

3-28-2022

New Teachers Enacting Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in Literacy Instruction

Sarri A. Gibson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/edd>

 Part of the [Education Commons](#)

CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY IN LITERACY INSTRUCTION

New Teachers Enacting Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in Literacy Instruction

Sarri A. Gibson

FACULTY RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Chair: Karen Buchanan, Ed.D.

Committee Member: Carrie Hall, Ph.D.

Committee Member: Frank Luzaich, Ed.D.

A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the
Doctor of Educational Leadership Department

In Partial Fulfillment for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

March 28, 2022



GEORGE FOX
UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION | EdD

NEW TEACHERS ENACTING CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY IN LITERACY INSTRUCTION, a Doctoral research project prepared by SARRI GIBSON in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership.

This dissertation has been approved and accepted by:

4/12/22 Karen J. Buchanan

Committee Chair

4/12/2022

Karen Buchanan, Ed.D.

Professor of Education

4/12/22 Carrie B. Hall

4/12/2022

Carrie Hall, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Education

4/12/22 Frank Luzaich

4/12/2022

Frank Luzaich, Ed.D.

Executive Director of Elementary
Programs
Lake Oswego School District

Abstract

This multiple case study investigated the experiences of majority culture teachers at the beginning of their careers as they navigated enacting culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) in their literacy instruction. The study explored how the new teachers described and enacted CRP in their classrooms, what they described as formative to their work as culturally relevant educators, what they identified as challenging, and what they found to be sustaining. The study shares case reports of each participant followed by a cross case analysis. Several themes were noteworthy from the analysis: 1) participants viewed an event or time period as formative, 2) participants felt their agency as teachers to incorporate CRP into their literacy instruction was limited; 3) participants persisted in enacting CRP within and beyond the curriculum and 4) participants held certain dispositions requisite for culturally relevant educators. Implications for teacher preparation programs include calls to prioritize cultural relevance in recruitment and hiring practices as well as ongoing professional development for instructors. Implications for school districts include recognizing that new teachers bring fresh ideas and resources regarding CRP. Ultimately, CRP requires nuanced and context dependent perspectives as well as ongoing reflexivity and collaboration.

Acknowledgments

I owe a debt of gratitude to so many who have been part of this doctoral journey; colleagues who encouraged, friends who listened, and family who came alongside me.

First, to the four brave, thoughtful, smart, and determined teachers who shared their time, their insights, their vulnerabilities, and their successes with me: Thank you for trusting me with your stories. You are gifted educators and I am excited to see how you continue to grow in your work!

My committee members were encouraging with their words, generous with their time and pushed me to think more deeply. Dr. Carrie Hall, Dr. Frank Luzaich, and especially my chair, Dr. Karen Buchanan guided me throughout this year. Thank you all for your belief in this work!

Dr. Susanna Thornhill bookended this doctoral journey for me, from introducing me to doctoral level classes three years ago- assigning me articles that empowered me to imagine this journey for myself to, this year, coaching me through teary Zoom meetings and finessing my words, even when I refused to quit writing in a passive voice. Susanna: Thank you. I truly could not have completed this journey without you.

I am grateful for the friends and colleagues who cheered me on, reassured me, and prayed for me along the way. Mindy: You trusted me with your students a decade ago, scaffolded my learning, taught me about imposter syndrome, introduced me to critical literacy, and spoke power to me. I do blame this doctoral journey mostly on you and I carry with me what it means to lift others up. Thank you for doing that for me. Carrie: thank you for the walks, for being a critical thinking partner, and a listening ear all these years. I am looking forward to having more time to think with you! Maranda: thank you for always being willing to walk to coffee or Thai food, for coaching me through the tough times, and celebrating with me during the ‘wins.’ I am so glad to

be in this with you! For Kristin and Sarah who have been in lockstep with me the past three years, who I have talked to almost every day these past months, and who I cannot wait to celebrate with on the other side: Thank you for your support with this dissertation and beyond!

A profound thank you to my family: Bill and Vanita: for your support always. I am so grateful for the love you have shown me the past many years. Thank you for always being on our team! To my first and best teacher, my role model, and my mentor: Mom, thank you for being my biggest cheerleader, for carting all these kids around, for bringing dinner, for bringing coffee, for reading my work. Thank you for being a model of a reflective practitioner, even still! I am so proud to be your daughter and share this work with you.

To my kids: Madeline, Garrett, Carter, and Rebeka. The way you have shown up for me and each other these past three years is something that I will hold on to, always. You have said “yes” to so many of my requests from hugs, to Sunday hikes so I could get away from my computer, to extra chores, and more. Being your mom is the great joy of my life and I am so proud of how selfless you have been these past three years.

And last, but certainly not least, to Joel: thank you for being my shoulder to cry on and my emotional bouncer, for keeping a clear vision of what is important and what is not, for cheering me on and believing in me! You have been the best partner as we have adjusted to grad school life, and during a global pandemic even! I love you and am so excited for more adventures . . . without my laptop!

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	8
EDUCATIONAL PROBLEM OF PRACTICE.....	10
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	12
PURPOSE OF THE STUDY.....	12
RESEARCH QUESTION	12
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	13
DEFINITION OF TERMS	13
LIMITATIONS.....	14
DELIMITATIONS	14
ORGANIZATION OF STUDY	14
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	16
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CRP	16
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	18
PARAMETERS OF LITERATURE REVIEW	18
CLASSROOM COMMUNITY AND EXPECTATIONS	20
CULTURAL COMPETENCE.....	21
CRITICAL/SOCIOPOLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS	22
REFLEXIVITY	24
PLANNING AND INSTRUCTION	25
BARRIERS.....	25
REMAINING QUESTIONS	27
CONCLUSION.....	27
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY.....	29
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	29
CASE STUDY	29
<i>Case Study Bounds</i>	30
PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLING.....	30
DATA COLLECTION	32

DATA SOURCES.....	33
<i>Interviews</i>	33
<i>Artifacts</i>	36
DATA ANALYSIS	36
<i>Phase One: Compiling</i>	37
<i>Phase Two: Disassembling</i>	37
<i>Phase Three: Reassembling</i>	37
<i>Phase Four: Cross Case Interpretation</i>	38
TRUSTWORTHINESS.....	38
THE RESEARCHER IN THE RESEARCH.....	40
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	42
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS	44
PARTICIPANTS.....	44
<i>Table 1</i>	44
<i>Lauren: “New teachers often bring in new ideas”</i>	46
<i>Riley: “It’s such a balancing act.”</i>	48
<i>Jack: “I won’t shy away from my privilege”</i>	52
<i>Chantel: “It’s been difficult . . . What keeps me going is the interactions I have with my kids.”</i>	55
CROSS CASE ANALYSIS	59
<i>Theme One: Experience as Catalyst</i>	59
<i>Theme Two: Limitations on Teacher Agency</i>	62
<i>Theme Three: Enacting CRP Within and Beyond Curriculum</i>	67
<i>Figure 1</i>	71
<i>Figure 2</i>	71
<i>Theme Four: Teacher Attitudes and Behaviors</i>	72
CONCLUSION.....	76
CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS.....	78
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	78
<i>How New Teachers Describe and Enact CRP</i>	79

<i>What New Teachers Identified As Formative in Teaching CRP</i>	80
<i>New Teachers' Constraints and Challenges in Enacting CRP</i>	81
<i>What Motivates and Sustains New Teachers as they Navigate CRP</i>	82
LIMITATIONS	83
IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE	84
<i>Implications for Teacher Preparation Programs</i>	84
<i>Implications for School Districts</i>	87
SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	87
CONCLUSION	88
REFERENCES	89
APPENDIX A	95
APPENDIX B	96
APPENDIX C	98
APPENDIX D	100
APPENDIX E	101

Chapter 1: Introduction

The seeds for this research study were planted in me long ago, during my first year as a new teacher. I looked around my classroom of eager second graders, noticing that they looked back at me with looks of anticipation mixed with apprehension. They seemed to trust me and believe that I knew how to teach them well. I felt a protective care for them and was determined to be worthy of that trust. And yet, within the first few days of our school year together, I began to recognize how ill-prepared I was to meet the needs of my emergent bilingual students. Two girls in particular were fluent in oral Spanish and early in developing reading and speaking skills in English; I struggled to teach them effectively. As time went on, I felt concerned about how little progress they were making. I felt deficient in my knowledge of how to teach them well. I knew I was missing something, something I can now name as a deeper understanding and appreciation for their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Unintentionally, I was viewing these students through a deficit perspective; that they were lacking something necessary for academic success in my classroom.

In the early 1990s, researchers like Gloria Ladson-Billings (1990, 1995) and Geneva Gay (2002) began a research movement based on a vociferous rejection of deficit frameworks that position children of color (specifically African American children) as culturally and linguistically disadvantaged. Ladson-Billings recruited parents, community members, and students to identify teachers who they believed were successful in teaching African American students to name characteristics of these effective teachers while also problematizing past notions of “academic success.” Her research helped her identify common qualities among teachers who did the work she eventually termed “culturally relevant pedagogy.” Core among

“culturally relevant” (CR) teachers’ qualities were identifiable beliefs about themselves, of their students, and of knowledge. These lay in contrast to beliefs held by assimilationist teachers. For Ladson-Billings, assimilationist teachers often viewed the status quo in education as “good enough,” perhaps even feeling that culturally and linguistically diverse students should “assimilate” into white cultural ideals in order to be successful in education. Such teachers often view their roles as technicians, instilling knowledge in students who are either willing or unwilling to learn. In contrast, CR educators believed teaching is an art form and held the belief that all children can learn alongside a teacher who helps them make connections and grow. These teachers felt passionate about their work and viewed education through a critical lens, emphasizing community and collaboration as a means to elevate the gifts of all students (Ladson-Billings, 1990, p. 340).

With continued research, Ladson-Billings formed these understandings into what is now known as a Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) framework. Ladson-Billings describes CRP as “a theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate” (p. 469). This framework emphasizes what is possible for students when teachers focus on developing students academically, while embracing students’ resources. Teachers who teach this way prioritize the development of a social/critical competence (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 483), which means pushing back against systemic inequities both in the field of education and society in general. Geneva Gay (2002) built on Ladson-Billings’s work, focusing on the importance of helping preservice teachers take up this work of practicing culturally relevant ways of interacting with students and curriculum; her work contributed to what is known today as “Culturally Responsive Pedagogy.” More recently

Paris (2012) and McCarty and Lee (2014) have called for updated understandings to CRP and advocate for replacing the terms ‘relevant’ and ‘responsive’ with ‘sustaining’ and ‘revitalizing’ to account for the increasing plurality of society. Ladson-Billings (2014), Gay (2002), Paris (2012), McCarty and Lee (2014), all argue for teachers to intentionally address and shrink the discrepancies in racial, cultural, and linguistic demographics, also termed the ‘education debt.’ Without such intentional efforts, teachers inadvertently perpetuate students’ lack of success in schools.

Educational Problem of Practice

Demographic discrepancies between teachers and students have long been part of the discussions about why educational equity is so challenging; as of several years ago, 80% of teachers were white compared to only 47% of students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). It is estimated that by 2027, diverse students will comprise over 55% of the public K-12 student body (Hussar & Bailey, 2019). In Oregon, where this study will take place, 38% of students are ethnically and linguistically diverse, compared to only 11% of teachers. Currently, 22% of individuals enrolled in Oregon educator preparation programs (EPP) are ethnically and linguistically diverse (Educator Advancement Council, 2020).

This discrepancy is problematic given that research indicates white teachers often avoid identifying and addressing issues of race, both personally and professionally (Mosley & Rogers, 2011). This lack of reflexiveness can perpetuate systemic inequities, such as the often-unexamined cost of holding deficit views of diverse students, or unconsciously believing they would be better served if they assimilated students to white ways of being (Hyland, 2005). While teachers do not need to be racially, culturally, or linguistically diverse to be effective, reflective, and race-aware; they do need to practice CRP (Ladson-Billings, 1995) to overcome tendencies to

unconsciously perpetuate inequities as part of the dominant culture. Likewise, just because a preservice teacher is a person of color does not mean they are critical or fully prepared to teach a diverse student body (Anthony-Stevens et al., 2017). Preservice and in-service teachers who communicate a desire to engage in CRP are, at times, unable to move past their own privilege and whiteness, and other times recognize their roles in systems based on white supremacy (Aronson & Meyers, 2020; Willey & Magee, 2018). Realizing the importance of CRP, and then engaging in the practice of CRP is challenging because it requires teachers to unlearn much of their knowing; this disequilibrium takes commitment and stamina.

This study sought to explore the experiences and stories of majority culture probationary teachers who have deliberately chosen to practice CRP. Through interviews, observations, and artifacts from their participation in teacher preparation and current practice, I attempted to better understand how new teachers purposefully take up CRP, and how they view their commitment to this work as being shaped by their teacher preparation program. This study posits that teachers' literacy instruction practices are a particularly relevant site to explore these issues, where representation in children's literature, along with book selection that attends to critical and race-based issues constitutes a particularly useful ground for teachers and students to explore culturally relevant pedagogical practices.

This study took place at a time in history when social, political, and racial tensions were high. Critical race theory (CRT) was been the topic at many school board meetings across the country, and governors in several states signed bills restricting the teaching of institutional racism, white privilege, and CRT (Stout & LeMee, 2021). While CRT and CRP are not directly connected, the unrest surrounding CRT spilled over to practices connected to cultural relevancy, including diverse representation in children's literature and critical conversations in classrooms.

Theoretical Framework

This case study research relies on the framework of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, developed by Ladson-Billings (1990), which emphasizes instruction rooted in cultural competence and critical consciousness alongside a commitment to students' academic growth (p. 483). CRP has been used in educational case studies to explore teachers' experiences, such as in Ciampa and Reisboard's (2021) study of how preservice teachers in an urban elementary school used children's literature to practice CRP. Similarly, Durden et al.'s (2014) ethnographic case study indicated how CRP was woven into early childhood educational settings. A multiple case study by Durden and Truscott (2013) revealed the ways three preservice teachers articulated what it meant to practice critical reflectivity and gain further insight into educational practices that can effectively help teachers take up CRP. Each of these studies served as precedence for the study I conducted here, by illustrating the usefulness of case study for exploring complex and challenging sites of change.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of majority culture teachers who are practicing CRP. I worked to better understand the factors that contribute to educators' decision to teach from a CRP framework, along with the challenges that come with this work. I wished to better understand what it looks like for participants to enact CRP in their literacy planning, preparation, and instruction. Current research describes the experiences and understandings of preservice teachers in educator preparation programs but there is a lack of research exploring the experiences of new teachers who are teaching using a CRP framework.

Research Question

This study is oriented around the following question and sub questions:

How do majority culture teachers who are at the beginning of their teaching career describe and enact CRP in their literacy instruction?

What experiences do they identify as formative for their current practice?

What constraints or challenges do they identify in this work?

What motivates or sustains them in this work?

Significance of the Study

Nationwide, political, social, and racial tensions are high. The teaching of critical race theory has been banned by school boards and even several state legislatures across the country. While the need for teaching using culturally relevant pedagogy is not new, current political and social contexts make it more critical than ever before. This investigation gives insight into how teachers new to the field, who enter it at this time in history, and work in these specific communities, found the courage to grapple with their own privilege enough to enact CRP in their literacy instruction and navigate the associated challenges of this work. The results of this study may enable teacher educators to consider how best to help pre-service educators see the necessity of CRP and take up the challenge of deconstructing their own privilege on behalf of more just action. School districts may also benefit from understanding the results of this study in planning support and continued professional development for new teachers, in order to better serve an increasingly diverse student population.

Definition of Terms

Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP). A way of teaching that requires educators to have high academic expectations for students, an understanding and willingness to prioritize cultural competence, and an understanding and practice of a sociopolitical consciousness. (Ladson-Billings, 1990, p. 483) CRP also requires that teachers operate from an asset-based perspective in their interactions with students and families.

Majority culture. Those who hold more power and privilege. For the purposes of this study, majority culture refers to individuals who identify as Caucasian.

Preservice teachers. Individuals who are part of an educator preparation program.

Student teachers. Individuals who are in their final stage of an educator preparation program and fulfilling the practicum requirements in schools.

Probationary teacher. Teachers who have been teaching for three years or less.

Limitations

There were several limitations that impacted this study. First, I was limited by time constraints as I wanted to respect participants' time and acknowledge their workload, so I conducted three interviews that spanned one hour or less. I was also limited by an inability to visit most classrooms due to restrictions put in place due because of the global pandemic. Participants had the agency in what to share with me and what to withhold, which limits the results of this study as well. Finally, I was limited by the participants that agreed to join me in this research. Their individual backgrounds, school, and community contexts may have impacted this study in that I was only able to represent a narrow set of experiences.

Delimitations

I constructed boundaries of this case study to make it feasible for my dissertation journey. These delimitations included interviews needing to be conducted between December 15, 2021 and February 17, 2022. In order to guide participant selection, I utilized a confidential informant with knowledge of the participant pool most appropriate for this study, which is a process I described in further detail in Chapter Three.

