FROM RECALLTO RESOLVE: SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRESERVICE TEACHERS IN A LANGUAGE ARTS METHODS COURSE

by

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ABSTRACT

CRYSTAL GLOVER. From recall to resolve: Supporting the development of culturally responsive preservice teachers in a language arts methods course. (Under the direction of DR. BRUCE TAYLOR)

The need for culturally responsive teachers in an increasingly diverse educational system is paramount. The purpose of this study was to investigate preservice teachers' developing understandings of culturally responsive pedagogy in a language arts methods class over the course of one semester. The study also sought to explore the relationship between preservice teachers' cultural background and their receptiveness to culturally responsive pedagogy. Using the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination as a guiding framework, this case study employed the use of innovative classroom practices designed to promote culturally relevant pedagogy within undergraduate literacy classes for preservice teachers. Data analysis revealed four major findings: 1. *The Role of Cultural Background*, 2. *Personal Connections and the Desire to Help Others*, 3. *Understandings about Culturally Responsive Teaching*, and 4. *Clinical Experiences*. Participants in the study progressed through three distinct stages-*Recall*, *Reflect*, and *Resolve*- related to the acquisition of culturally responsive pedagogical practice. There was also a suggestion within the data of the need for a fourth stage, *React*. These findings suggest a relationship between cultural background and receptiveness to culturally responsive teaching; a call for ongoing support and professional development regarding culturally responsive pedagogy for preservice teachers; and a need for diverse field experiences. Additionally, strong connections between the developmental stages coined, *The Three R's*, and corresponding levels within the revised

ABSTRACT

Bloom's Taxonomy promote the existence of a developmental process involved in the procurement of culturally responsive pedagogy.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandmothers the late Mrs. Arebell Collins and the late Mrs. Leatice Morgan (Granny and Momma). I know you both would have been so proud.

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CHAPTER I: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A growing body of research suggests that teacher preparation programs across the country are deficient in preparing preservice teachers to work with diverse student populations (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007; Gilmore-Skepple, 2011; Gunn, 2010; Hill, Phelps, & Friedland, 2007; Shanahan, 2008; Sleeter, 2008; Waddell, Edwards, & Underwood, 2008). The challenge of educating preservice teachers to work with students from diverse cultural backgrounds is extensive and complex. Many teacher educators lack the cultural knowledge base necessary to effectively prepare teacher candidates to work in culturally diverse schools. Most preservice teachers have been exclusively educated in traditional Eurocentric styles of pedagogy (Au, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Smith, 1998). As a result, they are likely to overlook their students' ethnic identities, beliefs, perceptions, values, and worldviews (Irvine, 2003). Irvine (2003) suggests that preservice teachers experience *cultural discontinuity* and have lowered expectations and negative assumptions about students of color. *Cultural discontinuity* refers to the culturally based differences that exist between the communication styles of students of color and the Eurocentric-based culture of the school (Ledlow, 1992) . It produces negative effects on student teacher relationships and student achievement levels (Irvine, 2003; Lovelace & Wheeler, 2006; Tyler, Boykin, & Walton, 2006).

In an effort to address the issue of preparing preservice teachers to teach in culturally diverse schools, many teacher education programs require teacher candidates to

take a single course in diversity, multicultural education, bilingual education, or urban education (Lenski, Mack, & Esparza-Brown, 2008; Sleeter, 2001; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2004). This one shot approach at infusing diversity into the preservice curriculum is largely ineffective (Lenski, Mack, & Esparza-Brown, 2008; Sleeter, 2001). Unless diverse perspectives are presented and reinforced in other classes throughout the program, preservice teachers demonstrate little change in their approach to urban education (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). In order to favorably impact preservice teachers' dispositions toward diverse students and increase the academic achievement of students of color, teacher preparation programs must engage teacher candidates in thoughtful self reflection, offer opportunities for meaningful dialogue, provide structured urban field experiences and maintain continued support throughout the program (Bennett, 2010; Gilmore-Skepple, 2011; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Waddell, Edwards, & Underwood, 2008).

High stakes testing and teacher accountability have led to a widening chasm between the academic achievement of White middle class students and students of color (Au, 2009; Kaplan, 2004; Richards, 2006; Sanchez, 2005). Low income, students of color in urban elementary schools have the poorest performance on standardized tests of literacy proficiency (Wilkinson, Mandel Morrow, & Chou, 2008). According to the Annie E. Casey National Kids Count Data report (2009), 79% of fourth graders in Title One schools scored below proficient in 2009 on standardized tests of reading compared to 58% of fourth graders in non-Title One schools. The Kids Count Data report also revealed that 85% of African American and 84% of Hispanic American fourth graders scored below proficient in reading in 2009. By the end of high school, African American

and Latino students underperform their White counterparts by four grade levels (Hendrie, 2004).

