predominately in urban schooling; however, the teachers’ racial and ethnic makeup has not diversified quick enough to keep up with this shift (Deruy, 2013). Thus, most students of colour still do not see themselves reflected in the classroom based on their teachers’ white, physical appearance. Olsen, a white mother, too, has observed this privilege of representation in
school as she stated: “my children know that the vast majority of adults in their schools will be of their same racial background, even in classrooms where many or most of their fellow students are of races difference from theirs” (1992, p. 1). As noted, in predominately urban schools, white teachers are being exposed now more than ever to the rich diversity of their students and they are responsible for catering to their student’s needs; needs which they may not identify with as a beneficiary of white privilege. A teacher’s pedagogy, teaching styles and perspectives are all sculpted by their experiences. While it is interesting to see how a teacher’s lens impacts their teaching, it is crucial to investigate how race and racial relations are addressed in the classroom by a teacher whose race is disproportionately privileged in society. It is important to acknowledge that the curriculum, materials, resources and the teacher’s racial and ethnic backgrounds, can all perpetuate white privilege in an educational institution. Although this knowledge may be hard for some to accept, understanding the rationales behind the systems we live in and how we perpetuate them is a strong tool for becoming reflexive, influential teachers and citizens.

Teaching black history in the classroom: reconstructing the black identity and deconstructing racism

Reconstructing the black identity

Retracing the history of traditions are important steps for discovering the progress made today. *Negro History Week* was first introduced by Carter G. Woodsen in 1926. It was designed to promote the black identity through teaching black diversity, developing self-esteem, and correcting myths and stereotypes about the black community. Although this week was created decades ago, the goals were not intended to be time-sensitive. By knowing these rationales behind *Negro History Week*, this knowledge can be used as a
foundation for understanding why it is important to teach black history. Thus, these motivations of instilling self-pride and self-worth can be used as look-for points in the participant’s responses when they comment on their students’ reactions when they are taught about black history. In addition, these look-for points can be amalgamated into the criteria composed from Epstein, Mayorga, and Nelsons (2013) article of culturally responsive teachers, discussed below.

If black history is taught in an uplifting, respectful way, it can serve as a great tool for strengthening the black identity, especially for the youth today. *Negro History Week* was to be acknowledged as a celebration and Woodsen felt that without this incorporation, his history would become negligible and would leave black individuals uneducated about their past. Understanding where you are from and your past stabilizes your identity and gives you a sense of belonging.

Teaching the struggles and successes of historical groups may not only develop the identity of those students who identify with those groups but also with other students who may not identify with that group. In the article *Locating identity and gender construction in a post 9/11 world: the case of the Hijabi girl*, the author Alnaaz Kassam explained her experience teaching multicultural education through poetry. Kassam decided to let her students explore their identity through a poem called 'Profile of Africa'; the poem was written by a black author from Nova Scotia, Maxine Tynes. One student in particular engaged with this poem in a deep reflective way, naming her oppression as a Muslim girl who wears a hijab. Although this student was not black, and did not historically belong to the enslaved black people of Nova Scotia, she identified with the struggles of a black writer
who blatantly questioned her identity on Canadian land. Teaching black history as well as teaching all history is beneficial if taught in a way where the students can become a part of the learning and the story.

**Tokenizing black history: black history is not monolithic**

Carter Woodsen believed in gradualism and proposed only a week of black celebration to ensure that the black teachings were non-threatening to the white public and to black individuals who were against it. The power of white privilege and the reality of black oppression were evident in Woodsen’s planning as he had to strategically ensure that he was not threatening any power structures in the education system. His objective however was more progressive than this tokenized week, as he envisioned a long-term amalgamation of black history as American history.

Today, *Black History Month* is the result of *Negro History Week*, which was the first documented attempt to incorporate black studies into the public education system. In Dagbovie’s article (2003), *Making black history practical and popular: Carter G. Woodson, the proto black studies movement and the struggle for black liberation*, he stated that we have drifted from the original objective of black history as it now has been commodified, tokenized and weakened. I believe that with one designated month, we have indeed weakened the teaching of black history. The month of February is when many schools incorporate black history into their community. By restricting the teachings of black history to four weeks, we have blindly tokenized the history to a few specific faces, names and events, all while forgetting the other memorable individuals and events. For many, hearing “Martin Luther King”, “Harriet Tubman” or the “Underground Railroad,”
brings Black History Month immediately to mind, and many may be even able to speak about their lives and contributions. What if we hear the words, Albert Jackson (Toronto’s first black postman), Delos Davis (first black Canadian lawyer) or Africville (a black community in Halifax that was neglected and destroyed by the Halifax city council)? Would these words spark the same association? The latter are specific to the people that lived, and events that occurred in Canada whereas the first sets of names were specific to American leaders. Social studies teacher Daniel Jocz agreed, saying: “we have an unfortunate tendency in this country to exclude the stories of various groups in our year-round teaching of the nation's history” (Jocz, 2012). This token and static centering of black history truly inhibits the discussions and teachings of other historical significances and influential members to be acknowledged and remembered. This analysis demonstrates two tendencies: the first being that tokenized teachings only allow for certain information to be explored and secondly, the black history we are teaching is American black history, not Canadian black history. What about African Canadian history? Where do African Canadians belong in black history? Educators, parents, and students need to ask these questions when we are teaching or learning about black history to avoid tokenizing these histories. Although learning about African American history is essential for black teachings, this secluded focus has perpetuated the idea that all blacks are African American and are completely separate from the Canadian identity. It is vital for black history to be taught in an alive and culturally relevant structure as it brings agency to the history of black people and their struggles.
A deeper look at American black history versus Canadian black history: accessibility and narratives

The complex relationship between the US and Canada is one that is seeped into our society and consequently into our education system. If I were to do a simple Google search of black history in the US and black history in Canada, I would receive an in-depth, large and accessible amount of information on American black history – and this information could easily be utilized into the classroom. I reflected on the statement: “the school is a microcosm of society” (Ghosh, 2010) and understood that the school is the institution that upholds the ideologies in its society. I then questioned what motivates the accessibility of information and how this accessibility impacts teaching black history.

Despite the positive events associated with American history, the history is also notorious for the violence and slavery that has stained the land. Compared to that of its neighbour, Canadian history is perceived as peacekeeping and accepting. The easy access to American black history and the minimal access to Canadian black history blindly leads people to believe that Canada was not involved in the enslavement and oppression of blacks. This perception upholds the narrative that Canada is a historical land of freedom while America is a historical land of enslavement. Natasha Henry, a Canadian educator, supported these thoughts and acknowledged that “African slavery existed in the colonies of New France and British North America for over 200 years, yet there remains a profound silence in classrooms and teaching resources about Canada’s involvement in the African slave trade” (2013). This lack of education towards Canadian black history is a failure to recognize Canada’s racist history, thus Ghosh declared that the consequence is the
acceptance of “white privilege” as Canada continues to be illustrated as a “race-less and colour-blind society” (2010).

The lack of education in the classroom can stimulate the way students behave, think, and conceptualize their society and their place in society. Teaching Canadian black history is vital within the teaching of Canadian history. Henry explained that teaching Canadian black history and specifically “slavery deflates the ‘not in our backyard’ myth that persists, the false notion that Canada did not enslave Africans like our American neighbours” (2013). When Canadian black history is taught through fragmented stories that are sprinkled throughout a lesson, the students may feel disconnected from the history and ultimately disinterested from its scarcity. Alternatively, teaching Canadian black history as a full historical narrative can promote discussions that infuse social justice and analyze the repercussions of this history today.

**Deconstructing racism**

Teaching black history is a progressive way to eliminate racism as it creates black cultural consciousness which can educate all students on the positivity, strength and courage of the black peoples (Dagbovie, 2003). These descriptions of black people are rarely portrayed in the mainstream media which is why positive black history teaching is required more than ever to balance the disproportional representations.