Organization of Study

This dissertation is organized in five chapters. In Chapter One, I offered a rationale for this study, along with discussing the educational problem of practice, the study's purpose and research questions. Chapter Two outlines related research and relevant literature connected to CRP-based literacy instructional frameworks in elementary classrooms. I describe the methodology used for this study in Chapter Three as well as the context for the study, and research design. Chapter Three concludes with a description of research ethics in regard to this study. In Chapter Four, I present the findings; describing the experiences of new teachers as they enact CRP in their classrooms, including what motivates them in the work, challenges they face, and items/moments that were formative in their learning related to CRP. Finally, the study concludes with a discussion of cases in Chapter Five and offers implications for various stakeholders in educational research and teacher preparation.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter offers an historical account of the research literature around culturally relevant pedagogy, tracing the last decade's evolution of educational understandings about CRP. The theoretical framework for this study is encapsulated under the umbrella of CRP; related concepts also include funds of knowledge, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and culturally relevant pedagogy, which point to what new teachers need to know and practice in order to effectively enact CRP in their literacy work. The balance of this literature review discusses what research indicates about how in-service teachers practice CRP, what CRP looks like in literacy instruction, and what questions are left to be answered.

Historical Background of CRP

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, researchers who sought to counter the deficit discourse about minority students began to get traction. In the 1990s, Ladson-Billings examined the poor educational outcomes for Black students and called teachers and educational researchers to account. She identified teachers who were effective at teaching African American students and studied them for several years. Her work challenged the notion of academic success as measured solely by standardized tests or assimilation to white values; she advocated that Black students could be academically excellent while maintaining their personal and cultural identity if their teachers could change the ways they viewed students (1990, 1995). Eventually, her landmark study resulted in the development of CRP.

At a similar time in history, Moll and colleagues (1992) were working with bilingual learners to understand how students' school experiences were often isolated and disconnected from their home and community experiences. This was especially true for culturally and linguistically diverse students. These researchers worked to find ways to connect students' home

and community experiences with school and in doing so, developed the concept of *funds of knowledge*. The funds of knowledge framework is an assets-based framework that honors students' ways of knowing and actively incorporates their home and community experiences into classroom life. This work positions teachers as learners seeking to move beyond a general understanding of students' culture in order to develop and enact "strategic knowledge and related activities essential in households' functioning, development, and well being" (p. 139).

Building on the work of Ladson-Billings, Moll, and others, Gay (2002) acknowledged the complexities of teaching in a diverse society and advocates for educators to remove the cultural barriers students face in schools and classrooms. Nearly two decades ago, Gay called on educator preparation programs to help teachers understand and support their diverse students. This includes a recognition of the ways students must perform academic tasks while functioning under unfamiliar cultural conditions (p. 114), which Gay termed "double jeopardy." Gay developed the framework of culturally responsive teaching (CRT), which emphasizes using students' culture as a resource instead of a deficit. When educators work to understand and value students' cultures, they are better able to teach without requiring their students to compromise their cultural identity in order to have access to educational opportunities (Gay, 2010).

As this work has evolved over the years, the terms have evolved as well. More recently, scholars have called for an update to the understanding and practice of CRP and culturally responsive teaching (McCarty & Lee, 2014; Paris, 2012) out of concern that the terms "relevant" and "responsive" are not enough to encapsulate how critical this work is. This is particularly relevant in the pluralistic society in which we now live (Paris, 2012). Paris's work offers culturally sustaining pedagogy as an updated framework, which builds on the culturally relevant pedagogy of Ladson-Billings and the culturally responsive framework put forward by Gay. Paris

posits that as culture continually shifts, educators must also shift their understanding of culture and learning. Similarly, McCarty and Lee's research with Native American communities name "cultural revitalization" as a priority for students whose Indigenous nations are actively working to reclaim language, traditions, and presence. These scholars agree that what culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogies look like in practice is highly dependent on the specifics of the communities, but that all teachers share a responsibility to engage in this work.

Theoretical Framework

For the purpose of this literature review and study, I utilized the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) with the added layer of culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogy (McCarty & Lee, 2014; Paris, 2012). Educators who enact this framework are characterized by a belief in all students' ability to develop academically, a commitment to cultural competence, and a focus on sociopolitical/critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 483) while prioritizing students' multilingualism and multiculturalism (Paris, 2012). Additionally, these educators have a non-assimilationist notion of themselves, of social relations, and of conceptions of knowledge. This means they understand their role to be part of a bigger picture as they mediate connections for students, build community, think critically in fluid learning environments (Ladson-Billings, 1990), and foster "linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" (Paris, 2012, p. 95).

The scholars who inform this theoretical framework advocate for an updated understanding of what it means to be a 'good' teacher to multicultural and multilingual learners. For the purposes of this study, I am using the term culturally relevant pedagogy because that is the terminology most used in the field, at present.

Parameters of Literature Review

While the work of enacting CRP is specific to the framework described above, there are other constructs that are sometimes used when describing teaching in a way that includes high expectations for students, cultural competency, and a critical consciousness. For this literature review, I included peer reviewed articles derived from the search terms “culturally relevant pedagogy,” “literacy,” “social justice,” “culturally responsive teaching,” “culturally sustaining pedagogy,” and “culturally revitalizing pedagogy.” Because many of these searches yielded articles about critical literacy for reading instruction, I refined the search with the term “writing,” which resulted in articles that gave me valuable insight into how teachers enact CRP within instructional aims around composition and language use. To find studies that focused on the experiences, perceptions, and perspectives of new teachers, but not student teachers, I refined searches with “new teacher,” “inductee teacher,” as well as “in-service teacher.” I included studies of educators who work with students from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade, with the bulk of the focus being on kindergarten through middle school. Given that the topic of CRP is deeply influenced by the current social, political, and cultural environment, this literature review focuses on articles published after 2010, with a few exceptions for studies that aligned closely with enacting CRP via literacy instruction with majority culture and/or new teachers.

There are few studies that examine how new teachers describe and enact CRP in literacy instruction, and even fewer that focus on how majority culture educators make sense of this work. Some articles detailed studies that focused on literacy and CRP specifically while others shared a broader view on general content areas with a framework of CRP. When articles were more broadly focused, I attended to the literacy-specific aspects of these studies. The dearth of research on my particular topic suggests the potential for this study to provide promising insights

for the field of teacher education and professional development by sharing how newly certified majority culture teachers enact CRP through literacy planning, preparation, and instruction.

Through a careful and thorough examination of the literature, I identified commonalities, connections, and themes between articles, based on how teachers are enacting CRP in their literacy instruction. These themes are explained in detail in the following sections and include a) classroom community and expectations, b) cultural competence, c) critical/sociopolitical consciousness, d) reflexivity, e) planning, and f) challenges. The literature review that follows is a synthesis of work done by researchers examining the experience of teachers and observations of classrooms related to teaching for social justice.

Classroom Community and Expectations

CRP classrooms emphasize the importance of a strong classroom community. Teachers understand that showing care, building trust, and forming relationships with and between students are essential elements for creating a positive learning environment (Aronson, 2020; Borrero et al., 2018; Carter & Bradford, 2019). Building trust and forming strong relationships with students comes from knowing students well (Aronson, 2020; Borrero et al., 2018), as indicated by findings from Borrero et al.'s (2018) study, where participants indicated the importance of not making assumptions about students.

While the idea of building classroom community is widely accepted as “just good teaching,” one element is specific and essential to CRP, and that is believing students have a wealth of knowledge that they bring to the classroom each day (Almaguer, 2021; Borrero et al., 2018; La Serna, 2020; Woodard et al., 2017). This asset-based discourse requires teachers to know and capitalize on students' funds of knowledge (Moll et al. 1992) when building relationships and planning curriculum. In order to connect with students, respect is essential. In

the classrooms that Woodard et al. (2017) studied, writing teachers respected students while capitalizing on students' funds of knowledge related to language use. The dominant language in the school community was African American English (AAE); teachers discussed the history of AAE, positioning it as legitimate as they also taught Dominant American English (DAE). Acknowledging language use is part of students' funds of knowledge is a powerful way to build relationships and trust with students.

A culturally relevant classroom community requires that teachers have clear and high expectations for all students and provide academic support so students can reach those expectations (Aronson, 2020; La Serna, 2020; Ladson-Billings, 1995). In Aronson's (2020) study, the teacher was clear about her high expectations for all students, but also showed flexibility as students strove to meet the objectives. She affirmed students' approximations and applauded problem-solving conversations through the learning process. The teachers in La Serna's (2020) study did this by stating and posting content and language objectives for each lesson, so students would understand the purpose of their work.

Cultural Competence

Cultural competence is another tenant of CRP (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Teachers who practice CRP in literacy instruction develop cultural competence in their students when they choose books that relate to and reflect their students' lives (Almaguer, 2021; Aronson, 2020; Burke & Collier, 2017; Murray-Orr & Mitton, 2021). Almaguer (2021) describes an interactive read aloud in a dual language classroom where she purposefully chose books with which her students could easily connect. She knew students would be highly engaged as she planned with their "affective and cultural domains" (p. 2) in mind while also planning for literacy development. She paired these culturally rich read-alouds with related guest speakers;

often family members or other community members that led students in an activity related to their skill or trade. Students would reflect on the read aloud and experience by writing in a journal, in whichever language they chose. This weaving of community, language, and relatable content is a strong example of culturally competent literacy instruction.

Paris (2012) reminds scholars of the ‘dynamic, shifting, and ever-changing nature of cultural practices’ (p. 95) in his argument to provide not just relevant and responsive education but sustaining and even revitalizing practice, as well. Borrero et al. (2018) extended this work by identifying teachers who “challenge monolithic views of cultural relevance” (p. 27). These educators were aware of the problematic nature of adopting a static understanding of culture. Instead, they sought to honor students' multiple and intersecting identities as they chose literature for their classroom and planned writing assignments.

Critical/Sociopolitical Consciousness

Teaching literacy using a framework of CRP requires that educators develop a “critical stance toward and critical action against unequal power” (Paris, 2012, p. 94). This tenet of CRP is also the one that seems to be the most diluted, omitted, or ignored when researchers try to see CRP enacted in classrooms (Aronson, 2020; Carter & Bedford, 2019; Ciampa & Reisboard, 2021; La Serna, 2020). Sometimes teachers have the awareness but lack the ability to do more than advocate for a student at an individual level. One example of this is when a teacher knew a multilingual learner needed additional support beyond what she could provide, but felt hesitant to refer him for special education testing because she was aware multilingual learners are often overidentified for special education services (Aronson, 2020).

In other circumstances, teachers understood that critical consciousness is important, but were unsure how to enact it in the classroom. For example, teachers in Ciampa and Reisboard’s

(2021) study questioned whether it was appropriate to discuss race and racism in their early childhood classrooms. In her study of teacher practices that included classroom observations, interviews, and lesson plan analysis in a dual language program, La Serna (2020) did not see any evidence of the critical consciousness that is required for CRP. Similarly, in Carter and Bradford's (2019) mixed method study, the majority of teachers reported that CRP positively impacted their students. But when an accompanying survey asked teachers to self-report their self-efficacy related to practicing CRP, teachers self-reported low-self efficacy around questions related to critical consciousness. The survey results mirrored the follow up interviews as well.

One aspect of critical consciousness that is found in many culturally relevant classrooms is critical literacy. Critical literacy is a lens used in teaching and learning that examines power relationships between text and reader. The principles of critical literacy include using learners' funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) and recognizing how neither texts nor readers are neutral (Vasquez, et al., 2019). Teachers who practice critical literacy help students examine the world as a socially constructed text, consider power structures and sociopolitical systems, and ultimately combat inequality. Early childhood students can engage in critical literacy and critical conversations through what Darvin (2017) terms cultural and political vignettes. Darvin shared a lesson in a first-grade classroom about uniqueness through picture books about a spoon and a spork who each feel out of place in the utensil drawer. The teachers led students through a scenario, or vignette as a comprehensive pre-reading activity, had students practice building empathy by representing a character, and brainstorming prompts used for reflection. Students participate in multiple engagements to support various viewpoints and help them take a critical stance.

Older students who learn in critical literacy environments benefit from opportunities to consider various perspectives, challenge societal narratives, and develop a critical consciousness around their responsibility to be a global citizen. Mid-level and high school teachers advocate for critical literacy through exposure to multiple and even contradictory perspectives (Borrero et al., 2018; Murray-Orr & Mitton, 2021). A teacher in Murray-Orr & Mitton's (2021) study described the ways students considered multiple perspectives countering dominant narratives through examining primary sources during a lesson on Canadian history (p. 256). In Borrero et al.'s (2018) study, a teacher argued for the inclusion of both dominant and counter narratives to address the notion that students cannot conduct critical analyses without all perspectives. While researchers identify ways that critical literacy is enacted in classrooms and how it is beneficial to students, there is a dearth of research on the experiences of teachers who take up this work.

Reflexivity

Teachers who practice CRP are reflective as a way of being (Borrero et al., 2018). This reflexivity is evident as participants analyzed their own teaching (Aronson, 2020; Borrero et al., 2018; Ciampa & Reisboard, 2021) but also as they considered their own beliefs and positionality (Aronson, 2020; Borrero et al., 2018; Burke & Collier, 2017; Hyland, 2005). The teachers in Borrero et al.'s (2018) study identified self-reflection as essential for enacting CRP, both for short- and long-term goals. Another teacher named the importance of modeling self-reflection for students if they are asking students to think deeply about their own lives. Hyland (2005) shared a teacher's conversation as she reflected on her handling of a classroom management situation. This teacher was able to critically consider the situation and ultimately admit that her decisions in that moment led her to be complicit in racism. This depth of reflection and

vulnerable acknowledgement is rare, but essential for majority culture teachers to do if they want to dismantle oppressive practices.

Planning and Instruction

CRP is enacted in various ways, depending on a community's context and needs (McCarty & Lee, 2014). Intentionality in planning and preparation is foundational in classrooms where CRP is practiced. Not just a list of activities, CRP is a lens through which teachers engage in continuous discourse and thoughtful planning (Borrero et al., 2018). Multiple researchers point to the importance of intentionality in literacy planning for successful CRP implementation (Almaguer, 2021; Burke & Collier, 2017; Darvin, 2017; Murray-Orr & Mitton, 2021; Pomerantz, 2018; Woodard et al., 2017; Zoch, 2017). This includes such element as teachers carefully choosing books and materials that represent and engage students (Woodard et al., 2017; Zoch, 2017) and inviting guest speakers that connect students' experiences with classroom literacy (Almaguer, 2021). Intentionality in planning also includes thoughtfully designed discussions (Burke & Collier; Darvin, 2017; Zoch, 2017) like teachers' uses of cultural and political vignettes to conduct "pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading and writing activities" (Darvin, 2017, p. 131). Intentionally weaving social issues like gender equality through content areas is a way to purposefully build multiple opportunities for students to read critically and understand multiple perspectives (Murray-Orr & Mitton, 2021).

Barriers

Teachers report encountering several barriers as they enact CRP in literacy instruction. These include a lack of resources (Burke & Collier, 2017; Borrero et al., 2018; La Serna, 2020; Vittrup, 2016), pressure surrounding high stakes assessment (Aronson, 2020; Borrero et al., 2018; Vittrup, 2016), challenges between the conceptualization and actual practice of teaching

literacy using a framework of CRP (Borrero et al., 2018; Burke & Collier, 2017; Carter & Bradford, 2019; Ciampa & Reisboard, 2021), and opposition from parents or community members (Woodard et al., 2017).

Teachers often lack time, materials, and models of CRP-based literacy instruction; these constitute major barriers to CRP. Teachers shared a feeling of ‘going at it alone’ when discussing issues related to social justice in their classrooms, such as residential schooling (Burke & Collier, 2017). In Vittrup’s (2016) mixed methods study, most educators reported that teaching race related issues was important, but few reported actually discussing race in the classroom. Some teachers cited not having adequate curriculum or materials as a reason for the omission of multicultural lessons while others said that they lacked time to implement the topic. Educators in Borrero et al.’s (2018) study noted that the standard curriculum did not adequately address authentic CRP and without “mentors and models” (p. 33), teachers were required to find and create materials as well as attempt CRP on their own.

The high stakes testing environments characteristic of public education is another barrier to enacting CRP. Teachers who feel stressed about their students making benchmark on tests may shy away from what they view as deviations from the standard curriculum, even if they believe CRP is worth their time. Aronson (2020) reported that the teacher in her case study felt so much pressure surrounding testing that it impacted her willingness to enact CRP; she was torn between pedagogical beliefs and the requirements imposed by the school and state. She also felt a responsibility to prepare students for the test, which led her to question how much time she should spend on culturally relevant literacy instruction, versus equipping her students to assimilate to the culture of testing. Teachers in Vittrup’s (2016) and Borrero et al.’s (2018)

studies also identified requirements to teach their districts' curriculum with fidelity in order for students to be prepared for high stakes testing.

Finally, as teachers enact the important work that encompasses CRP, they share the complexities between the abstract theory of CRP and the practice. Carter and Bradford (2019) found that all the teachers in their mixed methods study reported that CRP positively impacted students but they felt least efficacious enacting CRP aspects of capitalizing on students' native languages or cultural backgrounds. Educators in Ciampa and Reisboard's study (2021) cited CRP as important but felt a lack of preparation needed to tackle complex or potentially controversial topics in their classrooms. They reported avoiding the conversations completely, feeling afraid and uncomfortable that they did not know enough about the topic.

Remaining Questions

Researchers have explored CRP from several perspectives; how students benefit from CRP being enacted in the classroom (Carter & Bedford, 2019), the self-efficacy of teachers (Burke & Collier, 2017; Durden et al., 2015), teachers' understandings in professional development settings (Ciampa & Reisboard, 2021; Pomerantz), and the effectiveness of various strategies (Darvin, 2017; La Serna 2020; Woodard et al., 2017). This body of research provides both broad and nuanced views of CPR in literacy instruction. And, there is a paucity of research surrounding how newly certified teachers are navigating the complex landscape of enacting CRP in a liminal season of transitioning from teacher preparation to in-service teaching. This study helps to fill this space as I tried to understand how newly certified teachers enact CRP in their literacy instruction as well as what they identify as influential to their practice, what challenges them, and what sustains them.