Some research suggests that the problem is exacerbated by teacher ineffectiveness (Castro, 2010; Kozol, 2005; Richards, 2011; Waddell, Edwards, & Underwood, 2008). Students that are taught by effective teachers for a period of three years experience significantly improved academic achievement (Haycock, 2003, as cited by Waddell, Edwards, & Underwood, 2008). Teacher quality in schools populated by diverse student bodies suffers greatly from teacher turnover (Waddell, Edwards, & Underwood, 2008). The 50% five-year attrition rate for teachers in urban schools (Waddell, Edwards, & Underwood, 2008) speaks directly to the need for systematic restructuring of teacher preparation programs responsible for producing effective teachers of urban students. Thus, careful attention must be given to the preparation of new teachers of students of color.

Significance of the problem

America's population is becoming increasingly more diverse. Ethnic and racial minorities account for 36% of the overall population and 49% of the K-12 school population (Haupt, Kane, & Haub, 2011). One in six U.S. residents is Latino/a. For the population under 18, the figure is one in four (Haupt, Kane, & Haub, 2011). While over 90% of students in urban schools are African American or Latino/a, the population of teachers serving these schools remains largely young, White, monolingual, middle class females (Bennett, 2010; Landsman & Lewis, 2006, 2011). Often these teachers have limited experiences with children of color. They are deficient in their understanding of

the culturally responsive teaching practices that can enhance a student's school experiences and improve their performance on standardized tests of achievement.

Despite the changing demographics in public schools, traditional Eurocentric curricula maintains its status as the dominant instructional tool. Few teachers recognize the value of implementing culturally relevant strategies to engage students of color and maximize student learning. Research indicates that all students benefit from instruction that is relevant to their cultural backgrounds (Bennett, 2010; Delpit, 1995; Lazar, 2011). However, both in-service and preservice teachers often reject the notion that multicultural education is necessary. Statistical trends indicate that White preservice teachers currently have more negative beliefs about the academic abilities of students of color than preservice teachers from the past 60 years (Bennett, 2010; Castro, 2010; Edwards & Kulman, 2010; Irvine, 2003; Sleeter, 2008). Law and Lane (1987) found that White preservice teachers have lower expectations for students of all subcultures in America. Preparing teachers to meet the needs of the students most in need is imperative to provide opportunities for *all* students.

This issue has personal significance to me. In the next section I describe my journey in becoming a culturally responsive educator. Using personal reflections, I describe how my individual experiences influenced the ideas and beliefs I currently hold about culturally responsive pedagogy. I reflect on my childhood, academic, and teaching or instructional endeavors as I depict my journey towards becoming more culturally responsive. My goal is to illustrate how the obstacles I have faced evolved into a passion for preparing preservice teachers to teach culturally diverse student populations.

My Story: Becoming a Culturally Responsive Educator

My journey as an African American educator began more than 20 years ago. I entered Winthrop University in Rock Hill, South Carolina as an eager, ambitious, outgoing young coed ready to take on the world. Four years later, I graduated with a degree in Elementary Education fully expecting to teach for a maximum of three years before moving on to another more lucrative career. I was not prepared to fall head over heels in love with the notion of having my own classroom full of "bright-eyed" 6 and 7 year olds eager to soak up anything I taught.

As an energetic, headstrong 3rd year teacher, I made one of the biggest decisions of my teaching career. Frustrated with the bureaucracy associated with the large urban school district in which I was employed, I left the wealthy suburban school where I taught 2nd grade to go to a new school where I was not restricted by the bureaucracy. Although I adored my students and colleagues, I felt restricted by the regulations that prevented me from providing the type of individualized instruction I felt my struggling readers deserved.

The student body of my new school was comprised of 99.3% African American students and 100% of the students received free or reduced lunch. Most of my students performed below grade level in reading, writing, and math. I quickly learned to modify my instruction in unique ways to meet the needs of my students. I conducted home visits to gather more information about my students' backgrounds and intentionally incorporated their personal experiences into my lessons. Although I lacked the terminology to describe what I was experiencing, it was through these experiences that I

began to formulate my understanding of what it means to be a culturally responsive teacher.