The concept of deconstructing racism and black oppression through teaching black history was supported by Burrell and Walsh’s (2001) article, *Teaching white students black history: The African-American experience in the classroom*. These researchers believed in
the importance of teaching black history specifically to white students and to any students who have negative stereotypes about black individuals. Burrell claimed that if black history was not taught, black stereotypes and myths (of being lazy, dangerous, only liking basketball) would continue to thrive in the minds of white students who have never been exposed to the whole American history. However, the author conceded that there was no formal effort that provided teachers with support and materials to teach black history. I do not completely agree with this claim as I believe there are resources and teaching materials available for teachers, although it is limited. For example, a workshop called *Teaching African Canadian History* was available for all York Region District School Board teachers to attend to receive material and lesson plans on Canadian African history. I attended and noticed the lack of attendance for a workshop that was free of charge and provided a pool of rich information. This article however, affirmed the reasoning behind my research inquiry which is to learn how white teachers of European decent are teaching black history and learning about their comfort, challenges and successes in doing this work.

In the Ontario public education system, teaching black history is not mandatory in all grades; the curriculum recommends these teachings in grades three, six and seven (Social Studies History & Geography Curriculum, 2013). By understanding that the lack of black history teachings can result in the reproduction of disproportional myths and stereotypes about black people (Burrell & Walsh, 2001), while knowing that black history is not mandatory in all grades is problematic. As stated in Dagbovie’s (2003) article that investigated the birth and struggle of black history, it is important to remember the goal of teaching this history as an attempt to popularize, legitimize and create self-worth within the black community. With this knowledge, my research can support more teachers with
strategies of how to appropriately include black history into their classroom while also recognizing the impact of reconstructing the black identity and deconstructing racism.

**Not identifying with the history you are teaching**

In the article, *White teachers, social studies, and race: A case study of the intersection of teachers’ habitus and pedagogy*, Chandler (2007) investigated the ways in which two white male teachers taught racial relations in a social studies class. The teachers were interviewed in regards to their pedagogies including their opinions on the materials to which they had access. Using critical race theory as the foundation of evaluation, Chandler concluded that the teaching about race was conducted in a conservative approach, thus oppression and marginalization of people of colour were practiced in their teachings. It was interesting that one of the teachers was of Cherokee decent, identified as a white male, yet admitted that he did not enjoy teaching the beginning portion of Native American history.

This article challenged me to critique the language I used when I decided to look at the racial and ethnic background of my participant pool. This reading helped me narrow my focus towards my use of ‘identify’ when I decided to interview participants who did not identify with the history they were teaching. I had to ask myself: Do I mean white-passing? White people? European white people? By defining my participants, I will be able to have a specific criteria for my participants. Akin to one of the teachers in Chandlers study (2007), one of my participants could belong to a racially oppressed group but not identify with that group. This is extremely important to know as it adds another dimension of personal experience to my study that I would not have accounted for. I now know that I am focusing on how white teachers from a European descent teach black history. This
criterion will be clearly outlined in my participant selection. This article provided me with great insight into my participant sampling criteria.

**Culturally Responsive Teaching: the impact of language**

**Culturally Responsive Teaching**

Chandler (2007) explored the silence around race as an attempt to reduce arguments and minimize conflict. He explained that it is this ideology that perpetuates the silenced cycle of race being ignored in the social studies curriculum. It is very detrimental to think (especially in an education setting) if we bring light to it (race studies), we will confuse or shame people. Research defended these claims by stating that when a child’s identity is represented in the classroom (Abrams, 2013) and they are actively engaged in the learning process (Gardner et al., 1994; Graham et al., 2007), there is an increase in their academic achievement (Montgomery, 2001). Thus, culturally responsive pedagogy is vital for the identities of marginalized students to have the space to acknowledge their racial and ethnic differences as a process to validate their realities and strengthen their identities.

The effects of culturally responsive teachers who taught about race and racism were explored in the article, *Teaching about race in an urban history class: The effects of culturally responsive teaching* by Epstein et al. (2011). In this article, culturally responsive teachers were identified as those who taught about the collective agency of people of color along with the complex relationship of identity, history and society. Through a case study evaluating pre and post instructional explanations of racial groups and racism, the researchers discovered that during pre-instructional explanations, the students were less responsive to instruction about their roles as an oppressed group and as members of anti-
racist movements. However with post-instructional explanations, the students grasped the complex world of racism and understood their role in the current society as culturally responsive teaching was incorporated. These findings provided a strong foundation to my research in regards to cultural responsiveness as it will help me analyze my participant’s responses in regards to how they are implementing culturally responsive teaching. Ladson-Billings (1995) assertion can also add to my analysis as she claimed that “culturally relevant teachers utilize students’ culture as a vehicle for learning” (p. 161). This quotation can be used as an interview prompt by asking my participants how they have practiced the ideology behind these words. I also appreciated that Cornel Pewewardy, a Native American educator (1993), emphasized that teachers need to insert education into culture rather than inserting the culture into education (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 159). This statement provided more reasoning as to why the educational system, namely the curriculum, along with teachers pedagogies should include frameworks that allow culture to naturally be integrated. When these systems are implemented, I believe that the tokenization, the avoidance, and ultimately the elimination of teaching oppressed histories will be reduced.

Additionally, Epstein et al.’s study (2011) investigated how the practice of culturally responsive teaching impacted the students. Although I will not be able to ask the students about their experiences, I will be able to ask the teacher how he/she feels their black history teaching impacts their students. I hope this inquiry will help the teachers reflect on their identity as white teachers and their attempts to be culturally responsive while teaching black history.
Language and black history

In the book, *The Skin That We Speak: Thoughts on Language and Culture in the Classroom* by Delpit and Dowdy (Ed. 2008), the experience of a black individual named Smith in a white community is discussed. Smith’s experience with his language, Ebonics, resulted in a disconnect between his white teachers, his white peers, including the black individuals who spoke ‘properly’ (Standard English). Ebonics, also identified as Black English, was a language that was tightly incorporated with his identity. His failures in school all stemmed from his language use which involved teasing, special education placement and suspension (p. 14-27).

This chapter motivated me to consider the language that is being used to teach black history within the classroom. Language has an immense connection to the meaning of concepts and cultural identity in classrooms. Paying attention to the language the teachers use to teach black history will be important in recognizing their comfort and cultural responsive teachings styles. Specifically, I would be interested in discovering if teachers eliminate certain words from their speech out of self-comfort. Often, when specific words are not spoken, a sense of emotion and genuineness can be eliminated. For example, if a teacher is uncomfortable saying the word “Negro” in a passage read aloud to their class, and replaces it for a more politically correct word such as “Black”, the authenticity and depth may be rid from that reading.
My literature review has probed me think more about my research study investigating how a sample of white teachers of European descent acknowledge their comfort levels and how they teach black history with a culturally relevant pedagogy.

My reviews all support the complex and interconnected world of white privilege, identity, black history, and comfort levels. I intentionally looked for sources that focused on the multifaceted dimensions of black history— from the origins, stemming to the teaching practices along with the pool of obstacles. I did not limit myself to scholarly works in a specific time period as I wanted to clearly compare and contrast the past and present challenges and successes of black history teachings.
Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

Procedure

My research study investigated the comfort levels of white teachers teaching black history. I completed a rigorous review of literature examining the origin of black history, the benefits of teaching black history, the comfort levels of white teachers teaching history, and resources that are used to support this teaching. The information from this review served as a strong foundation to develop and structure the design and execution for my interview questions, thus I delved into the strategies used, successes, and challenges my participants encountered while teaching black history. The interview questions allowed for deep responses and provided the space for the participants to engage in self-awareness and reflection.

I conducted a phenomenological qualitative study using in person interviews with two teacher participants. Creswell (2013) identified a phenomenological study as describing “the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon” (p. 76). This qualitative approach best represented my research inquiry as the phenomenon of the comfort levels of white teachers teaching black history was investigated. Furthermore, all of the participants had a commonality of being white from European descent and taught history that they did not identify with.