Conclusion

Teachers who enact CRP in their literacy planning, preparation, and instruction are characterized by having high expectations for students while providing a safe and strong classroom community. They are culturally competent and have a developed critical and sociopolitical consciousness. These teachers are reflective about their work as well as their positionality in their classroom and intentional in their planning and preparation. They identify challenges in their work but work to overcome them in service to their students.

In this literature review I have examined the origins of CRP, how the work of CRP has grown through the decades, and how it continues in present day. I have explained the theoretical framework that informs this study as well as the parameters of this literatures review. Finally, I have given an account of the experiences of educators who are enacting CRP in their literacy instruction.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This research was a multiple case study exploring the experiences of majority culture elementary teachers who are engaged with teaching literacy through a CRP lens. This chapter outlines the study's design and methodological approach, including participant selection, data sources and analysis. It outlines considerations for trustworthiness which ensure a credible and transparent study. I have also included a discussion of my interest in this topic, along with ethical considerations.

Research Questions

I have oriented this study around the following questions:

How do majority culture teachers who are at the beginning of their teaching career describe and enact CRP in their literacy instruction?

What experiences do they identify as formative for their current practice?

What constraints or challenges do they identify in this work?

What motivates or sustains them in this work?

Case Study

Case study is a useful method for educational researchers whose interests are exploratory and aimed at understanding complex and nonlinear processes. Merriam (1988) describes case study as seeking "holistic description and explanation" (p. 10) while Yin (2014) notes the usefulness of case study for understanding an issue or situation where the case and context are intertwined. Multiple case study design is compelling to utilize in this study to examine perceptions and experiences of new teachers, thus providing the ability to explore the complex and nuanced experiences and perceptions of the participants. In this multiple case study design, I utilized comparative case analysis to examine the teaching and learning journeys of four

probationary teachers who implemented CRP in their literacy instruction. An examination of such contexts and processes has the potential to further educational understanding of how teachers enact this work, the complex ecologies which shape it, and the memorable experiences of teacher preparation programs that inspire it.

Case Study Bounds

In educational research, a case can be defined at many levels, at macro levels such as state- or federal-level programs or micro levels such as an exploration of a particular classroom or student. This study focuses on a select few teachers and their experiences. While I describe the ideal qualities of my anticipated participants for this study in the following section, the bounds of this case focus on what it means to practice CRP in one's literacy practices, especially when one is a member of the majority cultural milieu and seeking to better meet the needs of her diverse learners. Since the majority of elementary teachers are white (Educator Advancement Council, 2020, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017) and given what the field knows about the challenges of enacting a critical and culturally relevant pedagogy (Aronson & Meyers, 2020; Willey & Magee, 2018), it is worth exploring how teachers who are new to the profession work within their professional responsibilities while navigating these challenges.

Participants and Sampling

Given the specific aims of this study, I selected participants purposely. "Purposive sampling is based on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand, gain insight [about a particular thing]; therefore, one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most" (Merriam, 1998, p. 48). To that end, I recruited participants who: 1) were members of the majority culture in terms of their demographic profile, 2) have taught for three or fewer years, and 3) were actively practicing CRP in their literacy instruction, within or beyond mandated

curricular or instructional guidelines required by their districts. Participants were also reflexive and articulate, and shared experiences from their undergraduate and teacher preparation programs that they viewed as supportive of their practice. To that end, I employed an informal gatekeeper who gave me insight into a potential participant pool. This individual had extensive experience in the field of teaching literacy using CRP and knowledge of students who were leaning into the work of CRP during their teacher preparation. She did not have any power over me or any stake in the outcome of this study, thus, she constituted someone who was able to support this study. With her permission, I asked her to recommend teachers who met the criteria above, who are also contending with their own privilege and have an asset-based view of their students.

I purposely narrowed my sample to include teachers from the majority culture because the demographics of the teaching force across the United States, as well as in the Pacific Northwest, are overwhelmingly white (Educator Advancement Council, 2020; National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Because of this, I wanted to learn about the experiences of those in the majority culture who were contending with their own privilege as they sought to better meet the needs of diverse learners. Researchers like Ladson-Billings (1990; 1995) and Gay (2002) shape and inform these priorities.

Goetz and LeCompte (1984) share a detailed schema that represents various ways of criterion-based sampling. This study employed reputational-case selection. Reputational-case selection occurs when “instances are chosen on the recommendation of experienced experts in an area” (p. 82). The informal gatekeeper for this study recommended eight potential participants, and emailed them (Appendix A) to introduce them to me and the study. Four potential participants responded with interest, and I met with them via a brief, informal Zoom call. During

the call, each participant verbally assented to being part of the study. Following the Zoom call, I emailed each participant an informed consent form (Appendix C), and a detailed description of what we had discussed during the Zoom meeting detailing what the study included. Within 48 hours each participant responded via email that they still wanted to participate and they included the signed informed consent form in their response. I want to note that I worked at Oak University several years ago as an adjunct professor, so I knew three of the potential candidates (Riley, Lauren, and Chantel) tangentially. I did not teach them in courses having to do with literacy; I only taught in a course very early during their time in the TPP.

This study is also impacted by a global pandemic, caused by the COVID-19 virus. Students, parents, teachers, administrators, and support staff are navigating this season burdened with stress and uncertainty. At the time when interviews were conducted, the world was 20 months into this global pandemic. Study participants have had their teacher preparation, student teaching, and early teaching experience shaped by the pandemic. While I had planned to visit the classrooms of the participants, I was not able to do so, due to COVID-19 restrictions, apart from Riley. Since participating in this study required an investment of time, I gave participants a token of appreciation in the form of a \$25 gift card towards books or supplies for their classroom.

Data Collection

In qualitative research, pieces of information become meaningful and are transformed into data. This process takes place through the filters of a researcher's perspectives, interests, and areas of study (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 2015). Researchers using a case study methodology strengthen the veracity of their study by triangulating sources of data. In order to better understand the experience of new teachers enacting CRP in their literacy planning, preparation, instruction, I collected data through interviews and examination of relevant artifacts. Initially, I

had planned to conduct classroom observations as well, but that was not possible due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Data Sources

Interviews

Interviews were the primary source of the data in this study. Through interviews, researchers are able to collect data through not only what a participant says, but also how they say it; body language, emotions, and emphasis are equally important sources of information. (Josselson, 2013; Seidman, 2019). I engaged participants in three interviews, following Seidman's interview model. This model emphasizes the relationship between the researcher and participant and allows time to thoroughly explore participants' histories, contexts, details of experience, and cultivate the reflective space to consider the meaning of a topic. As an educator, I made some adjustments to Seidman's model so that I was able to better understand the participants' contexts as well as examine artifacts that show evidence of how each teacher thinks of CRP in literacy instruction.

I had planned to ask participants if we can conduct the first interview in their classroom, so that I could see how they had arranged their classroom literacy spaces. However, that was not possible due to COVID-19 restrictions, so all first interviews took place via Zoom video conference and were audio recorded. This interview explored each participant's history related to how they came to be a teacher practicing CRP. As our initial interview, this experience established the foundation of a working relationship between myself and participants. This means it was imperative to create an atmosphere in which the participant felt relaxed and trusted that I would authentically represent their experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Seidman (2019) also places the responsibility of setting the tone for a respectful and trusting relationship with

participants and recommends that during this initial session, researchers ask ‘how’ questions instead of ‘why’ questions in order to draw out a range of stories. This interview was semi-structured with open-ended questions and focused on learning about the participant’s history while making them feel comfortable. The interview was approximately 45 minutes in length and audio recorded, with participants’ permission. During this interview, I also encouraged participants to bring any artifacts to our second meeting that they felt represent what teaching CRP in literacy means to them. Ideas for this artifact could have included assignments from their teacher preparation program, emails from colleagues, parents, students, or administrators, or recent student work, or anything else the participant identified as representative to their work. Interview questions are included in Appendix B.

The second interview began with a brief member checking as a response to what I compiled during interview one. During this member checking, I recounted my understandings back to each participant to give them an opportunity to clarify or share additional information. Following this time of reflection, the remainder of the second interview was focused on participants’ current teaching contexts and CRP practices. Seidman (2019) urges that researchers ask questions that encourage participants to focus on their experiences that they have not yet reflected upon. To this end, I focused this interview on learning what practicing CRP is like for participants, including their challenges and successes. I worked to understand their experiences of teaching literacy through a lens of CRP. This second meeting was also a time for participants to share artifacts that they felt represented their practice of CRP in literacy planning, preparation, or instruction. The second interview took place via Zoom for all participants, except Riley. As I was still hopeful that I would be able to visit most participants’ classrooms, I accepted her invitation to meet at her school on a Saturday. All interviews lasted about an hour, were audio

recorded. Participants showed me their artifacts during the meeting and shared pictures with me so I could include them as evidence (Appendix E).

The final interview focused on what it meant for each participant to be a teacher practicing CRP. Seidman (2019) recommends that the researcher asks questions that tie the understandings from the first two interviews to this final interview so the participant can reflect, making deeper meaning of the experience. Thus, this interview was a time to conduct thorough member checking with each participant. I spent approximately half of this interview sharing a visual timeline with descriptions of the participant's journey learning and teaching with a CRP lens and asked participants to confirm or expand on whatever elements they noticed. As participants reviewed the visual timeline we both turned off our cameras and sounds in order to provide some time and space for reflection. Participants were able to add notes to the timeline. When participants were ready, we came back together and discussed areas that needed clarification or additional information. During this time two of the participants provided significant amounts of additional information about incomplete understandings that I held.

When member checking was complete, we moved into the final questions. The final interviews took place on Zoom for each participant, were audio recorded, and lasted approximately 60 minutes.

Throughout each interview, I practiced empathy in my listening, questioning, and responses (Josselson, 2013). This means I listened to understand rather than prioritizing my own curiosity or investigations into academic notions of CRP. I practiced summarizing, paraphrasing, and mirroring to be sure I followed participants' perspectives. I iteratively moved between what I know/sense about CRP and the ways they explained prioritizing and enacting CRP in their respective contexts and literacy instruction practices.

Between each interview, I conducted memoing as a data collection and analysis tool. Saldaña (2016) describes memos as an all-encompassing way that researchers engage in sense making through writing before, during and after the process of data collection and analysis. Directly following each of the three interviews, I listened to the audio recordings and engaged in memoing, which helped me to make sense of the conversation between the participant and myself. This process also helped me plan for the subsequent interviews. Whenever researchers think of something related to data analysis, they need to be prepared to stop, drop, and write! To that end, I always carried a notebook with me, so I was able to memo whenever the need arose.

Artifacts

The final source of data for this study was artifacts. While experts warn against using artifacts as the only data source in a study, well-chosen artifacts can complement the data from other sources and strengthen a study (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 2014; Yin, 2015). For this study, artifacts included books, assignments and projects, and mementos from participants' journeys in becoming a CR educator and in showing how CRP was revealed in their teaching.

Data Analysis

I conducted formal data analysis in four phases, using a model adapted from Yin (2015). This model focuses on compiling, disassembling, reassembling, and interpreting and works well as a foundation for this study because researchers move iteratively between these phases, enabling them to interact deeply with the data, consider it in different ways, and ultimately interpret data in ways that provide insight into complex issues. The issue at the center of this study is seeking to understand how new, majority-culture teachers describe and enact CRP in their literacy practices. I conducted the first three phases of analysis for each individual teacher case, before doing a cross-case analysis during the final analytic stage.

Phase One: Compiling

The purpose of phase one was to organize all the data collected into a usable format (Yin, 2015). During data collection I continually read and reviewed interview and artifact data to plan for the following interviews, memoing as I went. I worked to immerse myself in the raw data to build an understanding of each participant. When data collection was complete, I began phase one; compiling data. In this phase, Yin recommends reviewing all data again; this is distinctive from the previous reviews as it is done after all collection is complete and allows the researcher time and space to thoughtfully consider what has been collected. Yin urges the researcher to consider the features of the data, how it is related to the research question(s), and what additional insights the researcher is finding as she begins analysis (p. 191).

During this compiling phase, I organized the data into electronic files, sorted by each participant and stored in chronological order. I developed a glossary to define important terms and constructs and to ensure consistency across the project (Yin, 2015). Being consistent with the organization of terms, constructs/ideas, and data across the project led to clearer analysis.

Phase Two: Disassembling

During the disassembling phase, I broke the compiled data into smaller chunks by reading through the transcripts and notes several times, noting emerging pieces of data. I coded data at a literal, descriptive level (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2015) through in vivo coding (Saldaña, 2016). Through this initial coding process I was able to use the language of each participant to develop preliminary categories. I coded participants' words and phrases that were particularly salient or repeated often.

Phase Three: Reassembling

Once the initial emergent coding was completed in the disassembling phase, I reassembled the data and sought patterns. I identified patterns by grouping codes and thinking conceptually and theoretically about the data. This aligned with Yin's (2015) recommendation that researchers play with data through different arrangements. I used matrices as I reassembled data in order to organize data into conceptually meaningful arrangements (p. 208). I also continued to memo during this and subsequent phases of analysis, to compile profiles of each participant and sense-make through writing.

Phase Four: Cross Case Interpretation

During the fourth phase of analysis, I began examining the cases together to identify themes across the cases. I juxtaposed the matrices formed in Phase Three to see similarities and differences between them and developed a thick description of each participant. Yin (2015) discusses the importance of thick description as a way for readers to develop a deep understanding of the research issue. Thick description is a way for the interpretations to bring the focus to the participants as well as the larger social themes across related literature.

Trustworthiness

To ensure this study is credible and trustworthy, I employed several strategies throughout the data collection and analysis. These strategies included consulting with a critical friend, using an audit trail to track decisions and changes, member checking, and bracketing for potential bias.

Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend researchers have a colleague review and debrief throughout a research process. Ideally, this is someone who can give honest feedback and ask direct questions. I have worked with a coach throughout this process who acted as a critical friend. This critical friend is a writing coach who is also an experienced qualitative researcher.

An audit trail is a list of dates and decisions that a researcher uses to keep track of the changes and researcher decisions that occur throughout the study (Creswell & Poth 2018). In order to increase transparency, I maintained an informal audit trail throughout data collection and analysis.

Seidman (2019) argues that his three-interview structure lends itself well to validity. It gives participants and researcher the chance to review and check that participants' perceptions were accurately represented. I conducted member checks periodically throughout the study and attended to what participants share. I was prepared to include varying perspectives if differences arose during the study discussion (Creswell & Poth 2018). When I completed writing the cases and themes, I emailed each participant and shared what I had written, to ensure that they felt that they were represented in a way that was authentic and true. Using a three-interview structure for iterative discussion of the study's themes and member checking, paired with audit trail and peer review generated a study that is high-quality, trustworthy, credible, and valid.

Finally, to best understand participants' perceptions, I practiced reflexivity through the study; this was a high priority for me. Reflexivity is the ability to reflect on one's own preconceptions and biases. Bracketing is the process of actively setting aside one's preconceptions and biases. When a researcher engages in bracketing, their data analysis is less impacted by preconceptions and biases. This enables the researcher to take a fresh perspective on a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 78). Teaching literacy using a CRP framework is an essential issue for me, so being reflexive was crucial throughout the process.

Immediately following each interview, I relistened to the audio as I went through the transcript to make sure it was accurate. After doing this I took some time to write down my initial thoughts and reactions. During this bracketing I examined my emotional responses to

statements made by participants and worked to set them aside. Before beginning phase one of analysis, I listened to the interview audio a third time, without a pen or the paper transcript, just to listen. After that I began the phases of analysis. Phase one of analysis began two to four days after the initial interview. This gave me time and space to consider my own reactions before I made analytical decisions. Because I bracketed my own values, beliefs, and biases, I worked toward being able to see an experience clearly without my own judgements or preconceptions, suspending my assumptions and existing understandings (Moustakas, 1994).

The Researcher in the Research

The topics of culturally relevant pedagogy, critical literacy, and diverse representation in children's literature have interested me for most of my adult life. As an emergent scholar and passionate practitioner, this is a professional interest, but it is also important to me as a parent and citizen of our global community.

As I described at the outset of this dissertation, when I was a new teacher in the early 2000s, I felt ill equipped to teach a culturally and linguistically diverse student population. In an attempt to solve this problem, I enrolled in a program to earn an "English to Speakers of Other Languages" (ESOL) endorsement. My coursework helped me recognize the many important components to being an effective teacher for culturally and linguistically diverse students; one of those ways included ensuring that students were represented in their learning materials. At the time, I interpreted 'representation' somewhat shallowly and worked to include posters that were multicultural and books that featured characters of various races. After earning my ESOL endorsement, I served as a reading specialist working with culturally and linguistically diverse students where I continued to learn how best to serve them. In 2009, my husband and I began an adoption process and in 2011, my youngest daughter joined our family from Ethiopia. I have

spent the last ten years reading, listening, and learning how to raise a Black child in the United States. Similar to being an effective teacher, there are many important components in raising children in a transracial adoptive family, and diverse representation in literature is only one aspect of this very big picture.