After making the decision to leave the classroom and pursue a doctorate in education, I felt lost. As a classroom teacher, my identity had become that of a passionate, energetic educator dedicated to improving the lives of my students. I had no idea who I was outside of that world. It wasn't long before my lifelong love of learning took over and I wholeheartedly threw myself into the doctoral student world with the same fervor I had embraced as a classroom teacher. I also embraced the opportunity to share my love of teaching with promising future educators in the elementary education methods courses I taught. Almost immediately however, I began to feel a distinct disconnect between the research I was reading about the growing diversity in U.S. public schools and what I saw being done to equip preservice teachers with the tools to meet the academic needs of diverse student populations. I began learning about historic and systematic marginalization of students of color and the long-standing effects of the intricate and multifaceted domination that continued to hinder their academic progress. I was intrigued by the work of educational pioneers such as Gloria Ladson-Billings, Geneva Gay, and Lisa Delpit who sought to create and refine systems for helping students of color achieve academic success. Ladson-Billings (1994) identified successful teachers of African American students and emphasized key behaviors exhibited by those teachers.

As I read the work of these multicultural trailblazers, I reflected on my own educational experiences as both an African American student and teacher. I thought about the teachers who had taken a special interest in my own academic pursuits. I

thought about the underprivileged students of color that had graced the walls of my classroom and had taught me more about teaching than anything I ever learned in my teacher education program. It was only through trial and error that I emerged victorious in helping these students reach their full potential. Now, I want to help my undergraduate students become the culturally responsive teachers the students in our state and nation so desperately need.

My own research and the research of others before me assured me that this task would not be easy. In order to help sometimes reluctant and/or resistant preservice teachers become adept at teaching diverse student populations, I would first need to help them evaluate their own cultural backgrounds/biases, introduce them to the complex issues that frame the lives of many students of color, teach them to recognize and reject the forces of domination that serve to perpetuate the failure of students of color and help them to promote fundamental change and social justice. Over the months and years of coursework in the Ph.D. program, this desire became a calling and ultimately led me to undertake this study.

Purpose of the study

Teacher education programs have an obligation to help improve the instructional literacy practices for all students including those that negatively affect students of color. Teacher educators must assume responsibility for preparing teachers to meet the literacy needs of diverse student populations. In doing so, teacher educators must develop culturally relevant curricula and model effective implementation of culturally responsive teaching strategies. Additionally, there is a need for teacher education programs to provide preservice teachers with meaningful field experiences in urban schools. In

summary, colleges of education are an integral component to the solution of decreasing the academic opportunity gap that exists between White students and students of color. The opportunity gap represents a lack of equal educational, economic, and sociocultural opportunities for students of color when compared to White students.

While much of the research on preservice teachers and culturally responsive teaching presents information regarding the lack of cultural responsiveness demonstrated by teacher candidates (Castro, 2010), this study explores the process that preservice teachers undergo as they are introduced to culturally responsive pedagogy. The purpose of this study was to determine how 10 literacy-based instructional activities influence preservice teachers' understandings about culturally responsive teaching. The study also determined how adept preservice teachers become at recognizing and integrating culturally responsive teaching strategies and techniques in their own teaching during an integrated field-experience. My goal was to restructure my language arts methods course to include an emphasis on culturally responsive literacy instruction for diverse learners using the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination as the lens for analysis. Specifically, the study addressed the following research questions:

1. How does cultural background influence preservice teachers' receptiveness to culturally responsive literacy instruction?
2. How do preservice teachers' understandings about culturally responsive literacy teaching change as they matriculate through an undergraduate language arts methods course?
3. In what ways do preservice teachers demonstrate culturally responsive literacy teaching during a three-week integrated clinical experience?

Theoretical Framework

The Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination

The Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination is a theoretical framework that outlines the multifaceted dimensions of oppression and domination that exist within literacy education. This section describes the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination and delineates its ties to other social theories. The Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination has its roots in two major social theories; Critical Theory (Freire, 1970, 2000) and Patricia Hill-Collins' Matrix of Domination (1990). The Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination blends key elements of these theories to explain the oppressive factors involved in literacy education. Using the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination to analyze unjust literacy-based educational practices allows researchers within the field of literacy to gain awareness and understanding of the actions necessary to impart change.

Critical Theory

Critical Theory is a theoretical framework that systematically theorizes and critiques society. Critical theorists seek to highlight and admonish injustice and inequality and are committed to the transformation of oppressive social conditions. Educational scholars employ critical theory to examine power and privilege within academic institutions of learning. Noted critical theorist Paolo Freire (1970, 2000) challenges the imbalance of authority and oppression in both society and education and points to self-awareness and the creation of knowledge as a means to overcome injustice. For Freire, oppressive aspects of education lead to the marginalization of disadvantaged populations. Friere recommends that educators enable these groups to critique the destructive forces of society that restrict their progress.