Interviewing is a popular qualitative technique and is the primary way stories are gathered by researchers and insight is gained on the human experience (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Accordingly, face-to-face interviews allowed for a stronger rapport and gave me the ability to create a trustful environment with my tone and body language. In addition, I realized
that face-to-face interviews portrayed the natural facial expressions and responses expressed. The interviews were conducted in a private room to maintain confidentiality and all of the participants were given a written and verbal outline about the study and the interview procedures. Once the participants read through and signed the required consent documents, I began the interview with comfortable conversation questions. After the interview was concluded, the participants were encouraged to ask any questions or voice any concerns. They were thanked for their time and were reminded of how the study would be accessible once completed.

**Instruments of Data Collection**

My data collection consisted of conducting interviews and audio recording them for transcription. The interview process gave my participants the space to express their own words from their own perspectives (Howe, 1988) which served as rich data for this research study. Participants can sense when the interviewer is genuinely interested in the conversation, which may cause the participant to share more about themselves than initially expected (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Thus, I ensured that I maintained eye contact with my participants, actively listened and allowed for thinking time. I strategically created my interview questions to elicit detailed responses from the participants. To avoid "yes/no" answers, I altered the question structures to give the participants the freedom to expand their "yes/no" thoughts. Re-structuring the questions to end in other words than "explain why" was another technique I used to promote diversity and novelty in my questions. I also used open-ended questions which promoted in depth responses, along with questions that asked “how”, as they gave the space for specific reasoning. My interview started with
general based questions and then progressed into questions that were more sensitive and specific. This sequencing strategy allowed the participants the time to relax and feel comfortable with me and with the process. See Appendix B: Interview Questions.

Jacob & Furgerson (2012) advised that researchers use prompts during their interviews to create the space for unexpected data. After I asked the interviewee a question (“What extra support do you need as a teacher teaching the history of oppressed groups whose information is often tokenized and outdated?”), I at times provided them with some prompts (the curriculum, teaching materials, or professional development) for more specific responses. By honing in on all of these interview techniques and skills, I created a safe climate where the interviewees were able to speak comfortably on their experiences teaching black history. See Appendix B: Interview Questions.

Participants

Two highschool teachers were chosen as participants for this research study. This was a purposive sample as all of the teachers met the specific criteria of being: 1) white from European descent, 2) a teacher in a school board, and 3) taught black history.

Ethical Review Procedures

I followed the ethical review approval procedures outlined in the Master of Teaching program ethical protocol. All of the provided documents were adapted for my research study. Each participant was provided with a letter of consent, which they read and signed before the interview was conducted (see Appendix A). The participants signed two copies
of the consent letter, one copy for their personal records and the other copy was stored for my records. Prior to signing the consent form, participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any point during the interview without penalty. The participants were clearly informed about their right to have access to their transcription responses and they could be provided with a copy upon request. Additionally, the participants were made aware of their ability to omit specific recordings if they felt that the transcript did not capture what they intended to say. To abide by the confidentiality agreements under the ethical standards, pseudonyms were assigned to each participant to ensure anonymity.

An ethical consideration that I reflected on throughout the interview process was the participants’ sense of openness and comfort during their responses. As noted earlier, I was aware that the participants could have felt anxious answering some questions that explicitly focus on how white are teaching black history. Some participants could feel that an honest response might shame or harm their identity as an educator. I had to be cognizant of these potential circumstances and I verbally reminded the teachers that their participation will be used as a tool to help the teaching of black history as opposed to defaming white teachers of European descent.

Limitations

This research held some structural and personal limitations due to its nature and focus. I felt limited in the participant selection process as I could not interview the students who experienced the teachings of black history. There is a large void in research when it comes to accounting for students’ experiences (Epstein et al., 2011). Many scholars supported the claim that there was little knowledge known about how students were influenced by the
culturally responsive teaching strategies and how these practices influenced their understanding about historically racialized groups (Grant, 2003; Wills, 1996; Wills, Lintz & Mehan, 2004). It is natural to gravitate towards analyzing the information from teachers, educators or administrators; however, hearing the voices from the learners themselves would provide a wealth of new knowledge that would bring breadth to these investigations. Another limitation was the number of participants interviewed. A larger sample would provide the space for more concrete patterns to be identified and would give me a better picture for a deep analysis (DePaulo, 2011). Although I was reflexive and socially aware during the interview with my tone and body language, I was conscious of the controversy and sensitivity built in this topic. I was also cognizant that my physical presence as a black researcher could influence the participants’ responses to be socially desirable instead of authentic and raw responses (For example, the teachers might not be comfortable stating their genuine opinions to teach black history, or they might feel pressure to use politically correct words, etcetera). These confounding variables were taken into consideration in my data analysis.

Despite the limitations, there were excellent strengths associated with this research study. The method of a face-to-face interview allowed for a deep examination of the teachers experiences that would not surface in a survey or questionnaire. Having the human connection through interviews allowed for a strong rapport that yielded powerful data as a sense of trust, comfort and relaxation was established. Correspondingly, interviews do not have to be restricted to the order or the number of specific questions; this gave me the flexibility to redirect and guide the focus of the conversation in real time. An interview
also gave the participant a sense of flexibility and control as they have the right to pass or expand on specific questions.
Chapter 4: FINDINGS

Introduction and Summary

This chapter consists of the responses from two participants, Frank and Abby\(^1\) two high school teachers, who were interviewed in semi-structured interviews. The interview questions stemmed from my overall research question – “How are a sample of white teachers of European descent acknowledging their comfort levels and teaching black history with a culturally relevant pedagogy?” The findings provided a wealth of information regarding the teacher’s challenges, successes, needs, and their comfort levels teaching black history as white committed individuals. This chapter details my qualitative findings, and fleshes out four major themes which emerged from the data: Teaching black history, challenges teaching black history, resources, and instructional strategies. Chapter 5 delves into the significance of the data and the work that we still need to do to successfully teach black history.

Teaching black history

*The history of the oppressed is for all*

“…black history isn’t just for black kids” – Abby

Education is a powerful tool that can be and has been used to liberate and denigrate people and the learners. As a learner yourself, most of us can probably think of a time when the education we received, whether a lesson, an informal class discussion, or a movie made us feel liberated or, on the flipside, belittled. Education has the power to do this. Education

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\(^1\) Pseudonyms were used for both participants.
has the power to enlighten, dictate, and persuade the learner’s thoughts, beliefs, and actions. The educator who provides the space for education innately has a lot of power; their voice which speaks the knowledge can be powerful and their hand which shares specific knowledge is also very powerful. Learning about the histories of our ancestors and other groups of people can be the key ingredient for self-liberation, establishing agency, and combaiting racism (Burrell & Walsh 2001, Dagbovie 2003).

Frank delved into the importance of learning about the Other through history education. By nature, the Other acoustically and semantically makes us think of the abnormal or the alien. Kumashiro (2000), defined the “Other” as “those groups that are traditionally marginalized in society, i.e., that are other than the norm, including students of color, students from under- or unemployed families, students who are female, or male but not stereotypically ‘masculine,’ and students who are, or are perceived to be, queer” (pg. 26). Frank believed that teaching history afforded his students the opportunity to learn about the Other. Frank used the word “Other” to address those individuals who are different. He explained his theory of why history education is beneficial to all:

One of my theories of history, is that history gives you a chance to encounter the Other, and that’s not necessarily the racial Other, that’s the political Other, that’s the whatever Other. Different perspectives, different cultures and the more different perspectives we can give, that seems to me to be the basis of a good democratic education that lays the foundation to have a civilized society.
I asked my participants a short yet challenging question – “What benefits have you observed from teaching black history,” and they both acknowledged the importance of teaching history to students who do not identify with that history. In other words, teaching black history to non-black students. Abby, however, briefly mentioned how teaching black history can help black children specifically, giving “them more ownership.” She proceeded and said, “I also think that it is just as important for the other kids in the class and school as well too [to learn about black history]. Like that kid I was talking about is such a great example. It is understanding that black history isn’t just for black kids.” The “kid” Abby referenced, is later described under the subtheme Identity: whiteness in the class. Frank’s perspectives aligned with Abby’s as he too believed that teaching black history to all students helps to“cast an eye on our society better.” Frank continued his thought below.