In early 2012, a friendly acquaintance asked me to teach some literacy method courses for her in a local educator preparation program. I was reluctant because I had been out of the teaching profession for a time, but she generously shared her resources and supported me. One of the lessons I taught was centered on Critical Literacy, the idea that readers are active participants in the reading process. Through this lesson and others, I was introduced to the work of Rudine Sims-Bishop and her 1990 essay, *Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors* in which she discussed the importance of representation in literature for all students. That piece resonated deeply with me as a human, a mother, a teacher, and now, as a scholar. Over the past few years, teaching literacy methods courses for pre-service teachers has prompted an academic awakening for me. I am absolutely passionate about diverse representation in children's literature, critical literacy, and culturally relevant pedagogy; these commitments are ones I have nourished over the past decade.

In my current professional context, I teach literacy methods courses. As a white, middle class, straight, cisgender woman charged with preparing many other mostly white, middle class, cisgender women to teach a diverse student body (Educator Advancement Council, 2020; Hussar & Bailey, 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, 2017), I recognize how vital it is to prioritize culturally relevant pedagogy. This leads me to prioritize educational experiences that help preservice and in-service teachers understand how to teach literacy from a CRP perspective.

I view this work as essential because it is an important part of making our school system more inclusive and accessible to culturally and linguistically diverse students.

As a researcher, I brought assumptions to this research. I acknowledge that these assumptions have the potential to impact this study and must be disclosed (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019, p. 111). I assumed that the participants I focus on for this study believed CRP is important, as do I. I assumed that new teachers can remember their experiences from 2-5 years ago. I also assumed that participants knew themselves well, were accurate self-reporters, and answered the questions with transparency and honesty throughout the interview process.

Ethical Considerations

Being an ethical researcher means attending to principles of respect, beneficence, and justice throughout a research project (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, the American Psychological Association (2020) holds researchers to the standards of accuracy in reporting findings, honoring the rights of participants, and protecting intellectual property. Each stage of this study attended to ethical considerations in order to abide by and maintain high standards of ethical integrity. Ethical practice began at the inception of this study as I strove for transparency about my design choices such as participant selection and where the study will take place (Yin, 2015). As detailed above, I identified a participant pool with the help of an informal gatekeeper using purposive, criterion-based sampling and reputational-case selection.

Merriam (1988) warns that ethical dilemmas may develop during data collection. In interviews, participants may feel vulnerable if they are sharing information they may not want other stakeholders to know. I was cognizant of this possibility and reassured participants that their privacy and wellbeing was my priority. Yin (2015) addresses ethics regarding the researcher being clear about what data to include or leave out. To address these potential issues

and ensure that data collection and analysis are ethical, I did several things. First, I conducted member checking after each interview so that participants were comfortable with how they were represented in the transcripts and in my analytic write-ups. Throughout interviews I took a generous view of participants' efforts towards CRP.

I asked participants to sign an informed consent document, shown in Appendix C, outlining the ways I planned to pursue respect, beneficence, and justice throughout the project. This document included the details of the purpose of the study as well as the anticipated length, frequency, and timeframe of the interviews. The rights of the participants included voluntary participation, the right to withdraw, and the right to review and withhold interview material. In order to mitigate any personal and professional risk, all identifying details of the participants and the schools in which they teach were masked. Participants' privacy was honored in data reporting as well as with the informal gatekeeper. The informed consent document also ensured that participants understood they were free to ask questions during the interviews and clear up misconceptions in our communication as they arise. (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Seidman, 2019). I submitted this proposal for IRB review through my institution and worked to ensure the ethics and integrity of this research throughout the process. I received IRB approval (Appendix D) for this research from my institution.

In this chapter, I have shared an outline and rationale for the study's methodological design including sample selection, data collection and data analysis. I offered considerations regarding trustworthiness and ethics. Finally, I positioned myself as the researcher and someone who is passionate about the issue of teaching literacy using a CRP framework.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine how new teachers use culturally relevant pedagogy to inform their literacy instruction. This chapter offers narrative case reports for each of the four teacher-participants in this study, followed by research findings for each teacher's case. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the cross-case analysis, which explores themes common across cases.

Participants

The teacher-participants in this study were all Caucasian, working as either first- or second-year teachers at the time of this study. All four teachers completed their teacher preparation program (TPP) at Oak University, a small, private liberal arts university located in the Pacific Northwest. I have provided a demographic summary of the participants in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Gender	Grade Level	Years Teaching	School Setting	Number of students in school
Lauren	F	2nd	2	Rural	700
Riley	F	Kindergarten	2	Suburban	250
Jack	M	3rd/4th Blend	1	Rural	250
Chantel	F	5th, Humanities	1	Urban	500

This study took place almost two years into the global pandemic caused by COVID-19, which significantly shaped their introduction to the profession. Lauren and Riley's student teaching was interrupted by COVID-19 when schools initially closed; they spent much of their first year teaching virtually amidst a great deal of uncertainty. Jack and Chantel spent most of

their student teaching year as instructors on Zoom or working to create asynchronous curriculum and lessons. Chantel described navigating challenges with classroom management throughout the year because she had never had the opportunity to practice managing an in-person classroom full of students. Riley explained it had been difficult to keep her kindergarten students physically distanced while also attempting to lead small groups and adhere to the best practices she learned in her teacher preparation at Oak University. The challenges of keeping students safe weighed heavily on all teachers; Lauren described it as being in a constant state of anxiety and feeling helpless to keep all students safe and healthy. All four teachers discussed the revolving door of students over the course of the year as COVID-19 rates in their areas rose and fell. They also all experienced staffing shortages at their schools, necessitating constant pivots and flexibility. While each of these teachers placed a high priority on CRP, they were working in very challenging circumstances.

All participants indicated high awareness about the social-emotional needs of their students. Riley shared that many of her kindergarteners still cried each morning, several months into the school year. She permitted them to bring or borrow stuffed animals to help them soothe themselves. Jack mentioned that his third and fourth-grade students were still tattling and demonstrating immature behaviors that typically resolve after first or second grade. Lauren and Chantel both shared how frequently they emphasize mindset and attitude for their students, underscoring their view that a social-emotional lesson each day was just as important as other aspects of the curriculum.

Each case report below shares how participants came to a career in education. The reports also include factors specific to each participant's school context that influenced the ways that they engaged with CRP in their literacy instruction.

Lauren: “New teachers often bring in new ideas”

At the time of the study, Lauren was a second-grade teacher at Bechtown Elementary School, in a rural coastal town in the Pacific Northwest. Although rural, Bechtown Elementary served several coastal communities and enrolled over 700 elementary students. Lauren was in her second year of teaching, although her first year consisted primarily of teaching virtually until March first, due to the global pandemic.

Lauren always felt drawn to the field of education. She grew up playing school with stuffed animals and childhood friends and was part of a family that included generations of teachers. Understanding the immense challenges that teachers face, the educators in Lauren’s family encouraged her to consider other fields. However, Lauren said that during her first education course at Oak University she knew that teaching was the path she would take; it felt intuitive to her.

Bechtown Elementary. At the time of our interviews, Lauren was in her second year of teaching, but it might as well have been her first year of teaching because it was her first year being fully face-to-face with all her students daily. Her school district had recently undergone major structural changes and what used to be two elementary schools had recently combined into one; Bechtown Elementary. This came with logistical challenges such as where to direct 700 kids during a fire drill or how to organize assemblies with so many children in one space. When fellow Bechtown teachers told Lauren they were looking forward to getting back to normal, a common phrase during the global pandemic, Lauren felt unsure what they meant. For her, nothing was normal in this new school structure; everything was new for everyone.

Bechtown Elementary did have a mentor program for all teachers who had taught three years or less, and Lauren felt she was well supported by her mentor who taught third grade. She

described this mentor as “someone that has worked very hard to be educated on this topic [CRP]” (Lauren Interview 2, 2-1-22). Lauren also described having a positive and supportive working relationship with her team of four other second grade teachers. While Lauren did discuss aspects of pandemic teaching that were very challenging for her, she seemed to be taking the challenges as they came. She talked to me about other teachers’ stress in her school and said that at this point in the school year, she felt that she could take on a little more to help others; that she knew others were feeling “full,” but that she had a little more capacity. To help lighten the load of her colleagues, Lauren had taken the lead in customizing the team’s new social emotional curriculum by developing slide decks to support the daily lessons.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Lauren envisioned CRP as a classroom community where all students' contributions and voices were valued. She enacted CRP primarily through read alouds and class discussions. Lauren shared artifacts (Appendix E) of books she used throughout the year that elicited vibrant classroom discussions. During our second interview Lauren was excited to share about the Lunar New Year mini unit she had recently taught, emphasizing one student’s holiday of importance. Lauren had done research on the holiday, shared books with her students, and the student’s family had given each child in the classroom a red envelope with coins to celebrate: “They [the students] got to be part of her tradition and we talked about what was similar and different from how some of the other students celebrated the New Year . . . I had to do a lot of learning!” (Lauren Interview 2, 2-1-22) Lauren recognized that teaching about Lunar New Year was a way to make cultural awareness relevant in her classroom by connecting a cultural experience with a member of the classroom community and at the same time she made that student feel that she belonged.

Part of being a culturally relevant educator is being aware of structural issues or ‘traditions’ that are inequitable. Lauren believed that as a new teacher it was her role to question some of the longstanding practices at Beachtown Elementary:

In college we talked about the *whys*. Why, why, why, why, why! . . . There are a lot of things we’ve never done as teachers but one of the things fresh in our brains is talking about those *whys*. As a new teacher we need to ask *Why does this happen? Why do we do it that way?* As a new teacher, people usually take it as *Oh, she just doesn’t know*, and they don’t feel defensive. Sometimes they make their own connection [that a practice might be problematic or exclude students]. (Lauren Interview 2, 2-1-22)

Lauren went on to describe how when she asked these types of questions, she would offer a more inclusive, more culturally relevant solution and her senior co-workers were often receptive to her ideas. Lauren shared examples of these conversations in regards to how holidays were celebrated at Beachtown Elementary and how pull-out programs were handled for linguistically diverse students. Lauren considered questioning to be advocacy for her students.

Riley: “It’s such a balancing act.”

At the time of our interviews, Riley was a kindergarten teacher at a public charter school in a suburb of a large metropolitan area in the Pacific Northwest. The school’s mission focused on academics, inquiry, and agriculture. It was Riley’s second year of teaching, although it was her first year at the charter school. Her first year was a very different experience, co-teaching with a veteran educator at a Waldorf-inspired public charter school in a small, rural, coastal community.

Riley shared that she took some time to come to education as a career path. At Oak University, she visited an open house hosted by the education department and decided to try a

class or two. Once she started taking education courses, she felt that “everything kind of started falling into place” (Riley Interview 1, 1-18-22). The more courses she took, the more she realized that a career in education made sense for her and she had a lot of informal experience acting as a mentor or teacher for younger siblings in her blended family.

Tensions. As Riley described her unique journey to become a teacher, I was struck by the tensions she held. She cared deeply for her students and was so proud of their social-emotional and academic growth. She reluctantly acknowledged that her students’ growth could be attributed to her instruction and nurturing but she also shared several times how she wrestled with feeling like she was not doing enough for them. Riley explained that during her full-time student teaching, she only taught a few weeks before the school district closed due to COVID-19 and then reopened mostly virtually and asynchronously. She shared that she had never had the opportunity to work with small groups of students until this year, and she now works diligently to keep students distanced.

And last year I’d never, ever, once had a group of kids together, like teaching small groups or anything like that. And this year, we tried that and it’s really hard for me to do that every single day, and I am so hard on myself about it. . . I didn’t get to small groups today because one kid was out with COVID-19 . . . there could be stuff going around and my table isn’t big enough for that. But I am so hard on myself because from my teacher ed program I know I need to keep a schedule every day so they know what to expect.

(Riley Interview 3, 2-2-22)

Riley’s descriptions of the tensions she experienced painfully illustrated the challenges of becoming a teacher during a global pandemic. She also acknowledged that she prioritized finding balance between her work life and home life, and there were multiple tension points to that

balance. She set a boundary of working hard during her time at school, and leaving it all at school at the end of each contract day. She shared that this is a challenge, because this boundary was healthy and kept her from burning out, but she could not get everything done:

I really try to stick to this contract time as much as I can. I feel like I could be doing so many things for two hours after school. I could be bringing them such wonderful things.

But I've set that boundary and it's healthy. But I want to do so many things with them!

(Riley Interview 2, 1-23-22)

The tension between doing what she knew was best for herself versus what she felt she should be doing in the classroom was clear. Yet even as she honored her boundaries, Riley was able to take on a leadership role in the school. As one of the only teachers with an ESOL endorsement, she collaborated with the *diversity and sustainability* teacher to attend a conference. She gathered teaching strategies for working with multilingual learners and presented a mini training to her teacher colleagues.

The third time I met with Riley, she had been conducting assessments in preparation for the end of the grading period. She was excited to share about her students' academic growth as revealed by the assessments, but it took her a moment before she realized that her teaching was part of why the students were learning. She laughed as she said, "It was amazing to see their growth. I was blown away! At first, I'm like, 'Oh, that's so great. They learned this stuff.' But I realized that I taught it to them! I have to give myself some credit" (Riley Interview 3, 2-2-22). She also described how, despite the state of the world and all she needed to balance, she had moments of feeling encouraged about teaching:

I have those moments of, *This is good. I love this.* And I love the moments with my students. And part of that is me not spending extra hours at school every day, just

balancing that. There are so many things keeping me in a good spot right now . . . I'm still learning a lot as an educator and the kids are sure learning a lot. (Riley Interview 3, 2-2-22)

The tensions between what Riley felt like she should be doing and what she was doing, between the demands of the profession and her prioritizing her own time and health, between the state of the world and how much her kids were learning, these were consistent themes that surfaced throughout our discussions.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Riley described CRP as foundational to her teaching philosophy; a filter through which she viewed her work as an educator. As a kindergarten teacher, she described the importance of understanding the different facets of students' lives, and having a growth mindset about students as well as oneself. The artifacts (Appendix E) Riley shared were examples of how she had adjusted the curriculum to focus on students' individuality as well as similarities. One example of this was the health curriculum lesson about families. Riley used the opportunity for a discussion about what was special about each student's family.

Riley enacted CRP through developmentally appropriate methods. These consisted of focusing on the uniqueness of each student and increasing all students' awareness of each other's similarities and differences. For example, Riley shared that she incorporated sign language in her classroom because she believed it assisted in language development. She quickly learned that one of her students had a deaf grandparent who lived with family, and sign was a valued form of communication in their family. Riley was excited to be able to incorporate aspects of the home culture into the classroom in a way that benefitted all students.

Riley also had a student whose home language was Spanish. He was very shy and quiet but when he got excited he spoke Spanish at school. Riley shared how she incorporated Spanish into her daily routines in order to connect with the student:

Sometimes we stand up and sing the Good Morning song in Spanish together and he just lights up! The first time we sang it I said to him, *Do you know this song? I think I've heard you sing it before and I've heard it before at another place that I worked, so I think we know the same Spanish Morning Song!* And we sang it together. Then all the other students were so excited and wanted to try it too. It was beautiful. (Riley Interview 1, 1-18-22)

Riley believed that her focus on students' similarities and differences built a classroom community where all students were not only valued, but where students celebrated one another.

Jack: "I won't shy away from my privilege"

When I first met Jack, he was in his first year of teaching in a small town in rural Oregon. Jack grew up in a metropolitan area in Oregon, the youngest of four boys. Jack's mom was German, so Jack had dual citizenship and grew up traveling to Germany on an annual basis. Many times during our conversations, Jack identified his own privilege as having rich educational and travel experiences. Throughout high school, Jack interned and later worked in the district-sponsored daycare housed at the high school; it was here that he got his first experience working in educational settings. He also volunteered in a life skills classroom and became close friends with a person with Down's Syndrome and later was employed as his personal support worker. Jack graduated from high school in 2015. In early 2016, he was hired to teach kindergarten at an international school in Germany. While teaching in Germany, Jack decided he wanted to make teaching his career. When he returned to the States, he finished

community college before transferring to Oak University for his BA in elementary education; he graduated in 2021. At the time of our interviews, Jack was teaching in a 3rd/4th grade split classroom. He described having a strong working relationship with his grade level team; two third grade teachers who were both in their second year of teaching.

Privilege. Jack acknowledged the many layers of privilege he held. He noted that as a white male, he was always well represented in curriculum and media. He grew up in an affluent part of a city and attended one of the highest ranked high schools in the state. He attributed his family values of respect, responsibility, and strong work ethic to his parents and older brothers. Jack said, “I think there were a lot of variables outside of my control that led to my stable foundation which brought me to where I am now” (Jack Interview 3, 2-8-22). Jack described his time teaching in Germany as the first time he experienced significant cultural and linguistic diversity. This was a seminal experience for Jack, especially when communication proved difficult. As he continued on to Oak University and had field experiences in school districts with culturally and linguistically diverse students, Jack had greater empathy for students navigating a language barrier, given his time in Germany. He was struck by the challenges multilingual learners experience through all their years of schooling. He described these experiences as eye-opening, helping him better understand the privilege he had carried his entire life.