But one of the benefits I think is that when you teach a history of a group that is a minority group in your society that has experienced oppression – to me the best thing that happens and I see this with my students is it allows us to cast an eye on our society better, right. They behave this way and it wasn’t controversial… it’s controversial to us.

Frank’s comment “They behave this way and it wasn’t controversial… it’s controversial to us” provided a new perspective towards the benefits of teaching black history. Instead of merely glossing over the understanding that history can teach us about the Other, as he earlier said, he explained that it can also deepen our perspective of how we judge and interact with history that we do not identify with. This quote challenges us to reflect on our oppressive thoughts of oppressed people and to unlearn our preconceived notions of why
groups of people act the way they do. The imperative point is not to question the Other, instead question yourself and challenge why you are uncomfortable instead of why they acted that way.

**Challenges teaching black history**

*Lack of Confidence - Full of Commitment*

“The first step toward liberation from oppression is being able to identify and name your oppression” (Morrell et al, 2008, p.10)

Having the confidence to teach is one thing, but having the confidence to teach a history that cradles a pool of violence, death, hurt, and current implications lends itself to another complexity- one that becomes personal and emotionally charged. The lack of confidence to teach black history was consistent throughout both of my interviews. Frank quickly noted that he was “certainly committed” but that “he wouldn’t say I’m confident.” He admitted that if I asked him “how do you do teaching black history”, he would say he “could be doing so much better, so much better.” Similarly, Abby explicitly acknowledged that she was committed while expressing her lack of confidence. She said “I am not going to say that I’m confident, I’m just not.” Both participants did not feel confident teaching black history, when asked about their commitment their perspectives altered.

Abby and Frank drew on experiential factors that supported their strong commitment to teaching black history. Abby openly addressed her personal experience that helped to sculpt her committed nature. She explained: “I am in an interracial marriage, so
I get influenced that way. I'm also myself, I'm queer so you know that kind of oppression related to history it fits, the whole system fits in.” I then asked her if she would be comfortable disclosing her partner's race, specifically asking if her partner was black, and she happily informed me that that “yeah she is biracial...her mother is Jamaican, her other half is Dutch.” There was a common observation that did not surprise me: that being a sense of empathy to an oppressed group when you yourself have experienced oppression. Abby added that although she lacks the confidence, she knows “it is a really important thing to do, so for me, the best way for me to develop my confidence is to try to learn as much as I can, we didn’t have that information.” Abby acknowledged her identity and relationship as supportive factors towards her commitment.

At the beginning of the interview, before a question was even asked, Frank automatically stated “I will tell you right off the bat and I actually think it’s a good sign I feel this but I feel utterly inadequate as someone who does a very good job of teaching as much black history as I could.” As the interview progressed and I questioned him about his confidence, akin to Abby’s response, Frank turned to his own oppression he encountered when he was younger as a Jewish child. Although to a lesser degree of oppression, Frank reflects back on his childhood experiences and carefully thinks of how to express his oppression by asking himself:

Is my own cultural experience and background and whatever oppression might have happened, does that inform my attitude to black history teaching? Well I’m a Jew, I am the grandson of Holocaust survivors. You know that is a culture that sees itself as oppressed, that has been oppressed, and I think – I’m just trying to think about your
question a little bit more. I know very well what it’s like to grow up somewhat as an outsider. Now I don’t flatter myself or pull a Bill O’Reilly and say there is no such thing as white privilege. At the end of the day I am a white boy that grew up in middle upper middle class area in Hamilton and have lived comfortably. That said, I knew what it was like not be able to sit on Santa’s lap, I experienced all be it, thankfully, in small doses, anti-Semitism when I was younger but I don’t think that I’m a person who gets up in the morning and says I have experienced oppression, therefore – here is how I am going to act. I don’t think that informs my experience that much.

Frank admitted that his small dose of anti-Semitism was not the pillar that supported his commitment to teaching black history; however it is still an experience that has caused him to reflect on and speak to directly in this interview. Frank admitted that he lacked the confidence to teach black history; however, he became more specific when he identified his own education and comfort when teaching American black history: “I really have studied this stuff right. I mean my graduate degree is American history right. I had to read Baldwin, I had to read W.E. Du Bois and Souls of Black Folk, immerse myself in civil rights literature and you know 1950s and 60s.” Frank also informed me that he struggled “trying to teach history in a way that isn’t just getting white kids to feel badly about themselves.” He was aware that American history is full of violence and the country was “built on the slaughter of one race and the enslavement of another.” However, he told me that he worried about his students’ perceptions when he teaches black history. He revealed, “I just feel like I would sound like I’m on Fox News being like ‘Obama’s a racist, he hates white people because he thinks black history is important’.” Earlier in the interview, Frank remembered one of his novel experiences teaching a media studies course and leading a
media deconstruction project. He strategically brought in an LCBO poster of two teenagers at prom and described them to be the “whitest most beautiful looking kids you’d ever seen in your life.” He explained that he vividly remembers thinking “I’m not bringing this in to call the LCBO racist and I’m not bringing this in to say ‘see they should have been black, they should have been Hindu, they should have been Chinese’.” Instead, Frank wanted to expose his students and plant a seed that would get them to think about decisions and norms. He wanted his students to understand that someone had to make a decision to use these white teenagers to portray the idea that “this is what a prom is going to look like.” The students responded with a “viscous resistance” to Frank’s critique. Although he acknowledged that he “probably did not frame it right”, the students collectively thought, “well you gotta have somebody, so what every time you pick a white person you’re racist?” Frank admitted that these reactionary students make it a struggle to teach black history. The lack of confidence yet full commitment to teach black history stems from multiple factors, identity and whiteness can be another factor that is explored next.

**Identity: Whiteness in the class**

Our identity is a mosaic of our lived experiences and told stories, and our intentions and actions can be puppets to our identity. Simply put, what we believe and how we act in certain situations are dependent on our experiences and our identity. We need to reflect on our identity and how it can influence our interactions and experiences, to better understand our role in society. Our physical identity can give us privilege or can marginalize us. The question around whiteness and teaching was directly presented and both Abby and Frank addressed their own whiteness in the classroom. I asked each participant “How do you feel about your skin colour impacting your confidence teaching black history?” Abby promptly
replied “I’m always conscious that I am a white girl in front of the room and I am really weird that they are making enormous efforts in diversity because teaching is very white, so I am always aware of my skin colour when I am teaching about black history.” Frank addressed his teaching style saying that he does not bring “a black guy in to teach” and said “so I mean I am an amateur, but I’m a sincere amateur.” Frank’s reflection on his ability to teach black history is honest and allowed for more discussion surrounding his identity.

The overlap of identity and having confidence to teach black history was evident when Abby said “I know that although I am comfortable teaching it in an equity context, in a grade 10 history context, if we were to ever offer a full course on Canadian black history, because they do offer them in other schools, that I would never feel comfortable being the white girl teaching the entire course on black history.” She then included knowledge as another factor that contributes to the lack of confidence as she speaks about a black teacher in her department. Abby is the department head of global studies and she asked a black teacher if she “would be interested in teaching a full course on Canadian black history” and the teacher said “she wasn’t comfortable.” Abby claimed that it was the teacher’s knowledge, or lack of knowledge that made her uncomfortable and not her skin colour. Abby concluded with a statement about her skin colour saying that “there is an extent, where I can advocate and teach black history, but I don’t think I’ll ever, because I am white, I don’t think I’ll ever comfortably teach a whole course.” Thus, Abby believed that her whiteness and knowledge contributed to her comfort levels teaching black history.
Abby also mentioned an example of whiteness in the class from the perspective of a student and his thoughts of his whiteness. The “kid” Abby referenced earlier was a student who had an awakening moment during her class, she explained:

One of my favourite moments, because it was such a great teachable moment was that I do have a Caucasian guy in my class, more than one, but this guy in particular, very outspoken and very opinionated- and I remember this moment where he had this look on his face and went “White people suck!” And I laughed and it was a great moment because I said no no no that’s not useful to take, you have to embrace, because the whole first part of the course is me talking about privilege, so the idea is that you have to embrace the privilege you have and then do something about it. So don’t just say “we suck” and through up your hands in the air. It was a really powerful moment for the white kids in the class, to understand that we do have this past where we were the oppressors and in some ways still are, well in many ways still are.