Helper. Jack described himself as someone with a natural tendency to work well with children; he was patient and had a strong desire to help others. He felt that these characteristics made him a good teacher:

Why am I in education? I enjoy working with kids. It's not just that, you know, fuzzy feeling. I think it stems more so from wanting to help others. I naturally have gravitated towards helping others, especially those that might require a little more help or support. I

think I paired that with my natural ability to work with children . . . So, we all have our own strengths. We all have weaknesses. One of my strengths is working with children and being patient. So, I think I've paired that with my tendency to help others. (Jack Interview 2, 2-24-22)

During our second meeting, Jack shared about a student who had been absent due to Covid that week. He was gathering work to drop it by the student's home along with some soup he made for the family because he knew they were struggling. He also mentioned another student who the school staff generally considered difficult. He had attempted to connect with the student's grandmother, to better support this student, and subsequently learned he did not have a strong male role model in his life. Jack was honored to learn the grandmother thought Jack was meeting that need for her grandson. These are just some of the ways Jack sought to help students and families in his school.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Jack described CRP as a focus on social justice in the classroom while valuing students' backgrounds and experiences. He emphatically believed that "all students can learn and *want* to learn, if given support and opportunities" (Jack Interview 1, 1-19-22). He shared examples of classroom discussions that had occurred over the course of the year about women's rights and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Jack believed that most any lesson could become culturally relevant if the teacher found ways to connect it to students' lives: "I try to find texts about students' passions or interests. Writing is easier [to enact CRP] because you can give an open-ended prompt and the student can respond how they want. I learn a lot about students this way" (Jack Interview 1, 1-19-22). Jack felt that his work as a culturally relevant educator was made easier due to his close working relationship with the two other third grade teachers who held similar values related to the work of CRP.

The artifact (Appendix E) Jack shared was a book that was made and given to him at the culmination of his time teaching in Germany. He described it as a reminder of his decision to become a teacher and his desire to honor diversity and acknowledge his privilege.

Chantel: “It’s been difficult . . . What keeps me going is the interactions I have with my kids.”

During this study, Chantel was a first-year teacher at a public charter school in California. Her school was unique since it was one school in a national network of schools serving in low income and traditionally underserved communities. Chantel, a white female, described that the school’s student body was composed of 80% students from low-income households and 98% were racially diverse. Chantel was the fifth-grade humanities teacher and she worked with four groups of students each day.

As Chantel and I discussed how she came to education as a career, she shared that she was the oldest of three and her early memories consisted of playing school with her sisters; she felt that she was always on the path to teaching. In high school and college, Chantel took jobs where she could work with kids: camp counselor, swim coach, and other jobs aligned with her passion for working with young children. Throughout her time at Oak University, Chantel felt confident in her choice of major; by that time, her identity was strongly rooted in being a teacher.

Promise Elementary School. Promise Elementary School, where Chantel taught, was unique in its mission and structure. The school sought to connect with families in low-income communities, focus on high student achievement, and develop exceptional educators. The school day was organized into a block schedule, and Chantel taught the Humanities block for fifth grade. The school model included weekly professional development for teachers, with a focus on culturally relevant pedagogy, equity, and responsiveness in instruction. The school leadership prioritized relationships with families and expected teachers to intentionally meet with families

outside of the school day or parent/teacher conferences. Chantel was hired in late summer; her first interactions with students and families were at ice cream parlors and parks.

Promise Elementary incorporated a mentor model; every teacher had a mentor, or coach, who frequently visited the classroom and gave in-the-moment feedback. Coaches all held principal or vice-principal roles at the school.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Literacy. Chantel described CRP as understanding students' strengths and needs while making content accessible and engaging to all students. According to Chantel, a culturally relevant educator would create a classroom community where students feel safe and valued. Chantel shared artifacts (Appendix E) from the recent Black History unit that was taught school wide at Promise University and included slides from the curriculum and artwork produced by students in response to the Black History content. As Chantel offered an overview of the units of study she had taught in Humanities, she detailed a unit that covered the American Revolution that had recently concluded:

Our unit incorporated sources from all people that were involved in the American Revolution. So, we looked at women, we looked at Black Americans, we looked at poor men who did not own land and then white men that did own land, and we looked at Native Americans and indigenous groups . . . No matter what the topic is for the thematic unit, it's always representative of all viewpoints. (Chantel Interview 3, 2-17-22)

Chantel valued the rich resources and diverse representation that was provided in the curriculum at Promise Elementary, and saw it as congruent with her philosophy of teaching.

Tensions. Chantel and I interviewed several months into her first year of teaching. We usually met at six or seven in the evening, as Chantel was just getting home from a twelve-hour day at school. She shared that twelve-hour days were her norm.

During our interviews, Chantel answered my questions carefully and spoke descriptively about how teachers at Promise Elementary were expected to enact CRP. She answered each question with a positive perspective. When asked about the challenges of teaching, she began her answer by describing the positives of Promise Elementary and repeated how grateful she was to be at a school that prioritized CRP in their teaching and professional learning. Chantel acknowledged that she had grown and learned immensely over the course of the year. During the first two interviews, I only caught glimpses of the difficulties Chantel was experiencing related to high expectations in her school environment. By the third interview, Chantel shared at a deeper level. She described the difficulties of the mentor model aiming to help teachers continually improve:

So, I had a coach this year. She's been fantastic . . . she's taught middle school. She's a great resource. But the way this school operates is that the coach will be in your classroom very frequently observing you and giving you in-the-moment feedback. And at the beginning of the school year, I was really overwhelmed. I really needed it, but it was really overwhelming to have someone in there and just be saying things out loud. And the kids were losing the connection between who's the teacher and who's not . . . I understand the reason behind it and I know that's what's helped me to grow in this role.

(Chantel Interview 3, 2-17-22)

She went on to describe how at one point, she had a coach physically move her from one side of the room to the other, this made her feel embarrassed and awkward. While Chantel believed that mentor programs were valuable, the intensity of this mentor program made Chantel feel a lack of confidence in her teaching and disconnected from her students.

Chantel also described tensions related to the expectations to connect with families several times a year, beyond school events or conferences. At first, this policy was exciting for Chantel, she believed the strong relationships with families was beneficial for students. But when she realized that she had 90 students, she felt that it was impossible to meet the school's expectations. As with the mentor model, the expectation to connect with all families several times a year were aspects of the school that were congruent with Chantel's philosophy of teaching and learning, but were very challenging, and even demoralizing, in practice, especially for a new teacher who was attempting to learn it all while teaching in person for the first time.

Chantel shared her concerns about the rigidity of behavior management for the students. She believed that students needed some down time and freedom in how to manage themselves. However, students at Promise Elementary only had recess once a day, and even fifth graders were expected to be silent during their lunch time. Chantel described the tension between the intention of the school leadership and the structure required of the students:

The school has a strict structure of students and every minute of their day [is structured]. I know that in their [school leaders'] mind, it seems like the more structure, the more routine, the better. But part of me has noticed that having so many minutes of your day as a young kid that is academic and driven and structured . . . it is not super conducive to the kids just being kids. . . It's so much structure and not much free time. They have 20 minutes of recess each day and 20 minutes of lunch in their classroom, which is a *zone zero* time; no talking, just eating. And walking through the hallways as kids transition from class to class is a *zone zero* transition, even up to fifth grade. 'It's a zone zero transition and we're going to do it again if you're not silently walking through the school'. It's something I never could have imagined. (Chantel Interview 1, 2-2-22)

At the end of our final interview, Chantel told me that she was certain that she would not be returning to the school the following year; she felt like she needed ‘a break’ from teaching. She thought that maybe teaching was not for her, and expressed feeling guilty for considering leaving the profession even temporarily.

Cross Case Analysis

This case study examined how new teachers navigated teaching literacy using culturally relevant pedagogy. During interviews I listened to participants describe CRP and how they enacted it in their classroom, what they identified as formative experiences in prioritizing CRP, what they found challenging, and what sustained or motivated them. Based on analysis of participants’ narratives and the teaching artifacts they shared with me, I identified four major themes which I discuss in the balance of this chapter: 1) participants identified an event or time period that made them realize the importance of understanding multiple perspectives; 2) participants felt their agency as teachers to incorporate CRP into their literacy instruction was limited; 3) participants persisted in enacting CRP within and beyond the curriculum and 4) participants held certain behaviors and attitudes requisite for culturally relevant educators. All aspects of this study were informed by the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), which asserts that culturally relevant educators are those who prioritize a) high expectations for students’ academic development, b) a commitment to strive for cultural competence, and c) a critical consciousness.

Theme One: Experience as Catalyst

All participants recognized being able to consider perspectives of others as foundational to enacting CRP. Lauren, Riley, Jack, and Chantel all cited unique prior experiences as helping them to better understand diverse viewpoints; this was pivotal to their current work of becoming

culturally relevant educators. Participants used language like “eye opening” and “awareness” as they described moments or seasons when a paradigm shift occurred for them and this work began.

Lauren first became aware of others’ perspectives when a high school English teacher assigned her class a “point of view” project. She identified this as an initial moment of awareness; people in her daily life had very different experiences and realities than she did: “that was kind of when I started to really be aware that, even all living in the same place, we can have such different experiences . . . and we all interpret everything so differently because of those experiences” (Lauren Interview 1, 1-26-22). Her classes at Oak University helped her develop this idea; she had a deep desire to meet the needs of all students in her classroom.

Within her student teaching experiences, Lauren came to recognize multiple perspectives as foundational to CRP. Her first student teaching experience was with an educator who prioritized CRP, and the second was in a classroom with a teacher who did not practice CRP. This drastic difference enabled Lauren to explain:

Seeing how much it [CRP] *worked* [in the first class], I think that was the biggest thing.

Then I went to my other class, it wasn’t as present. It wasn’t as much of a priority. It was evident [that CRP was missing] (Lauren Interview 1, 1-26-22).

Experiencing the contrasting environments and norms impacted Lauren. She claimed the student teaching experiences as foundational to helping her create the classroom environment she envisioned; a classroom where the teacher held high expectations for all students, where the teacher led students towards cultural competence, and where the teacher modeled critical consciousness for the students through read alouds and class discussions.

Jack, too, acknowledged that his time at Oak University helped him come to understand CRP as vital to his work as an educator. Jack's starting point for enacting CRP was making the conscious choice to recognize his privilege. He recognized the privilege in his upbringing, from his family structure to his affluent neighborhood, frequent international travel, and the general representation of white males in literature, movies, and media. He was able to see that he personally benefited from all of this, and have compassion for the ways others did not enjoy these benefits. As he progressed through his teacher preparation classroom experiences, he connected his privilege to his experiences teaching in Germany and to what he had been observing in local classrooms. Jack felt that he could not ignore the inequities inherent in the system: "I began to think about the struggle of the language barrier I had in Germany and I couldn't imagine my whole kinder through 12th [grade] where I felt like that . . . so that was eye opening" (Jack Interview 1, 1-19-22). Jack's reflection on his time in Germany was so compelling that as his artifact, he shared a memory book given to him by his colleagues in Germany. He explained that the artifact represented he had chosen well to become an educator and that he needed to honor diversity and acknowledge his privilege. These experiences intersected for Jack; he was able to contend with his privilege and recognize others' perspectives, setting him on the path to enacting CRP.

Riley also identified educational experiences as formative to her understanding of CRP. Her most significant experience was the supplemental program she enrolled in to earn an endorsement to teach English to speakers of other languages (ESOL). She characterized the endorsement program as eye opening, helping her realize the benefit of instructional strategies for multilingual learners as essential for all learners:

It's lifting everybody up. And every year I realize that more. It's so incredibly important and the ESOL classes in college made me realize, *Oh, this is important* and I need these extra skills to help me build my skills as a teacher and open my eyes more to many different people that could come walking in my classroom, and how I can help them and how I can lift everybody up. (Riley Interview 1, 1-18-22)

At Oak University, teacher candidates were given the choice to earn an ESOL endorsement, and Riley was shocked that some of her classmates chose to forgo it. Riley felt strongly that the ESOL endorsement classes gave her tools to better enact CRP in her classroom through an emphasis of asset discourse for all students, and through providing support so students could reach their teachers' high expectations for them. She knew that regardless of the demographics of her future classrooms, an ESOL endorsement would enable her to better meet the needs of all students.

Like Jack, Chantel described growing up in a homogenous, affluent, white suburban neighborhood where the neighbors lacked diverse perspectives and experiences. Chantel's parents were committed to their kids understanding that the world was more diverse so they made sure that Chantel had experiences and relationships outside of that neighborhood. Chantel attributed her awareness of the importance of CRP to those relationships and experiences, including her ability to attend a diverse school in early elementary. Later, as a teen, Chantel worked alongside her friend and family as they opened Indian restaurants. During high school, Chantel spent afternoons and weekends working alongside the family helping in the restaurant. Chantel described these things as foundational to her awareness and understanding of other perspectives.

Theme Two: Limitations on Teacher Agency

During their teacher preparation programs, teacher candidates are usually encouraged to examine standardized curriculums with a critical eye, weighing their recommendations and requirements with what they know about educational practice as well as their students' unique needs. School district requirements vary as to how much agency teachers have in adjusting curriculum based on their professional judgment. Curriculum adoptions are expensive and districts typically encourage educators to use programs with fidelity to maximize student learning gains, since curriculum companies only promise learning gains to those who follow their plan. However, true CRP calls for critical consciousness and associated action within every aspect of education, including curriculum. This means teachers practicing CRP should be actively interrogating and enhancing curriculum programs to enhance their own and students' cultural competence and critical consciousness. Teachers who do so may feel satisfaction in enacting CRP, yet also experience the risks of being deemed too critical or too outspoken by those responsible for hiring or maintaining their positions. While there is no formula for how to achieve this balance, it is important to note how contextual features of districts or communities factor into these decisions. What might be regarded as excessively critical in Jack's small rural district might be viewed as inadequate in Chantel's urban school community.

The participants in this study recognized and worked within these tensions. They all felt they had very little agency to diverge from the required curriculum elements, even when they found it to be lacking in diverse perspectives or believed they should incorporate more CRP into their literacy instruction. Participants identified several significant limitations on their agency to enact CRP, namely curricular demands, time constraints when it came to planning/preparing, and pressure to adhere to plans developed in their teaching teams.

Jack indicated the challenge of wanting to incorporate more intentionally culturally relevant lessons but felt constrained by his students' daily schedule. In his school, students moved between teachers for small group reading instruction so much of his literacy instruction time was intertwined with and dependent upon other classes. Jack explained he was required to follow the small group curriculum with fidelity, which meant he could not deviate from material and instructional choices. Jack also felt that the time it took to plan and prepare the required curriculum left little time for planning and preparing supplemental lessons that might engage students in more culturally relevant content. Jack shared,

I am staying [at school] two extra hours [each day], and it's still just not enough. So, I have to draw the line, at some point. Yeah, time has been, I think, the most challenging thing for me. Teachers have told me to try to set a time limit. I'm only going to do eight hours. I'm only going to do nine hours, but then it just stresses me out if I'm not prepared for the next day . . . Time has been, I would say the most challenging aspect of teaching which then affects culturally relevant pedagogy. They kind of go hand in hand. (Jack Interview 2, 2-24-22)

Jack felt conflicted that he already needed to spend so much time at school each day just to plan and prepare the required curriculum. Although he recognized the importance of CRP, he lacked the time and energy resources to use his agency to that end.

Lauren appreciated her administrators' support for CRP and expressed gratitude that her principals would "have her back" (Lauren Interview 3, 2-8-22), if a parent challenged Lauren's teaching content. Lauren also described her school's required curriculum as lacking diverse perspectives and inadequate to deliver high-quality literacy instruction. Despite this, Lauren was reluctant to supplement:

When you supplement, there are always things that you didn't do that someone else did. And then there are holes [knowledge] in different places for different kids. I also feel a lot of pressure that when you supplement it needs to be really good content, right? You need to have a reason why it's better than the curriculum that you're provided. So, finding those and having the proof of, *This is why it's better*. Especially as a new teacher, that can be really hard to be like, *Here's the problem. This is better*. (Lauren Interview 2, 2-1-22)

Even with her critiques of the curriculum, Lauren did not feel that she had the agency to change course unless she was able to articulate a strong justification for why she was doing so. She felt responsibility to ensure that her students received the same content as the other second graders at her school. She also acknowledged that any supplementing would overextend her already taxed time to plan and prepare.

Like Lauren, Riley shared that her school required a certain number of minutes for different content areas each day and felt that her agency as a teacher to modify things was limited. She said that her Core Knowledge time, which she deemed most conducive for conversations related to CRP, happened at the end of the day, which meant there was often no time for it. The tension Riley felt was evident:

The curriculum is asking us to have more than 100 minutes per day- focused on this [Collaborative Classroom curriculum]. And then we have our phonics curriculum. And then we have our handwriting that goes along, it's extra. And so it's such a balancing act, just getting the basics. I want to have so many more in-depth conversations. But I'm like, *Oh, we have to cover the basics first*. (Riley Interview 2, 1-23-22)

As a kindergarten teacher, the need to *cover the basics* was the priority. Riley acknowledged that she was not limited so much by her curricular materials, but rather by the

requirement to spend a specific amount of time on each subject. Riley felt her time to plan and prepare was consumed *by the basics* and there was no time left over to supplement.

Chantel, too, felt tension between school requirements and the agency afforded her. However, Chantel's challenges were slightly different than other participants since her elementary school had strong elements of CRP integrated into the school structure. The rigorous academic expectations for all students at Promise Elementary meant that educators were expected to teach from the scripted curriculum, with very few exceptions. Chantel appreciated the resources and innovation of Promise but also felt constrained by what she described as a lack of agency to tailor her content and instruction. Chantel felt pressure to stick to the script even when she knew adjusting instructional strategies would be more effective. She said,

They're very specific about how you have to spend this amount of time on your grammar for the morning and this amount of time for your social studies, and this is what you're teaching each day. These are the expectations and the assignments students have to do, so in that sense there's not a whole lot of ownership around the content and the delivery of the content. (Chantel Interview 3, 2-17-22)

Promise Elementary's rigorous academic expectations for all students meant that educators were expected to teach from the rigorous curriculum. Chantel also felt significant pressure to adhere to the required daily schedule. The demands of her school were such that she needed to plan for several daily small group interventions. With the large number of students requiring such interventions, Chantel spent a great deal of time planning and preparing. She understood the rationale for these small groups and scripted curricular engagements, but did not feel empowered to focus her energies in different directions. She believed in the mission of

Promise, but sometimes found it difficult to enact because of the rigid expectations for staff and students.