Both of the participants recognized their whiteness in the classroom and how their white skin impacted their comfort levels teaching black history. Frank however spoke more about his whiteness in the later sections.
Frank and Abby were asked how their whiteness impacted how their students learned black history. Frank’s response touched on race and gender while Abby focused on her skin colour. When asked if he would feel differently if he taught black students, Frank expressed the following:

But the truth is Anita I haven’t taught a lot of black kids. I’ve taught a bunch of black kids but I’ve never taught a majority school that hasn’t been white. I would hope that I wouldn’t, that there would be no issue of my whiteness because you know I like to think my hearts in the right place that would save me. I don’t know that the road to hell is often paved with good intentions.

He added that he is not just an amateur but a “sincere amateur.” I then prompted Frank ensuring him that this is not a question that could be answered instantaneously but could be reflected on. He then posed a question to himself “What would it look like if I was black? What would my experience be?” And I added “Yeah or if you only had black students.” Frank answered:

It’s just so hard for me to imagine some of these scenarios. I mean that’s the big challenge is what, what does it look like from the student’s perspective. The thing that I worry about is, is the gender thing. Because you know I’m a boy and you know the stereotypes is that boys like war, I love war, I teach World War I or World
War II much more passionately than I’ll teach the stalk market crash in the 1920’s and 1930’s.

Frank then came back to race and addressed his whiteness by adding:

I am sure that that comes out in my whiteness when I teach black history, or when I teach any history – is you know an unconscious or semi-conscious privileging of one set of stories or another, or one set of sources or another. I mean if I really wanted to get in there and do some radical history right, it would look very different what I’m doing. So I think to a certain extent, there is something very conservative about how I teach right.

Abby focused on the students’ relationships and acknowledged that there was a difference between the relationships black students had with her compared to the black teacher (referred to earlier), she claimed that Marcella (pseudonym) “has a relationship with the black kids in the school that I could never have.” However, when asked how she thinks her skin color impacted the way her students responded to her teaching of black history, Abby replied “it’s not like their gonna do more poorly on a test if there is a white teacher teaching black history versus if there is a black teacher teaching black history, because that is the only way to figure that out”. She added that she does have a couple of black girls who are disengaged but she “also has girls that aren’t black and are disengaged.” To state that there is a significance of engagement between the black and non-black students Abby said “is really tough to say.” Abby concluded that she is “very conscious” when she is “teaching black history to pay more attention to whether or not they [the black
students] are paying attention.” The consciousness of our identity and specifically our physical identity, is a strong step towards recognizing the role we play in the classroom.

**Resources: What factors and resources support these teachers to do this work?**

*Black history belongs in America (lack of resources in Canada)*

“There’s no ‘I have a dream speech’ in Canada” – Frank

Resources are crucial for teachers to bring into their classroom, to learn from, and to supplement their teaching. However, a lack of resources can leave the teacher to feel stranded and unsupported. The lack of resources specific to Canadian black history was expressed between both participants.

Frank explained his comfort with American history and told me: “…so I would say, I could speak to you for hours longer about black history in America and I could probably speak to you about black history in Canada for another 10-15 minutes. As I said from the beginning, I do a better job at America.” He further described the difference between Canadian black history and American black history through acknowledging the popularity and recognition of American black history:

You know I’ve been talking about the difference between Canadian and American history, Canadian history doesn’t have, for whatever reason, the high profile experience of race or prejudice even though we have them, even though they are all there that the Americans have right. There’s no ‘I have a dream speech’ in Canada there are speeches that do all those kinds of things, we don’t remember
them and they certainly don’t sell any Big Macs, right which has happened to MLK
‘I have a dream that gap jeans will…’ I apologize for the impression. So America
just lends itself more easily for me as a history teacher to black history than Canada
does. Because America’s got the black white thing I think in a way that Canada
doesn’t. Even though the black white thing is here but there’s the black white thing
here, there’s the French English thing here, the major conflict in America is that
racial conflict.

Abby’s response to the lack of resources was analogous to Frank’s. She stated that
“we need more about Canadian black experience, there is not nearly enough out there, and
what is out there has been white washed, it’s been very sanitized so we need more about
that.” There are token faces and names that circulate black history teachings, Abby spoke
to this and told me that the students “know who Martin Luther King is, they know who
Malcolm X is, they know who Rose Parks is, but they don’t necessarily understand the
Christie Pitts riot, again they don’t know about the segregated schools, they didn’t know
about any of that.” When addressing the school efforts to teach black history, Abby said
that in the grade ten history class the war unit exposes “a little bit about how the Canadian
government didn’t care for coloured soldiers or Native soldiers in the context of
militarization.” She continued to explain that in the “humanities unit” they do get into black
history in “a bit more detail” for the civil rights, but “the only thing it is very American.”

Akin to Abby, Frank addressed the sprinkling of black history in Canadian textbooks. He
sarcastically said that in these textbooks you have “the story and then a black guy on the
side, here is something that a black person did. ‘Tommy Prince right, he was black, right’.
It’s sort of like you know, it’s sort of like little quotation marks on the side. This
incorporation feeds this “standard narrative.” This standard narrative is commonly used to teach black history, despite the limitations and lack of depth involved.

Frank acknowledged that his “biggest challenge is curriculum and going out and getting curriculum and deciding what’s going to be included.” He recognized that this struggle is not isolated to black history but it “is the paralyzing challenge” he felt as a history teacher.

The lack of resources can be very damaging as actualities are left untold and when they do arise and the students are re-educated, many will refute the truth. Abby informed me that in her grade 12 class, “there were some kids that experienced outrage might be too strong word, but surprised or shocked that there was, that this history existed in Canada.” She accurately concluded that “this violent history is not sold to us.” She then addressed that “there is a lot out there teaching about power and privilege” and she thought “it is a really important basis” but “we don’t really need more about that”, instead we need more about “the content of Canadian black history.” She strongly believed that teachers “need more training on how to teach the history of oppression that is not their own history.” Frank supported Abby’s thoughts by adding that teachers need “more information, more training on teaching black history.” He said he “could talk to you about the major issues in education in American history, black history. I don’t think I would be able to tell you what the issues are in Canadian history.” It is evident that American black history lends more to teachers which impedes the teaching of Canadian black history as minimal.
Supportive resources

Despite the minimal access of black history resources, especially Canadian black history resources, Abby acknowledged that “there are increasing members in our history textbook, we use Creating Canada.” Frank agreed that the resources have increased as he stated “you know we’ve gotten better we have more resources.” Frank loved using movies as a resource to supplement his teaching and he said that his students appreciated the fact that he did not just show movies. Teaching specific events could be hard to conceptualize without a visual aid or reenactment, so Frank showed a movie to make the teaching “come alive a little bit.” He gave the example of scenes from movies such as the First World War trench scenes, “or the slave ship scene in Amistad does what I can never do.” The only time Frank said he showed a full movie to his class was when “no one really fancies” what they were learning. Frank was able to navigate some resources to supplement his teaching instruction.