Throughout these discussions with participants, it was clear they wrestled with the gap between their ideals and their reality with regards to culturally relevant practice. They worked diligently to fulfill their teaching responsibilities and often felt that addressing CRP would tax them beyond what they were already doing to manage their required, baseline commitments.

Theme Three: Enacting CRP Within and Beyond Curriculum

Educators who enact CRP embrace the key tenets of holding high expectations for all students, prioritizing cultural competence, and focusing on critical consciousness. In this study, although teacher-participants felt constrained by a lack of agency, they each held high expectations for their students, which transcends whatever curriculum requirements teachers had. Teachers were able to enact CRP in literacy instruction within, and sometimes beyond, the bounds of their curricular requirements. Each teacher was able to identify particular lessons or discussions illustrating how they enacted CRP by developing students' cultural competence and critical consciousness during read alouds and ensuing discussions.

Lauren brought several artifacts to help her show me how she enacted CRP through her literacy instruction; most were books that she had used throughout the year as read alouds in her second-grade classroom. She initiated several classroom discussions associated with these books, an example was around Martin Luther King's life and work. Lauren detailed the discussion that ensued after she read aloud *Martin's Big Words* (Rappaport, 2001) to her students:

I don't shy away from their questions. I think that's one of the biggest ways that I've shown it. When we were doing our study on Martin Luther King they were asking "Oh, he got assassinated? He got *shot*?" and I was like, "Yep, and when an important person

gets shot, it's called an assassination.” They were like, “Well, why did someone shoot him?” and I said, “They didn't like what he was doing and the changes he was making.” and they were like, “*Oh!*” (Lauren Interview 2, 2-1-22)

Lauren was proud of how she handled these sorts of difficult conversations and the ways students engaged with her. These were instructional moments where CRP was easy for her to self-identify.

Another book Lauren shared was *Just Ask! Be Different, Be Brave, Be You* (Sotomayor, 2019) along with the disability unit she had modified and enhanced to meet the needs of her classroom community. At the time of our interviews, Lauren was teaching a student who was autistic and non-verbal and another student who had a sensory processing disorder, so she had been helping students have conversations about disabilities and how people use tools to help them throughout the year. Lauren was excited to share that after her unit on disability, students continued to have conversations and make connections about disabled people using tools to help them do things. Lauren viewed this unit as a key way she was enhancing students' cultural competence and felt proud that, despite shortcomings in her curriculum, she was able to supplement and enhance this unit to her students' benefit.

Jack enacted CRP throughout his school day through formal and informal conversations with students. One class discussion surrounding Dr. King's birthday was an illustration of culturally relevant discussions in his classroom:

I had a discussion with the class today, because yesterday we talked a lot about MLK, and what MLK day is for. The class all agreed that racism is bad. All the students got it. And it seemed like a lot of students had the misunderstanding that it's over, that we fixed it [racism]. One student said, “MLK ended slavery and slavery is evil, and anyone that

has slaves should go to prison.” And then, the same student asked what we should do, like should we march, should we boycott? Should we do speeches like MLK, and I told him that he was already doing the first step. Asking questions. So, once you notice that there's something unjust going on or someone's being mistreated, ask questions, which is exactly what he did. (Jack Interview 1, 1-19-22)

With these words, Jack indicated how important it was to address student misconceptions while affirming their developing critical consciousness. Jack regularly strove to make read-aloud discussions meaningful and culturally relevant.

Another example Jack offered was an occasion where he learned a student in his class did not celebrate Christmas because his family was Muslim. Upon learning this, Jack reached out to his principal to see if he could gain access to educational resources about the Muslim faith. Jack also wanted to add books to his classroom library where this student could see himself; he wanted to strengthen the classroom community for this student by helping other students learn about Islam, too. The principal agreed this was a high priority and ordered several resources to meet these needs. Jack also decided the traditional Christmas activities and celebrations usually present in the small rural school in December were inappropriate for his classroom since it would exclude his student. Instead, he sought more inclusive ways to celebrate such as focusing art projects and read alouds on multiple winter holidays instead of only Christmas. Jack's actions point to his commitment to CRP and the ways he enacted it on behalf of his learners.

Riley described CRP as integral to her teaching philosophy and found developmentally appropriate ways to weave it into her kindergarten classroom. During our second meeting, when I asked Riley to share artifacts that she felt represented CRP, Riley shared a spreadsheet she had formed from a lesson earlier in the year. It was a lesson Riley had modified from the required

curriculum in order to make it more culturally relevant for her students. The lesson's original focus was on names; Riley added multiple facets that make up an individual, such as likes, and dislikes, family structure, and pets, to help students appreciate the diversity of what made them and their peers unique. After the lesson, students planned and delivered short presentations about themselves; Riley documented this information into a spreadsheet so she could refer to it throughout the year as she interacted with students and their families.

Another artifact Riley shared was a flier from the health curriculum. The focus of the flier was "Family Team" and Riley described engaging students in a conversation about what made each student's family special. These sorts of conversations were common in Riley's classroom, suggesting she was interested in helping her young students understand what they had in common with their classmates as well as their uniqueness. Riley understood her students' developmental levels required cultural competence to take the form of conversations about shared values and experiences.

At Promise Elementary, Chantel had many opportunities to enact CRP in her classroom, although she sometimes felt constrained in personalizing literacy content and instruction to her classroom community. During the month of February, Promise Elementary prioritized their Black History Month celebration during the week of Valentine's Day. Chantel shared artifacts that represented the focus values of each day of the week (see Figure 1) as well as her students' reactions to the Black History Month content (see Figure 2) Chantel was proud of the students' engagement in this work and said,

Students were, I thought, really engaged, and were thinking really critically about it, at least in my class, as fifth graders. I think the act of working as a team and creating posters, and to get the message across. We talked about empathy

and restorative justice. And those values were really exciting to the kids to learn about. I had groups of four and they created like a big anchor chart with either words or, their meaning of empathy or their meaning of restorative justice and what it means for our community. We got really into it. (Chantel Interview 2, 2-9-22)

Chantel identified the Black History Month curriculum as a time where she felt she could make the literacy content engaging and meaningful for her students while enacting the core principles of CRP: high expectations, cultural competence, and critical consciousness.

While these examples may seem like small steps into CRP, each participant acknowledged how many factors they were navigating in doing so. Despite challenges of COVID-19, limits to teacher agency, and the urgent need to help students develop social emotional skills in their classrooms, these teachers were determined to meet students' diverse needs in a culturally relevant way.

Figure 1

Chantel's Artifact: Black History Curriculum

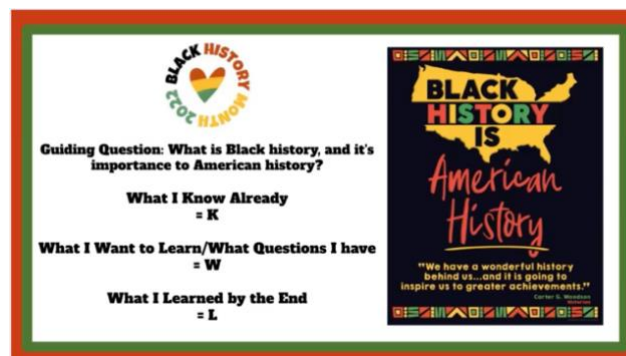


Figure 2

Chantel's Artifact: Student Artwork



Theme Four: Teacher Attitudes and Behaviors

In this final theme, I explore the ways participants' attitudes and beliefs enabled them to enact CRP as early career teachers. Ladson-Billings (1990) points to the importance of helping educators identify and cultivate attitudes and behaviors congruent with the identity of culturally relevant educators. In short, participants prioritized relationships with students and families, placed a high value on reflexivity both with their teaching and their beliefs, and placed themselves as part of the bigger picture of students' lives.

Chantel expressed gratitude for the opportunity to teach at a school that prioritized CRP where educators were piloting innovative ways to promote student achievement and connect with diverse communities. She valued all she had learned to that point in her year at Promise, despite all the challenges. Chantel's description of CRP indicated she highly valued knowing her students and their families well. She believed that her role as an educator was important beyond the time she had with students during their fifth-grade year, and hoped she could make a difference in students' larger lives. Chantel described CRP as accessible to every student, prioritizing multiple perspectives and truth in engaging ways:

It comes down to just being culturally responsive in the classroom; being aware of your students' backgrounds and needs and interests, their strengths and their areas of growth, and trying to find a well-rounded way to create a safe space, a classroom environment where students aren't afraid to be themselves and to share their background, their personal family history, and their thoughts and their goals. . . it's up to us to remind them and teach them that they're more than a student with talent, but a human with potential. How can we serve a student in every aspect of their human being instead of just their

academic path in school? I want to make them understand the importance of growing as a human more than just growing as a reader or writer. (Chantel Interview 1, 2-2-22)

Chantel wanted her work as a teacher to do more than support their literacy development, and believed her time getting to know families over the course of the year was an important part of making that difference. She acknowledged that authentically connecting with 90 families was impossible so she and her teaching team divided up the 90 fifth grade families and rotated through them each quarter. She knew she had to try to further build relationships with students. While she felt that progress had been slow in this area, she shared that things were beginning to shift:

I'm seeing the engagement and I'm seeing that the work that they're producing is improving. So feeling like I'm making an impact, even if it's in a small way. I think also the interactions I have with certain kids, just from the beginning of the year until now have really changed and become more positive. Like, maybe this work is worth it. Took me a while to realize that but it's starting to feel like it is. (Chantel Interview 3, 2-17-22)

Chantel described the tensions of believing that student relationships are important to learning but that it can take time to see the energy invested in students as beneficial when the daily work is taxing.

Jack enacted culturally relevant attitudes and behaviors by seeking additional professional learning. He sought stronger connections with his grade-level literacy coach in order to increase his CRP-based literacy practice, but this proved challenging during COVID-19 with substitute shortages and literacy coaches often reassigned to classrooms, which meant he did not have opportunities to be coached. Jack said,

I would feel so much better as an educator if I was observed. And I'm open to critique. I want to be the best teacher I can be. I think I do a good job but I don't know unless, you know, a professional comes in that's been doing it longer than me and observes me . . . As a beginning teacher we were told we were going to get this support. (Jack Interview 2, 24-22)

Jack went on to explain that he understands the reasoning behind coaching not being prioritized due to staffing shortages during the global pandemic but he was hopeful that coaching would be more consistent in the future. He knew that further professional learning would strengthen his teaching. Jack's openness to being coached and his desire to improve his teaching illustrate his reflexivity, a necessary characteristic of a culturally relevant teacher (Borrero et al., 2018).

Jack viewed forming relationships with students and families as essential to increasing his own cultural competence. Outside of the classroom, Jack prioritized making connections with families multiple times over the year, beginning his year off with a foundation of connection and communication by making phone calls to share students' good work. He made it a point to never report bad behavior but to share students' positive attributes and collaborate with families about any student behavior issues. During his literacy instruction, Jack described writing instruction as an especially meaningful way to learn about students:

I learned a lot about the students [through writing prompts]. For example, one personal narrative, *What's your favorite day of the year*, so I got to learn about all kinds of traditions, birthday traditions or Christmas traditions. So, I think writing is a little easier for culturally relevant pedagogy than math or literacy. (Jack Interview 1, 1-19-22)

At the beginning of the year, he assigned open-ended questions for writing prompts so he could learn about students' hobbies, interests, and values. Gathering this information helped Jack understand his students more holistically and gave him ways to connect with them.

Like other participants, Jack's focus for his students was broader than the scope and sequence of the third and fourth grade curriculum. He wanted his work with them to transcend their third or fourth grade year: "I am trying to set them up, not just for the next big test or for fifth grade, but for life! I think they're more than just students and I think I'm more than just a teacher" (Jack Interview 2, 2-24-22). Jack also felt responsible to be a positive male role model since several of his students do not have that in their home environments. Jack viewed learning about and supporting families as part of his own work to become culturally competent and critically conscious.

Riley noted it was important for her to have a growth mindset about her students and viewed this as foundational to her philosophy of teaching. When I asked Riley what sustained her in the work of being a culturally relevant educator she answered, "I know if I'm bettering myself as a teacher, always learning, my relationships with my kids will be stronger. I spend a lot of time getting to know the kids and observing and getting to know what they need" (Riley Interview 2, 1-23-22). Riley believed that continuing to learn professionally would help her be better able to connect with and serve her students. Like Jack, Riley adjusted assignments to ensure her students experienced representation and could share their lives with her. She used this information to build strong relationships with them and their families:

You know, I see it in different levels, like my classroom, and then kindergarten, primary, and then the school, and then going off into the world. And I feel like there is kind of the ripple effect of like, if these kids are learning about how to be respectful or how to think

critically, or go beyond their own learning and want to learn other things, that will ripple out into the whole nation or world (Riley Interview 2, 1-23-22).

Even as Riley navigated the many tensions of teaching during a pandemic, her goals for her students exceeded the academic standards of the kindergarten year.

Lauren valued CRP because she believed it was best for students and helped them achieve important life goals: “to be kind humans and to contribute to society in a positive way” (Lauren Interview 1, 1-26-22). This core belief about CRP led Lauren to prioritize understanding and connecting with her students and families. She understood her work with them as more significant than helping them make academic growth during their second-grade year. While Lauren emphasized these priorities throughout our interviews, the clearest way Lauren moved CRP into her teaching was in her work with her students who had special needs. Lauren detailed her work to educate herself about autism and how to be a strong teacher for her nonverbal student. Lauren discussed her students with an asset-based discourse, smiling as she reported, “I have learned a lot. A lot. The first few weeks we learned a lot, together.” Lauren also recognized her work to serve students with diverse needs was not just about that particular student, but about how to help her other students develop cultural competence and critical consciousness.

As each new teacher navigated becoming a teacher, they clung to dispositional characteristics that they knew would serve them in developing as culturally relevant educators. They were steadfast in their desire to build relationships with students and families. They practiced reflexivity in teaching and personal development because they were committed to growth and learning. And, participants understood that their work with students was important beyond the year in the classroom and the curriculum they covered.

Conclusion

In this study, four early-career teachers shared their experiences and perspectives on navigating CRP within their literacy instruction. Each one shared a variety of formative experiences along with the ways they enacted CRP, dealt with obstacles, and found the motivation to continue the work of CRP.

A cross case analysis revealed four themes across these cases: 1) participants experienced an event that made them realize the importance of understanding multiple perspectives; 2) participants felt their agency as teachers was limited; 3) participants enacted CRP within and beyond the curriculum and 4) participants held certain behaviors and attitudes requisite for culturally relevant educators. Based on these findings, the following chapter discusses the significance of this study and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusions

Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) served as the theoretical framework for this study, and guides teacher priorities to a) hold high academic expectations for students, b) prioritize cultural competence in order to support students in accepting and affirming their own and others' cultural identity, and c) develop critical consciousness to challenge the inequities perpetuated by schools (Ladson-Billings, 1990). These tenets informed every part of the study design, from the methodological approach to the analysis.

This study explored the experiences of majority culture teachers who were practicing CRP in order to better understand why and how early-career educators teach from a CRP framework, along with the challenges that come with this work. This multiple case study employed three phases of analysis for each individual participant, along with a cross case analysis. Four themes were evident: 1) participants identified an event or time period that made them realize the importance of understanding multiple perspectives; 2) participants felt limited agency as teachers to incorporate CRP into their literacy instruction; 3) participants persisted in enacting CRP within and beyond the curriculum and 4) participants held certain behaviors and attitudes requisite for culturally relevant educators.

I begin this final chapter by discussing the findings as they relate to the research questions for the study. Next, I acknowledge the limitations to this qualitative study followed by implications of this research for educational leaders. The chapter closes with suggestions for practice and recommendations for future research.

Discussion of Findings

Over the course of their interviews with me, participants offered insights about the daily practices, challenges, and motivations of new teachers as they shared about how they navigated

CRP in their literacy instruction. In this section I discuss the findings as they relate to each research question.

How New Teachers Describe and Enact CRP

These early-career teachers sought to enact CRP in their daily planning and instruction. Each one used an asset-based discourse to discuss their students, and explained how they viewed building relationships with students and families as foundational to CRP, echoing and enacting CRP priorities noted by research (Borrero et al., 2018). The global pandemic made building relationships beyond the classroom extremely challenging, but these new teachers attempted it through phone calls home, involving families in celebrations, and intentionally connecting with parents during field trips. The teachers also worked to build relationships inside the classroom through reading and writing assignments that focused on individuality and the unique qualities of students and families.

CRP was also evident in the ways teachers noted their intentionality to choose and share specific books for read aloud and discussions with their students. They understood that the books they used in their classrooms needed to represent their students and their lives. They believed relevant read alouds can promote critical thinking and facilitate dialogue between students (Almaguer, 2021). Participants identified these discussions as times when they felt most able to practice CRP. They were intentional about asking and answering questions that promoted cultural competence in their classroom community, such as when Lauren planned and taught a unit on disabilities to help her students better understand the strengths and challenges of their classmate who was non-verbal and autistic. This careful planning and implementation enabled Lauren to affirm her student's identity and place in her classroom, while developing the cultural competence of her other students.