Abby has relied heavily on an educator Natasha Henry, who researched and provided practical teacher information on Canadian black history. Abby claimed that the reason she had to rely upon Natasha so heavily was because she couldn’t find Canadian black history anywhere and her “resource library” did not have anything, even worse it did not exist. She added: “what does exit, there is some amazing stuff about American black history and that’s the stuff that the kids mostly know.” The resources, or lack of resources maintained the teaching of black history as a standard narrative where a few names and events are circulated.
**Instructional strategies:**

*Structuring black history*

Black history month is celebrated during the shortest month of the year and as Abby outlined, “the argument about black history is that there just is never enough time.” As the department head at a new school, Abby was excited to build the “curriculum from scratch” as she put it. Abby posed a solution to alleviate the crunch time that is placed on black history teaching:

Right from the beginning, one of the things I really wanted to do in grade 10 history instead of looking at history chronologically, to teach it thematically. So there is one unit on war and militarism, and a unit on politics and economy and a unit on humanities and one of the main reasons I wanted to do that specifically because the huge argument about black history is that there just never enough time. So it effectively allows there to be time because there can be an entire unit devoted to some of the major injustices that happened in the 20th century, so that includes the Holocaust, it includes residential schools, and it also includes the civil rights movements.

Abby acknowledged that black history teaching is “never in depth” as she would like it to be, and has been heavily neglected in her experience. She explained that “the timing of black history month is really annoying” because it occurs “right at the beginning of the second semester, so it is always very difficult to do it the justice, since we are starting up all of our brand new courses.” This issue went back to her solution of teaching black history
thematically as it can be “integrated more throughout the whole year” instead of solely in February. Structural propositions as suggested by Abby, could be practiced as an attempt to accurately and efficiently teach black history and the history of oppressed peoples.

**Engaging the students**

Engaging students could be considered the art of teaching and it could be an extremely challenging process. Frank stated that “students will appreciate history and understand the history’s importance if and only if they understand themselves as part of the story that we’re telling.” Frank took a novel approach that helped his students recognize their presence and contributions to oppression, he explained:

> I always say “Ladies and gentlemen, we are here 100 years later looking at them and saying ‘What the hell were they thinking.’ Here’s my question: what are they going to say about us? What the hell were they thinking?’ Because you know they are going to say it- so what is it, and that to me is the really wonderful benefit and allows us to really cast a critical eye on our own society.

This strategy could really challenge students to not only think about history as a past event but as a process that they are currently contributing to, and understand that our present actions will be history.

Frank continued to provide a wealth of strategies that he used to teach black history in an engaging way. Reading to his students was something Frank loved to do. He added, “I mean like for extended periods of time, I think it’s awesome.” Frank also explained how
he taught black history, in a “past present, past present” format touching on “Emmett Till and Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks and the standard story” while he also delved into the “Obama Reverend Wright controversy.”

Frank was able to incorporate instructional strategies that engaged his students in a way that made them interested in the story and more importantly a part of the story he was teaching.

**Comfort levels – identifying your comfort in front of the class**

To be comfortable teaching experiences that are foreign or unknown, can be difficult and can challenge one’s own identity. When asked how they became comfortable teaching black history, both participants mentioned honesty and vulnerability.

Abby stated that she had to educate herself and get herself to a comfort level at which, if she was teaching her students and they asked her a question, she knew the answer. She added: “sometimes I don’t know the answer because I am still a student of that myself, but I am always very honest with them about that-that I’m learning my way through it as well too, so they tend to be a little easier on me.” In her class, Abby always made her students and herself take the implicit bias analysis test. She admitted that her test came back “positive of biases and favors for white faces versus the black faces.” However, she said that was alright because she acknowledged her “own internal bias and prejudice, which comes from being the member of the privileged group.” She added: “it’s really the only one where I am the privileged – I am female- I don’t have the privilege there, I’m gay – I don’t have the privilege there, but that’s the one where I do have the privilege. I am very
vulnerable and upfront with the kids acknowledging we all carry that around with us, even
the black kids had biases for the white faces.” Frank also agreed that honesty and
vulnerability were imperative for successful teaching of black history. He advised the
following: “Don’t try to pretend that you’re up there and you’re the one who is somehow
immune to cultural biases or the limitations of your background. Show your vulnerability
to your students and that’s something I try to do and often just by teaching I will show them
my vulnerability, my vulnerability is not the best teacher.” Both of the participants agreed
that honesty with their own biases were stepping stones towards teaching history that they
did not identify with, and for teaching in general.

Abby mentioned that she focused on making the class space comfortable not only for her,
but also for her students. She stated:

One of the first things I did with this class, I worked specifically on rapport building
so we could have these conversations. So we would do regular community circles,
where they can say whatever the heck they want without consequence, and it’s
really important to me that they have that level of comfort and it goes both ways. I
have to have that level of comfort too, so I came out to them as a teacher which was
something I haven’t done before. They reacted very positively. It was outstanding
by how positive their reaction was.

Through establishing vulnerability and honesty, both teachers felt that they could teach
more freely.
Throughout the interview, both Abby and Frank identified specific aspects of black history that made them uncomfortable and traced back to their honesty as a pillar that helped them through these times. One of Frank’s favourite books to teach in American history is the *Bloody Shirt: Terror after the Civil War* by Stephen Budiansky. In this text the n-word is said and Frank felt uncomfortable every time he taught the book. He addressed his goals with this text and his discomfort:

So my biggest goal as a history teacher is to get kids to understand what it was like at that time. That also means hearing the voices of those people and those people said things that are so uncomfortable to listen to. So the idea of a white teacher up there saying the word nigger it roils my stomach in 18 different ways and I have spoken to multiple teachers about whether or not I should just…cause I don’t, I read this with the kids and I get them to read some stuff and whenever it comes I’m not going to make them say it [nigger] out loud…I debated with myself over and over and over again when I read this should I just say anymore. I have done it three times and I haven’t said n-word yet. I would actually be interested in your perspective because I don’t know.

Frank and I talked about asking the students their opinions and comfort levels, specifically black students, about the word being used in this context. Frank stated: “my only concern about doing that is making an issue out of it. Now I would like to think that I would behave the same way if all my students were black but you asked what has made me uncomfortable that [saying the n-word] makes me very uncomfortable.” The discussion around authenticity and language developed as Frank recalled an essay written by Michael Chabon
who defended editing and said that we edit all the time. Frank related this phenomenon to his personal life and stated, “when I read to my kids, you know I don’t want to get too intensely depressing and say ‘Oh no the frog went to sleep, it didn’t die.’ Is that the same gesture that I should be doing saying ‘you know what is more important that were all comfortable than we understand what it sounded like? I don’t know, I don’t know the answer.” Frank concluded and touched on his honesty in the class with these uncomfortable situations: “I just remember because at certain points we’ll read and then we stop, we talk, reactions. I will then say, I want you guys to know how unbelievably uncomfortable I am saying that word.” Frank relied on honesty with his students as a tool to teach uncomfortable texts in the classroom.

Abby focused on three aspects of black history that made her uncomfortable: a personal event, language and lynching. Focusing on the latter, when Abby taught about lynching she tried very hard to warn the students and stated “that this was something that was painful but still necessary” to address regardless if it “bothers them.” Abby understood that lynching “was torture and chopping off limbs, and cooking to death” and she “found that really really hard to teach just because it is so hard and so painful.” This pain she noticed on her students faces and although she tried to “prep them”, she realized that “you can’t escape” the reality presented in the descriptions.

Abby also explained how she addressed her discomfort with events regarding black people and homophobia:
I was teaching about, more contemporary example, I was teaching about some of the backlash when Obama got elected the first time and Postulation 8 was voted in. I was talking about how there was this backlash, this very unnecessary backlash against the black community in California because it was perceived that because they have come out to vote for Obama and voted down same sex marriage there was this discomfort between the two candidates, even though it was later disproven that black voters voted at the same percentage as everybody else, it was just an interesting moment of I myself when I heard that statistic feeling this terrible feeling of ‘if you have been oppressed so much why would you not support someone else’s oppression.’ I remember feeling that really uncomfortable feeling, so I remember telling them about why I felt that way, and that was a really exposing moment for me to admit it and at that point I had racist thoughts.

In regards to language use, Abby also acknowledged that “using derogatory words” would make her very uncomfortable, thus she stated that she would “never say the n word” instead she just says “the n word, but everyone knows what it is.” Her biggest challenge regarding language was fluctuating between the appropriate words to call black people. She stated that when she talks about black history historically she used the term “coloured people or people of colour” and “contemporarily” she “will say black.” She added that she did not generally say “African Canadian” because she had students in her class “who actually are African Canadian and not every black person is okay with that as an identity.” With this addressed, Abby sometimes worried “that switching between historical and contemporary” she would switch the appropriate terms as she has done before - saying “coloured” when she was “talking about contemporary” and she always had this moment of “oh no I did it
again”. Abby also checked her language when naming black people. She did not say “slaves because that is not their identity, it was something that was put on them so ‘enslaved persons’” is the term she used.

Both participants identified their challenges, their successes, and their identities in the classroom. They were also able to lightly draw upon their perspective of student experiences and tap into that angle which is often disregarded.

My research question - “How are a sample of white teachers of European descent acknowledging their comfort levels and teaching black history with a culturally relevant pedagogy?” was used as a foundation for this research paper. Abby and Frank were able to articulate their experiences and thoughts surrounding the four major themes: teaching black history, challenges teaching black history, resources, and instructional strategies. In the following chapter, I analyze the data from my participants and connect their information to the literature review allowing me to acknowledge implications, limitations, and further study areas in the field of black history.
Chapter 5: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to explore the comfort levels of white teachers who taught black history. Teaching history that you may not identify with and teaching history that is wedded to tragic events, such as slavery, can be difficult to do. I wanted to explore how these teachers were able to teach this history and how their comfort levels impacted their teaching. I had the opportunity to interview two high school teachers who were white and identified as committed to teaching black history. Through analyzing the data from my participants and relating it to the literature and my own perceptions, I have garnered a deeper understanding surrounding the comfort levels of white teachers who are teaching black history. This chapter will specifically address the implications of the comfort levels of these teachers and the impact on their identity and their practice. Specific recommendations for teachers are also stated which are an amalgamation between my own thoughts, the supporting literature, and the data collected. This chapter will conclude with recommendations for further study.

Connections to Literature

During the interviews, my participants provided me with detailed and authentic responses that harmonized with a lot of the research from my literature review. In this chapter, I focused on the predominant findings that had strong implications for teachers teaching black history.
Who am I in the classroom? Recognizing your identity

Both Abby and Frank recognized and named their physical identity as white teachers in the class. Abby was able to name her privilege as a white teacher and her oppression as a queer woman. Abby and Frank drew on experiential factors that supported their strong commitment to teaching black history. Abby openly addressed her personal experience that helped sculpt her committed nature. She explained: “I am in an interracial marriage, so I get influenced that way. I’m also myself, I’m queer so you know that kind of oppression related to history it fits, the whole system fits in.” I then asked her if she would be comfortable disclosing her partner’s race, specifically asking if her partner was black, and she happily informed me that “yeah she is biracial...her mother is Jamaican, her other half is Dutch.” There was a common observation that did not surprise me: that being a sense of empathy to an oppressed group when you yourself have experienced oppression. Abby added that although she lacks the confidence, she knows “it is a really important thing to do, so for me, the best way for me to develop my confidence is to try to learn as much as I can, we didn’t have that information.” Abby acknowledged her identity and her personal relationship as supportive factors towards her commitment.

In Chandler’s article, White teachers, social studies, and race: A case study of the intersection of teachers’ habitus and pedagogy, (2007) two white male teachers taught about race relations in a social studies class. Both of the teachers were identified as practicing in a conservative approach when teaching about race. Their approach was conservative in respect to their instruction, materials, and teaching style which abided by the dominant Eurocentric educational framework. This conservative approach does not
provide much space for non-Eurocentric learning styles, ways of knowing, or lessons, thus perpetuating the oppression and marginalization of people of colour whose stories are not acknowledged in Eurocentric education. During my interview with Frank, he admitted that there was “something very conservative” about the way he taught black history. He stated that he was sure his whiteness unconsciously “comes out” when he taught black history. Frank understood that to teach black history in an anti-conservative manner is to teach radically; he claimed that steering away “from privileging one set of stories or sources over another” would support radical teaching. Frank recognized what conservative teaching looked like and he admitted to being slightly conservative in his teaching, yet he was unable to execute a radical teaching of black history. This is an integral insight into the disconnect between theory, pedagogy and action.

**The lack of resources for Canadian black history**

Resources, or rather the lack of resources is a common shortcoming that was mentioned in the literature and expressed in both interviews. Frank audaciously stated that “there’s no ‘I have a dream speech’ in Canada” and repeatedly stated that American black history simply lends itself better to teachers compared to the neighboring Canadian black history. While Abby’s responses supported Frank’s, she mentioned that although there is indeed a small amount of information on the Canadian black experience, the material she has access to is “white washed” and has “been very sanitized”.

When Frank mentioned that “there’s no ‘I have a dream speech’ in Canada” and later stated that “America’s got the black white thing I think in a way that Canada doesn’t”, it
sparked a thought about how the lack of resources impacted his knowledge to teach. This relationship was explored in the article, *The discourse of denial: how white teacher candidates construct race, racism and ‘white privilege’* by Solomon et. al. In this article, the relationship between identity, perception and the truth was addressed. The imbalance of resource accessibility between American black history and Canadian black history upholds the distorted view of Canada as peaceful and accepting nation that never engaged in the enslavement of black people, akin to America. The mere fact that there are more resources for American black history can subconsciously impact how teachers perceive black history in Canada. If a teacher does not know slavery in Canada existed, how will they garner the knowledge to teach about it?

I was surprised that the participants did not mention the potential reasons that might control the accessibility between American black history compared to Canadian black history, yet Ghosh and Henry confirmed Abby and Frank’s frustration by acknowledging the hidden curriculum. Natasha Henry (2013) confirmed the lack of resources including class teachings for Canadian black history and specifically slavery, while Ghosh (2010) added that the lack of resources towards Canadian black history is a failure to recognize Canada’s racist history. The consequence of this failure is the acceptance of “white privilege” (Ghosh, 2010), and this intentional failure plays into the hidden curriculum that upholds the narrative of Canada as a free, race-less, peace-making country.

With the lack of resources, teachers are not exposed to accurate history which perpetuates miseducation. Although the miseducation that is apparent in schools today is not always intentional, it does stem from a purposeful curriculum that was founded upon
systemic racism and used to maintain oppression. Teachers are the gatekeepers and maintainers of systemic racism as they can be blindly misled to accept the lack of education as a norm and perpetuate the racism in the class by privileging the history and teachings that are readily accessible.

Resources are crucial vehicles of education for teachers to bring into their classroom, to learn from, and to supplement their teaching. However, a lack of resources can leave the teacher to feel stranded and unsupported and ultimately perpetuate the power and privilege associated with specific histories.

**Implications**

This study suggests various implications that are noteworthy for teachers, myself, and the educational community at large. My research study provided me with a wealth of knowledge pertaining to the impacts of teachers’ identities and their comfort levels teaching black history. My participants gave me detailed reasons as to why they did not feel comfortable teaching black history, and they named the support that would assist the growth of their comfort levels. The teachers were committed to teaching black history and although they recognized their faults and areas of growth, they were able to honestly expose their lack of comfort with their students. This level of honesty was deeply supported by both participants. Garnering this level of identity awareness and honesty is recommended for all teachers as it seemed to be the key ingredient to improve their comfort levels in the class.
The data showed that there was a difference between being committed and being comfortable when teaching black history. To be an effective teacher, we must be aware of our identity, power and privilege in the classroom. Developing your identity awareness is the stepping stone to improving your comfort level teaching histories that you do not identify with.

As a teacher who identifies as committed to teaching the history of oppressed groups, I have to be honest and accept that I will experience discomfort in my classroom. My discomfort however, cannot impede the education that my students deserve. To me, this discomfort is learning at its finest. I do not want to be a well-intentioned teacher who upholds the hidden curriculum, thus I must continually be reflexive in my teaching and critically analyze my practice. I want to hold myself accountable to these implications, and reflect on them when I am teaching in a classroom.