Read alouds and discussions also gave students the opportunity to build a critical consciousness in developmentally appropriate and honest ways, such as when Lauren shared with her students what it meant that Dr. Martin Luther King had been assassinated, and why it had happened. Jack, too, shared instances of conversations about racism that he had with his students. Participants understood that to have these critical conversations, their classroom community needed to include trust and respect as central components (Borrero et al., 2018).

What New Teachers Identified As Formative in Teaching CRP

Each teacher participant identified specific prior experiences that gave them an awareness that the world was bigger and more diverse than their limited perspective; they identified these specific events as the impetus to becoming a culturally relevant educator. Parsons (2005) might name such responses as *culturally relevant caring*. According to Parsons, culturally relevant caring happens when the ethics of care and justice are woven together with the goal of “justice to safeguard the rights of all. . . to be respected and to be treated fairly” (p. 26). While many white teachers identify caring as a primary reason for becoming a teacher, they must also contend with their privilege in order to learn how to best serve their students from historically marginalized groups. This sense of justice combines with the care they have for their students to help teachers enact CRP more effectively than caring, alone.

Riley, Lauren, and Jack indicated their perspective shift either took place during their teacher preparation coursework or that those experiences in their coursework enhanced that shift. They could identify that even as they were immersed in theories and practicing effective instructional strategies, they could see how important CRP was for the larger ideas of what it means to be a teacher. This supports the importance of teacher preparation coursework being infused with work by critical scholars like bell hooks (1994) and Paulo Friere (1970) for teacher

educators seeking to support their students in becoming culturally relevant teachers (Aronson, 2020).

New Teachers' Constraints and Challenges in Enacting CRP

Primarily, these teacher-participants experienced a lack of teacher agency regarding time and curricular choices; this is unfortunately commonly identified in research due to the heightened pressures around standardized testing (Aronson, 2020; Borrero et al., 2018). The main limits to their teacher agency were related to time constraints and curricular requirements. Participants felt that they did not have enough time with students to 'cover the basics' while thoroughly implementing CRP to the extent they would have liked. Although they were clearly dedicated to serving students in the ways they felt were best, they felt limited. Nevertheless, they found ways to both implicitly and explicitly weave CRP into their instruction. Research indicates how important it is for teachers to collaborate with one another "as a means to counteract the pressures" (Borrero et al., 2018, p. 33) Likewise, participants collaborated with others in their efforts to enact CRP. Jack was grateful to work with two other new teachers who were also contending with their privilege and attempting to implement CRP in their literacy instruction. Lauren was mentored by an instructional coach who approached her work through a CRP framework. Riley characterized her teaching team as supportive and she hoped they collaborate more in the future. Chantel described significant growth and learning from working with her coach despite complexities in the mentor model program. Collaboration in planning the scope and sequence on Lauren's grade level team enabled her to ensure that her second graders were in sync with other second graders in the school.

Within this study and certainly beyond it, the global COVID-19 pandemic represented an enormous challenge. All participants were impacted by the pandemic as it affected their teacher

preparation coursework, student teaching experiences, and induction to teaching. Since they lacked support and sufficient practice during their student teaching, their first jobs as probationary teachers were marked by inexperience with classroom management for in-person instruction. Additionally, as state agencies continually changed guidelines, teachers operated under ongoing uncertainty, causing a great deal of stress on their learning process. This is a noteworthy contribution for this study, which took place during a critical moment for these early-career teachers; it seems clear that stress and uncertainty limited the extent to which they could enact CRP. While there is currently a dearth of research on how the pandemic has impacted enacting CRP, emergent research indicates the pandemic has contributed to teachers experiencing lack of self-efficacy (Pressley & Ha, 2021) as they teach during an ever-evolving pandemic. Certainly, stress has increased significantly for teachers as communities clamor for consistency (Mecham, et al. 2021).

What Motivates and Sustains New Teachers as they Navigate CRP

When I asked teachers, “what keeps you in this work?” all of them responded swiftly with some variation of, “the kids.” Each of them found their work with students fulfilling and motivating, noting that building relationships with colleagues and students’ families was sustaining, as well:

No matter where I teach, I teach for the students. Students are the best part of teaching.

Therefore, wherever I go, the students are the best part. What drew me to my district was the staff. The staff, as a whole, care about the well-being of each other and the students.

(Jack Interview 3, 2-8-22)

Chantel also noted that students' progress and growth, both academically and relationally, was sustaining her to finish a challenging year. Seeing students' growth, building relationships, and learning alongside students was the sustaining factor for all participants. Lauren shared that she believed that teaching using a framework of CRP was "best for kids" (Lauren Interview 2, 2-1-22). She believed that teaching students to have high expectations for themselves, to become culturally competent in order to affirm their own identity and to understand others' identity, and to engage in critical thinking would move students toward her goal of them becoming adults who are kind, supportive, and helpful. She also explained that she persists in enacting CRP because she sees that it works:

When you do it, it's pretty evident that [students] are in a classroom that is doing this work [of CRP]. Today when we were reading this book [*Just Ask! Be Different, Be Brave, Be You* (Sotomayor, 2019)] and we got to the page about autism and half my kids go "Oh, that's what [classmate] has and that's why she uses this tool and that's how she helps like that's what helps her!" Seeing those connections that they make [sustains me].

Lauren's words represent the hope and sustaining belief expressed by teachers in this study. They persisted in working towards CRP despite challenges because they held a deep belief that the work was essential and would make the world a better place. This echoes the work of Parsons (2005), which described the underlying sense of purpose emerging from the place where caring and justice intersect. Educators who engage in culturally relevant caring give all their students access to quality educational experiences and prepare them to be change makers in their communities (Parsons, 2005).

Limitations

This study was shaped by several limitations, namely that although it involved a deep look at how CRP shows up in early-career teachers' practice, it did only include several teachers and thus cannot be broadly generalized. The participants who agreed to work with me were all recent graduates from a teacher preparation program from a single university, and participants were also undoubtedly constrained by school and community contexts regarding what they decided to share with me. I experienced my own challenges with time constraints and the global pandemic. Since I wanted to be respectful of participants' limited time, I met with each one via Zoom, with the exception of Riley; I was able to meet her in her classroom one time, outside of school hours. Due to school restrictions related to the global pandemic I was not able to visit other classrooms or observe participants while they were teaching, which would have lent greater depth to the study's insights on how early-career teachers enact CRP in their literacy instruction.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

Despite the limitations, this study does offer insights into the experiences of new teachers as they navigate teaching literacy using the framework of CRP. Several implications and recommendations for practice are worth noting.

Implications for Teacher Preparation Programs

The course of study included in TPPs, including theory, methods, and practice, is formative to how in-service teachers describe and enact CRP and teach literacy (Aronson, 2020; Scales et al., 2017). The research study presented here confirmed this and presses teacher educators to consider the call to ensure TPPs prepare culturally relevant educators.

CRP in Program Design. This study implies that TPPs have a profound responsibility to employ frameworks that promote the tenets of CRP in their courses from theory, to methods, to field experiences, to dispositions. Regardless of the demographic makeup of the TPP or

surrounding communities (Anthony-Stevens et al., 2017), TPPs have the opportunity to educate future teachers in CRP. Culturally relevant education is essential for children from all communities, as the path to extinguishing injustice necessitates cultural competence and critical consciousness from all, not only historically marginalized groups of people (Hambacher et al., 2020). To this end, TPPs must design entire programs using a framework of CRP rather than requiring one or two multicultural education courses.

In specific courses, instructors must intentionally scaffold preservice teachers in discussions about issues of injustice and other difficult topics (Hambacher et al., 2020). TPP faculty must plan to address misconceptions of preservice teachers (Nganga, 2020) as they lead preservice teachers in learning how to translate critical pedagogy into concrete practice (Burke & Collier, 2017). Courses that focus on literature and teaching literacy lend themselves well to embedding the ideals of CRP, but emphasizing high expectations, cultural competence, and critical consciousness as well as the dispositions of being a CRE transcend the teaching literacy content areas; CRP can well be woven throughout a TPP course schedule.

Field experiences hold opportunities for students to practice instructional strategies aligned with CRP. Beyond student teaching, preservice teachers can get experience transferring the theory of CRP into concrete ways through tutoring, after school programs, and classroom visits (Barnes, 2006; Mosley, 2010).

TPPs that prioritize CRP must also attend to dispositions of preservice teachers. Journell (2013) argues,

Once teachers become aware of deficiencies in their content knowledge, then they must make the choice whether to remediate any issues with content that may exist. At this

point, what was once a problem with a teacher's lack of content knowledge becomes an issue related to his or her dispositions (p. 320).

The challenge for TPPs is to not only educate using a CRP framework, ensuring that future teachers understand what it means to have high expectations for all students, pursue cultural competence, and practice critical consciousness, but to convey the importance of these things; to shape future teachers who make the choice to remediate their deficiencies. CRP requires educators to understand that the purpose of education is to foster empowerment in students (Ladson-Billings, 1990) and TPPs are tasked with leading preservice teachers to this understanding.

CRP as faculty focus. As TPPs work to approach the challenges above, they must ensure that they are staffed with faculty members and instructors who understand this work well. In order to do this, TPPs can prioritize cultural relevance in their recruitment and hiring practices and support all instructors with opportunities for professional learning. Helping teachers to become culturally relevant is a continuous and fluid process (Ladson-Billings, 1995; McCarty & Lee, 2014; Paris, 2012; Paris 2021). Ideas for professional development include book groups, and discussions that make space for inquiry, reflection, and collaboration (Burke & Collier, 2017).

Neither CRP or culturally relevant caring (Parsons, 2005) is automatic, nor can it be assumed that teacher educators with advanced degrees enact CRP. This points to the need for ongoing and intentional support for all instructors (Nganga, 2020) but also reflects the importance of TPP recruiting and hiring faculty who hold the dispositions that they hope to see in their students; willingness to contend with privilege, a commitment to continually learning

about issues related to CRP, and a willingness to confront deficiencies in their own knowledge and mindset.

Implications for School Districts

New teachers often bring renewed perspectives to their teaching contexts (Aronson, 2020; Borrero et al., 2018). This study, too, revealed the ways participants contributed to their school environments by offering their colleagues technological support during the virtual teaching necessitated by the pandemic. They also questioned the purpose behind long-held traditions and practices and contributed new teaching strategies. School district leadership should consider the unique assets of induction-level teachers as resources for supporting culturally relevant practice in their wider school communities. Early-career teachers could help create professional development to help their peers fuse CRP and curriculum. Ultimately, as leadership in school districts make plans for CRP development and support, they must acknowledge that nuanced and context-dependent perspectives are essential for enacting effective CRP. (McCarty & Lee, 2014).

School districts considering ways to support teachers' development of CRP should also take into account the power of collaboration (Borrero et al., 2018), particularly through coaching or mentoring (Aronson, 2020) or providing safe places to have hard conversations (Burke & Collier, 2017; Pomerantz, 2018). These opportunities could provide space for teachers to confront their own biases and come alongside one another to reflect on classroom practices that need to be refined in order to better meet the needs of all learners.

Suggestions for Future Research

To further the scholarship related to the intersections of early-career teachers, CRP, and literacy, several suggestions for future research are indicated. First, I recommend studies involve

larger and more diverse samples of participants. Due to logistical constraints, I was only able to interview four participants. A larger and more diverse sample would give additional insights into how new teachers navigate teaching literacy with a framework of CRP. Similarly, a longer time frame for data collection and varied data sources would also be useful. Due to the global pandemic, I was not able to engage in classroom visits or teaching observations, which I know would have added depth to this study.

Critical consciousness, along with examining and changing systems and structures that perpetuate inequities, are central tenets of CRP. Further research ought to examine how state or federal level policy might support TPPs work with teacher candidates in using a CRP framework in order to sustain these issues at a more structural level. Similarly, it would be helpful for research to explore how state policy and funding might empower school districts in supporting these new teachers in developing their teaching voice and confidence in enacting CRP.

Conclusion

This research study explored the experiences of new teachers as they navigated the work of incorporating CRP into their literacy instruction. Admirably, teachers did this work at a tender and critical moment in their own developmental process, and sustained these efforts during the uncertainties of a global pandemic. That they took the time to share their journey with me is nothing short of amazing. I am grateful to have learned alongside them and to have witnessed their deep care and concern for their students. Teacher educators and those interested in supporting the expansion of CRP for the benefit of all learners may find inspiration here and seek to support it through their own ongoing effort.

References

- Almaguer, I. (2021). (Re)Actualizing culturally sustaining read aloud practices: Enriching Latinx bilingual learners' literacy development. *Journal of Education and Social Development*, 5(1), 1-7.
- American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). American Psychological Association.
- Anthony-Stevens, V., Gehlken, E., Jones, C., Day, S., & Gussenhoven, S. (2017). 'I am assumed to be someone who doesn't have to deal with diversity': Countering the denial of diversity in rural teacher education. *Multicultural Education Review*, 9(4), 270-288.
- Aronson, B. A., (2020). From teacher education to practicing teacher: What does culturally relevant praxis look like? *Urban Education*, 55(8-9), 1115-1141.
- Aronson, B., & Meyers, L. (2020). Critical race theory and the teacher education curriculum: Challenging understandings of racism, whiteness, and white supremacy. *Whiteness and Education*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23793406.2020.1812109>.
- Barnes, C. J., (2006). Preparing preservice teachers to teach in a culturally responsive way. *The Negro Educational Review*, 57(1-2), 85-100.
- Bishop, R. S. (1990). Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. *Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom*, 6(3).
- Borrero, N., Ziauddin, A., & Ahn, A. (2018). Teaching for change: New teachers' experiences with and visions for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Critical Questions in Education* 9(1), 22-39.
- Burke, A., & Collier, D. R. (2017). 'I was kind of teaching myself': Teachers' conversations about social justice and teaching for change. *Teacher Development*, 21(2), pp. 269-287.

- Carter, H. & Bradford, M. (2019). "Opening a window to a world wider than our little classroom": The importance of culturally relevant pedagogy. *EViE: Emerging Voices in Education*, 1(1), 18-32.
- Ciampa, K. & Reisboard, D. (2021). Books like me: An investigation of urban elementary teachers' journey towards more culturally relevant pedagogy. *Multicultural Education Review*, 13(2), 128-147.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Darvin, J. (2017). Critical conversations with children's literature: How cultural and political vignettes (CPVs) support young readers. *UKLA Literacy*, 51(3), 131-137.
- Durden, T. R., Escalante, E., & Blitch, K. (2014). Start with us! Culturally relevant pedagogy in the preschool classroom. *Early Childhood Education Journal* (43), 223-232.
- Durden, T. R., & Truscott, D. M. (2013). Critical reflectivity and the development of new culturally relevant teachers. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 15(2), 73-80.
- Educator Advancement Council. (2020). *2020 Oregon Educator Equity Report*.
<https://www.oregon.gov/highered/research/Documents/Reports/2020-Educator-Equity-Report.pdf>
- Gay, G. (2002). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(2), 106-116.
- Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive Teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. Teachers College Press.
- Goetz, J. P., & LeCompte, M. D., (1984) *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research*. Academic Press.

- Hambacher, E., Silva, B., & Morelli, G. (2020). "There was complete silence": Reflections on teacher preparation for social justice education in a predominantly white community. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 22(4) pp. 201-209.
- Hussar, W. J., and Bailey, T. M. (2019). Projections of Education Statistics to 2027 (NCES 2019-001). U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
- Hyland, N. (2005) Being a good teacher of black students? White teachers and unintentional racism. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 34(4), 429-459.
- Josselson, R. (2013). *Interviewing for qualitative inquiry: A relational approach*. The Guilford Press.
- Journell, W. (2013) What preservice social studies teachers (don't) know about politics and current events—And why it matters. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 41(3), 316-351.
- Iwai, Y. (2019). Culturally responsive teaching in a global era: Using the genres of multicultural literature. *The Educational Forum*, 83(1), 13-27.
- La Serna, J. J. (2020). Culturally relevant pedagogy in two-way immersion classrooms. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 43(4), 400-416.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1990). Like lightning in a bottle: attempting to capture the pedagogical excellence of successful teachers of black students. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 3(4), 335-344.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory into Practice*, 34(3), 159–165.

- Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: a.k.a the remix. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(1), 74-84.
- McCarty, T. L., & Lee, T. S. (2014). Critical culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy and indigenous education sovereignty. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(1), 101-137.
- Mecham, E., Newell, E. J., Reina, L. J., & Steward, C. S. (2021). Navigating Pandemic Schooling for Novice Teachers. *Educational Research: Theory and Practice*, 32(1), 90-96.
- Merriam, S. B. (1988). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. Josey-Bass Inc., Publishers.
- Moll, L. C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory Into Practice*, 31(2), 132-141.
- Mosley, M., (2010). Becoming a literacy teacher: approximations in critical literacy teaching, *Teaching Education*, 21:4, 403-426.
- Mosley, M. & Rogers, R. (2011). Inhabiting the ‘tragic gap’: pre-service teachers practicing racial literacy. *Teaching Education*, 22(3), 303-324.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Murray-Orr, A., & Mitton, J. (2021). Middle years’ teachers’ critical literacy practices as cornerstones of their culturally relevant pedagogies. *LEARNIng Landscapes*, 14(1), 249-263.
- Nganga, L. (2020). Analyzing children's literature for hidden bias helps preservice teachers gain pedagogical practices in critical multicultural education. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 34(1), 93–107.