**Recommendations**

Based on the results of this research study, the following are recommendations for teachers who wish to develop their comfort levels teaching black history. These recommendations are not exclusive to black history; they could and should be extended to various histories.

Identify your identity:

- As a teacher, being reflexive is a mandatory process that helps develop the awareness of our identity. At the heart of reflexivity is the analysis of the self. Here are a few guiding questions that can spark your thoughts and help you recognize your identity as a history teacher. “What history do I belong
to?” “How connected am I to my history?” “How accessible is my history? Specifically, where can my history be found - libraries, the curriculum, through story-telling?” “How do my students perceive the historical and contemporary group I identify with?”

- Being self-reflective of your physical body *(usually* race, gender, ability), is beneficial in order to recognize your oppression or privilege. Ask yourself: “when people look at me at face value what do they see?” to help you understand how you may have power in the classroom and through the lessons you teach. For example, a male-identified individual teaching feminist theory needs to acknowledge his male privilege in the classroom – how much talking does he do? How often does he cast his own opinions in the class? How much space do women have in that class? Similarly, a white teacher teaching black history has to ask these same questions to recognize their power and privilege.

Resources:

- Collect a database of Canadian resources by: attending workshops that focus on Canadian Black history (Example: Natasha Henry YRDSB Workshops).

- Reach out to organizations in your community that are dedicated to supporting black students: (Alliance of Educators for Black Students - YRDSB).

In the classroom:

- Admit your lack of comfort to the class. Use “I” statements to make your comments personal and understand that this disclosure helps relax the class
atmosphere. Students are intelligent and they will recognize your discomfort, regardless if they share that discomfort with you or not.

- Observe your students reactions through their body language, engagement or disengagement before, throughout, and after your lessons. Ask yourself “Who was more engaged in the last unit?” “Who is more vocal?” Pay specific attention to the body language and engagement of the black students as it is often their identities that get challenged and ridiculed through these teachings.

- Be willing to learn from your students as they carry knowledge and are made of stories that can add to the learning environment. Be willing to relearn and feel uncomfortable in this unlearning process; this is the beauty and essence of education.

- Ask yourself: “What resources am I using and what resources do I deem as inappropriate? Is it controversial to me and why?” “When I am uncomfortable, what resources do I rely on more?” “Whose is the narrator of the stories I teach?”

- Address triggering language or events prior to teaching the lesson. If you do not know what may offend or emotionally upset your students, it is better to inform regardless them before diving into the teaching.
Further study

Although my literature review extensively supported my findings, there is still work to be done within this field of research. It is important to investigate the tools and programming pre-service teachers receive in order to properly instruct the histories of oppressed people. As an under-researched phenomenon in Canada, there is ample room for further study on this topic. The contribution of my work is a drop in the bucket in relation to the scope of what could be done.

Further investigation into the effectiveness of professional development workshops that are available to teachers from their boards needs to be unpacked. Natasha Henry facilitates workshops on teaching Canadian black history yearly. I attended her workshop last year that was available to teachers in the York Region District School Board, and although teachers attended, there were no more than twenty attendees. My question for further research is why was there an under-representation of teachers with permanent positions at this workshop?

Limitations

There were a few limitations to this study which influenced the findings and implications, and these limitations derived from the participant selection. Expanding the participant pool would deepen my knowledge and serve as a valuable addition to my research inquiry. Although this paper focused on the teachers comfort levels, by incorporating the voice of the learners (from the students themselves) would add depth and provide more personalized narratives to my analysis. Asking the students how a lesson, a unit, a teaching strategy, or
an event impacted them, would have provided me with a more complete understanding of how black history is being taught by my participants.

In addition to the absent student voice, by conducting a comparison study between black teachers and white teachers, I would have yielded interesting results that would explore the difference between race and comfort. As with my findings in this research paper, I am sure that there would be mitigating factors that would impact the teachers comfort levels regardless of their comparison group. It would be interesting however, to discover a relationship between these factors and its impact on teaching instruction and comfort. Inviting these areas into this research study will serve as another channel that can deepen our understanding about the comfort levels teaching black history.

**Concluding thoughts**

As a future teacher, my goal is to continue to reflect on my identity in the classroom and challenge myself to engage in a learning process that is timeless. I am aware that there will be uncomfortable discussions in my classroom, I am aware that there will be discussions that will challenge and oppose my beliefs and values, and I am truly aware that this is all a part of transformative education. As an educator who strives for liberation through education, I will hold this research experience as a stepping stone and continue to question the teaching of history and use a critical lens when I teach it myself. I am eager to continue my journey as a teacher and as a researcher while challenging myself to stay connected to new and seasoned research that can better support me as a learner and teacher.
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Appendix A: Letter of Consent for Interview

Date: Thursday, October 16, 2014

Dear (Participant Name)

I am a graduate student at OISE, University of Toronto, and I am currently enrolled as a Master of Teaching candidate. I am examining the comfort levels of white teachers of European descent teaching black history for the purpose of investigating an educational topic as a major assignment for our program. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

I am writing a report on this study as a requirement of the Master of Teaching Program. My course instructor who is providing support for the process this year is Dr. Angela MacDonald. My research supervisor is Dr. Arlo Kempf. The purpose of this requirement is to allow us to become familiar with a variety of ways to do research. My data collection consists of a 40 minute interview that will be tape-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient to you. I can conduct the interview at your office or workplace, in a public place, or anywhere else that you might prefer.

The contents of this interview will be used for my assignment, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a conference or publication. I will not use your name or anything else that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information remains confidential. The only people who will have access to my assignment work will be my research supervisor and my course instructor. You are free to change your mind at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may decline to answer any specific questions. I will destroy the tape recording after the paper has been presented and/or published which may take up to five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to you for assisting in the project, and I will share with you a copy of my notes to ensure accuracy.

Please sign the attached form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher name: Anita McFarlane

Phone number: (416) – 786- 9293                  Email: anita.mcfarlane@mail.utoronto.ca
Instructor’s Name: Dr. Angela MacDonald
Email: angela.macdonald@utoronto.ca

Research Supervisor’s Name: Arlo Kempf
Email: arlo.kempf@utoronto.ca

Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by Anita McFarlane and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described.

Signature: ______________________________________

Name (printed): ___________________________________

Date: ______________________
Appendix B: Interview Questions

- **Background information of interviewee**
  1. How long have you been teaching?
  2. What grades and subjects do you teach?
  3. Can you please describe the racial demographics of your students?

- **Interviewee’s understanding of the topic and/or context, issues, etc.**
  4. What is your opinion about teaching black history?
  5. Do you self-identify as a teacher who is confident and committed to teaching black history throughout the school year? How did you develop this confidence and commitment?
  6. Do you remember your first experience teaching black history? If so, what was the experience like for you?

- **Benefits/Challenges**
  7. Can you describe some of the common reactions of students when they are learning about black history?
  8. What benefits have you observed from teaching black history?
  9. What challenges do you personally encounter doing this work?
 10. Was there a specific time when you felt uncomfortable teaching an event, story or concept? Why did you feel discomfort?
 11. How do you feel about your skin colour impacting your confidence teaching black history?
 12. How do you feel about your skin colour impacting the way your students respond to teaching black history?
 13. How do you know if your students are engaged/disengaged/uncomfortable when you are teaching black history?
 14. Research has shown that many white teachers are generally uncomfortable teaching the history of oppressed groups that address race and racism: What would you suggest or what tips would you give these teachers to help them with their comfort level?
 15. What extra support do you need as a teacher teaching the history of oppressed groups whose information is often tokenized and outdated?

- **Strategies**
  16. What events or people do you focus on when teaching black history and why?
  17. How do you address sensitive topics or derogatory words that you come across when teaching black history?
18. What specific strategies do you use to be culturally responsive to your students?
19. What resources support you in this work?
20. How does your school teach black history?