- National Center for Education Statistics. (2017). *The condition of education 2017*. Washington, DC: Institute of Education Sciences.
- Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. *Educational Researcher*, 41(3), 93-97.
- Parsons, E. C. (2005). From Caring as a Relation to Culturally Relevant Caring: A White Teacher's Bridge to Black Students. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 38(1), 25-34.
- Pomerantz, F. (2018). Facilitating Teachers' Appreciation and Use of Controversial Picture Books. *The Reading Professor*, 41(1), 30-35.
- Pressley, T., & Ha, C. (2021). Teaching during a Pandemic: United States Teachers' Self-Efficacy During COVID-19. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 106, 1-9.
- Roberts, C. & Hyatt, L. (2019). *The dissertation journey: A practical and comprehensive guide to planning, writing, and defending your dissertation*. Corwin.
- Roulston, K. (2010). *Reflective interviewing: A guide to theory & practice*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Scales, R. Q., Wolsey, T. D., Young, J., Smetana, L., Grisham, D. L., Lenski, S., Dobler, E., Yoder, K. K., & Chambers, S. A. (2017). Mediating Factors in Literacy Instruction: How Novice Elementary Teachers Navigate New Teaching Contexts. *Reading Psychology*, 38(6), 604-651.
- Seidman, I. (2019). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. (5th ed.) Teachers College Press.

- Stout, C., & LeMee, G. L. M. (2021, July 22). *Crt map: Efforts to restrict teaching about racism, bias have multiplied*. Chalkbeat. <https://www.chalkbeat.org/22525983/map-critical-race-theory-legislation-teaching-racism>.
- Vasquez, V.M., Janks, H., Comber, B. (2019). Critical literacy as a way of being and doing. *Language Arts*, 96(5), 300-311.
- Vittrup, B. (2016). Early childhood teachers' approaches to multicultural education & perceived barriers to disseminating anti-bias messages. *Multicultural Education*, 23(3/4), 37-41.
- Vogt, W. P, Gardner, D. C, & Haeffele, L. M. (2012). *When to use what research design*. The Guilford Press.
- Vogt, W. P., Vogt, E. R, Gardner, D. C., & Haeffele, L. M. (2014). *Selecting the right analyses for your data: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed Methods*. The Guilford Press.
- Willey, C., & Magee, P. (2018). Whiteness as a barrier to becoming a culturally relevant teacher: Clinical experiences and the role of supervision. *Journal of Educational Supervision*. 1(2), 33-51.
- Woodard, R., Vaughn, A., & Machado, E. (2017). Exploring culturally sustaining writing pedagogy in urban classrooms. *Literacy Research: Theory, Method, and Practice*, 66, 215-231.
- Yin, R. K., (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Yin, R. K., (2015). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. The Guilford Press.
- Zoch, M. (2017). "It's important for them to know who they are": Teachers' efforts to sustain students' cultural competence in an age of high-stakes testing. *Urban Education*, 52(2), 610-636.

Appendix A

Recruitment Email

(Sent by gatekeeper)

Happy New Year, [Name]!

I hope you had a fabulous winter holiday and that your first week back has gone smoothly (or perhaps, smoothly-ish). You made it to Friday and that is worthy of celebration!!!!

I would like to invite you to participate in a research project with a colleague from a neighboring institution. It's a project that asks for little of your time yet will have much to contribute to our field. You may remember Professor Sarri Gibson from her time teaching in [Education Building at Oak University]. Sarri is currently teaching at [Institution] and is working towards her doctorate. She is hoping to interview new teachers about navigating culturally relevant pedagogy in literacy instruction.

Sarri is planning to hold an introductory conversation next week on Wednesday or Thursday evening at 7pm. If you would like to learn more about participating in the study, please email Sarri at [email] and let her know if either or both of those dates work. She will follow up with a Zoom link. I've cc'd Sarri in my email.

Thanks for considering this opportunity.

Enjoy your weekend,
[Gatekeeper]

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Interview One:

- I'd like you to tell me a little about yourself and your priorities as a teacher.
- What drew you to the profession?
- What's your working definition of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP)?
 - How do you think about it?
 - I am going to share my definition of CRP with you, will you tell me how you feel about it? My definition of CRP is based on the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings. I understand CRP to emphasize the importance of cultural competence and critical consciousness alongside a commitment to students' academic growth.
- Can you talk me through a few examples of how you enact CRP? I'd like to get a sense of what it looks like/sounds like, in your thinking, in your words to students, in your pedagogical decisions...
- I would love to hear about your experiences that made you realize that this work is important.
 - Can you tell me a story or an experience about...
 - authors/readings that have been particularly important/relevant
 - how you came to CRP? Or what inspired you...
 - a CRP practice/structure you can point to in your classroom?
 - an exchange with another teacher or student related to/informed by CRP?
 - how you view/practice CRP?
 - Can you tell me about an instance that you can pinpoint during your teacher preparation program that helped you understand the importance of CRP?
 - Can you tell me about an instance that you can pinpoint during your teacher preparation program that helped you understand how to teach literacy using CRP?
- I would like you to think of something from your teacher education program that represents teaching literacy through a CRP framework- maybe projects or assignments and bring it to our next meeting.

Prompts to draw out more information:

- Can you tell me more?
- Can you give me an example?

Interview Two:

Interview began with member checking, reviewing and reflecting on the previous interview.

- What does teaching literacy through a CRP lens look like day to day in your classroom? What are some examples?
- What challenges do you face in planning or preparation related to teaching literacy using a CRP framework?
- What challenges do you face in teaching literacy using a CRP framework?

- What helps you stay committed to CRP?

Interview Three:

Interview begins with thorough member checking, a timeline of all we've discussed from two interviews.

- What does it mean to be a new teacher engaged in this work?
- What motivates you?
- Can you talk to me a little bit about what it is like to be a new teacher during this global pandemic? What has that been like?
- Do you have any last words about teaching and CRP?

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

INTRODUCTION

The purposes of this form are to provide you (as a research study participant) information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research and to record your consent to be involved in the study.

RESEARCHER

Sarri Gibson, Doctoral Student, George Fox University

STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of the research is to learn about the experiences of white, elementary school teachers (grades K-5) who are teaching literacy using Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY

If you decide to participate, you will join an unfunded study. The protocol for this research includes the following commitments and your consent to be recorded in these activities through video or audio recording:

1. To conduct three separate interviews.
2. As a researcher, I will be keeping an electronic Researcher's Notebook. This notebook will be a place where I keep interview transcripts, jot notes, code responses, and keep analytic memos about the themes or assertions in the collected information.
 1. You will have the option of reviewing the information related to your three interviews to ensure the accuracy of the coding and themes discovered. You will also be able to ensure that all information shared in the interview transcript is usable. You will be able to strike any information from the interview transcripts that you do not want considered as a part of the research study.

The volume and nature of the data collection necessitates video/audio recording. Your participation in the study connotes agreement to this.

RISKS

There are no known risks from taking part in this study, but in any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified. It is important to know that the small nature of this study makes it difficult to guarantee complete confidentiality. It may be possible that others will know what you have reported. Because of this, you will be free to strike data or information from the record, should you feel concerned about any adverse impact to you.

BENEFITS

The possible/main benefit of your participation in the research is the opportunity to reflect on the experiences that you have had throughout your career. Beyond the benefits to you personally, this research has the potential to benefit the educational field through a deeper understanding of

the experiences- successes and challenges- of teachers who are practicing CRP through literacy in their classrooms

CONFIDENTIALITY

Due to the nature of this small, qualitative study, the researcher cannot guarantee complete confidentiality of your data. It may be possible that others will know what you have reported. The results of this research study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications, but the researcher will not identify you by name, unless you so choose. Based on your wishes, Sarri will assign you a pseudonym and use this code in working with and discussing the data. I will also not identify your teaching or residence location or the name of the school districts in which you have worked throughout your career. I will not share any specific, identifiable information gleaned from interviews with any individuals and information will be held in a secure location. Only Sarri and her chair, Dr. Karen Buchanan will have access to the interview transcripts and coding log information. All raw data from interviews will be destroyed three years after the completion of this research.

WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. It is ok for you to say “no.” Even if you consent now, you are free to withdraw consent later, and withdraw from the study at any time. Your decision will not affect your relationship with George Fox University or otherwise cause a loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. If you choose to withdraw from the study, the researcher will discuss your preferences for any data in which you were a part.

COSTS AND PAYMENTS

There is no payment for your participation in the study. You will receive a modest gift card as a thank you gift that you can use towards books or supplies in your classroom.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

Any questions you have concerning the research study or your participation in the study (before or after your consent), will be answered by Sarri Gibson (971-241-7398). This form explains the nature, demands, benefits and any risk of the project. By signing this form, you agree knowingly to assume any risks involved. Remember, your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefit. In signing this consent form, you are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. A copy of this consent form will be given (offered) to you. Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in the above study. By signing below, you are granting to the researcher the right to use your recorded interview transcript for presenting or publishing this research.

Participant's Signature_____

Printed Name_____

Date_____

Appendix D**IRB Approval**

2211160

5

GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY HSRC INITIAL REVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Title: New Teachers Enacting Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in Literacy Instruction

Principal Researcher(s): Sarri Gibson

Date application completed: 12/16/21


(The researcher needs to complete the information above on this page.)**COMMITTEE FINDING:**

✓ (1) The proposed research makes adequate provision for safeguarding the health and dignity of the subjects and is therefore approved.

_____ (2) Due to the assessment of risk being questionable or being subject to change, the research must be periodically reviewed by the **HSRC** on a _____ basis throughout the course of the research or until otherwise notified. This requires resubmission of this form, with updated information, for each periodic review.

_____ (3) The proposed research evidences some unnecessary risk to participants and therefore must be revised to remedy the following specific area(s) on non-compliance:

_____ (4) The proposed research contains serious and potentially damaging risks to subjects and is therefore not approved.


Chair or designated member

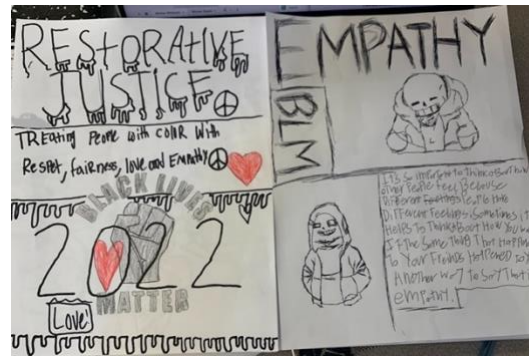
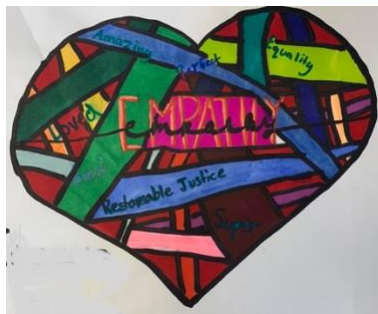
12/17/21
Date

Appendix E

Artifacts

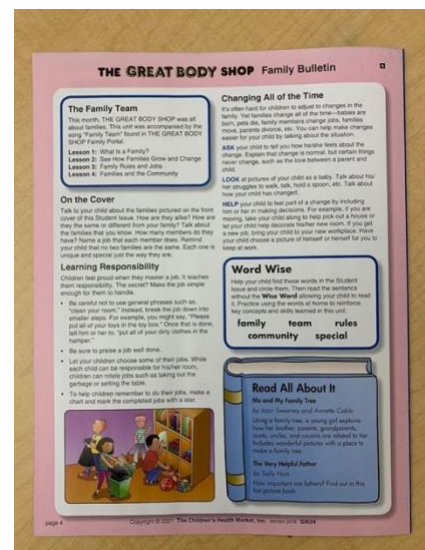
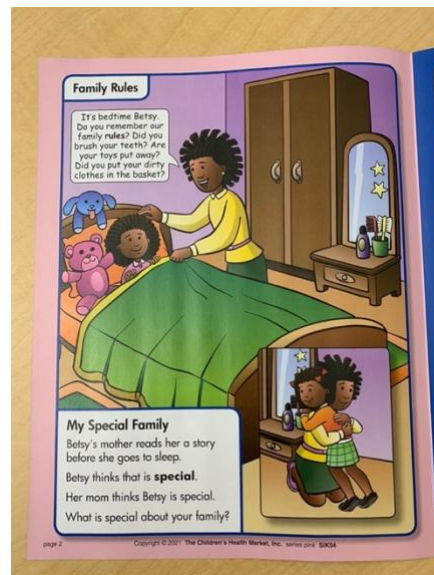
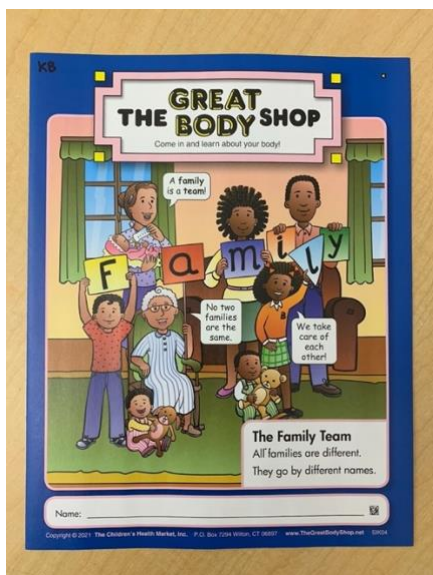
Chantel

Chantel's artifacts include slides from the Black History Month slide deck provided to teachers at Promise Elementary and examples of student work from Black History Month art projects.



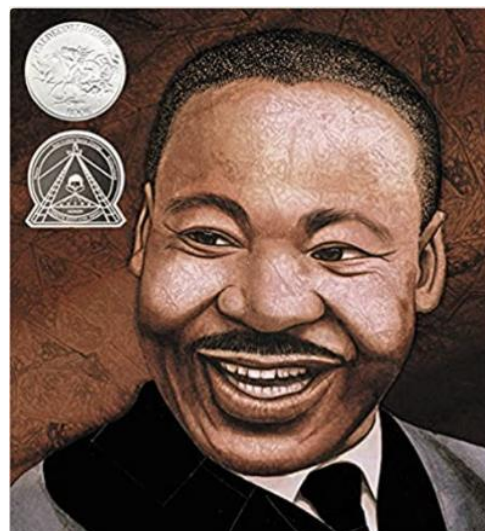
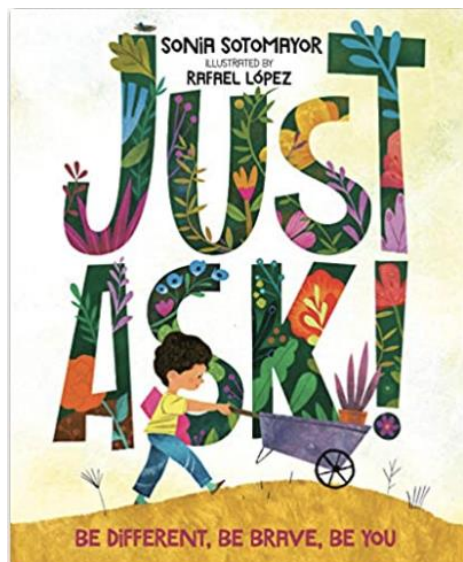
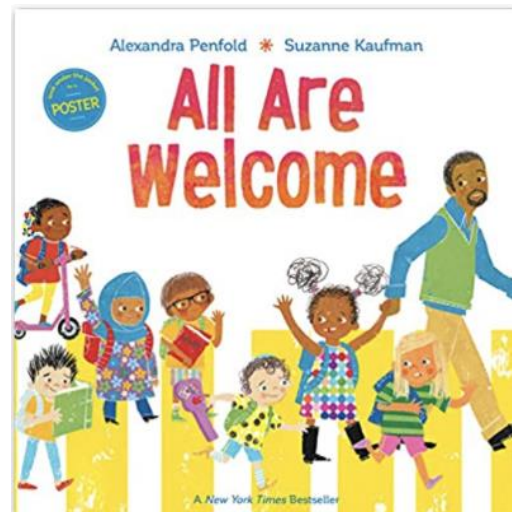
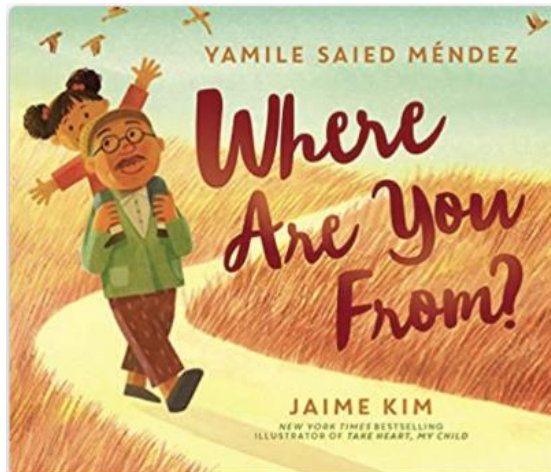
Riley

One artifact that Riley shared was a recent lesson from the adopted health curriculum. Riley shared how she used the curriculum and spent extended time focused on how families represented in her classroom were similar and different.



Lauren

Lauren's artifacts were books that she had used for read alouds and then moderated class discussions where she felt students had deeply engaged in developing cultural competence and critical consciousness.

**Jack**

Jack's artifact was a memory book that was gifted to him at the culmination of the year he taught kindergarten in Germany. It included pictures of students and staff as well as notes to him.