Lessem and Scheiffer (2010) identified four key tenets of critical theory. First, it *arises out of the problems of everyday life*. Critical theory examines the outcome of confrontational scenarios that involve conflict between opposing social and economic groups. Second, critical theory *promotes liberation*. In this sense, it is imperative that members of oppressed groups recognize their plight and make an earnest effort to overcome domination. Next, Lessem and Schieffer (2010) suggest that critical theory *uncovers power relations*. "Critical theory engages in the critical interpretation of unconscious processes, ideologies, power relations, and other expressions of dominance" (Lessem & Schieffer, 2010, p.212). Finally, the authors posit that critical theory *views reality as being socially constructed*. Thus, critical theorists declare that individuals create their own social and cultural realities based on shared meaning.

Matrix of Domination

Patricia Hill-Collins conceptualized the theoretical framework known as The Matrix of Domination in 1990. The Matrix of Domination rejects additive approaches to oppression and views dimensions of oppression such as race, gender, age, and sexual orientation as individual components working in unison to form a macro-level system of domination. While additive models of oppression are grounded in Eurocentric, male-dominated, "either/or" thought, the matrix of domination described by Hill-Collins advocates a paradigm shift in thought. Hill-Collins contends that an "and/both" stance transcends thought away from singular forms of oppression to a holistic, interconnected system of domination. Key to understanding the matrix of domination is the knowledge that individuals garner varying levels of 'penalty and privilege' from the systems of oppression that influence their lives.

The Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination

The Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination (CMLD) represents an amalgam of both Critical Theory and the Matrix of Domination. While the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination does not combine all facets of each theory, it takes key aspects of both paradigms to formulate a distinctive framework that has relevance for all educators. From Critical Theory, the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination borrows the overarching theme of change and social justice. The Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination seeks to bring awareness to the issues of oppression that exist within the field of literacy education. Like Critical Theory, the Critical Matrix of Domination focuses on educating members of oppressed groups and helping marginalized groups impart change through transformation.

Likewise, the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination takes key beliefs from Hill-Collins' Matrix of Domination. The Critical Matrix of Domination acknowledges that individuals are afforded benefits and penalties based on their status and positions in relation to certain components of the matrix. For example, a low-income, white female student may encounter literacy-based bias as a result of her gender and socioeconomic status whereas she may assume privilege as a result of her race and/or ethnicity. Whereas the Matrix of Domination was originally created to illustrate the dimensions of oppression faced by Black females, the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination is not limited to the feminist perspective. It can be used to examine interconnected issues of

race, class, religion, sexual orientation, and gender. The Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination does not stem exclusively from a feminist orientation.

There are three key tenets that characterize the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination. First, educators must seek to illuminate and reject bias within instructional literacy materials. Second, the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination emphasizes the need for professional development to inform literacy educators of the effects of oppression within the context of literacy. Finally, the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination is concerned with empowering students to overcome issues of literacy-based domination by seeking social justice through transformation.

Consider the following analogy comparing the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination to an ocean. Each drop of water in the ocean represents a different type of domination within the matrix. As one drop of water comingles with another, the forces of domination become intertwined until they are indistinguishable as separate entities. As a result of this comingling, the boundaries of domination are blurred and the forces of domination gain intensity through their expansion. The Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination is a sea of unjust literacy practices that serve to marginalize and oppress disadvantaged groups while supporting and privileging others. Each droplet of domination within the ocean of oppression gains strength and power as it fuses with other dimensions of literacy-based inequities. On the surface, the ocean paints a contrasting picture. Its vast, infinite beauty is calm, majestic and inviting which prompts many visitors to swim and enjoy the benefits of its waters. Power, prestige, and wealth are available to all who are equipped with the tools and knowledge to successfully traverse the ocean by swimming or by water craft. Those who are adept at navigating the waves,

reap the benefits of an enjoyable journey. However, less savvy thrill-seekers fall victim to the ocean's immense power. Without the knowledge, skills or tools needed to survive an encounter with the ocean of oppression, its interconnected drops of domination may overwhelm and drown its victims in an undertow of repressive forces or lose them at sea to its onerous power.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive teaching is an educational framework which supports the integration of students' cultural background and experiences into the classroom curriculum (Gay, 2000). Proponents of this approach suggest that students are more authentically engaged and achieve higher academic success when the instruction they receive is inclusive of their lived experiences (Kesler, 2010). Culturally responsive teachers forge meaningful connections between students' home and school culture (Gunn, 2010). According to Gay (2000), teacher education programs must embrace culturally responsive pedagogy as a means for preparing preservice teachers to become effective educators of diverse student populations.

> The term culturally responsive pedagogy is used interchangeably with several terms such as culturally responsible, culturally appropriate, culturally congruent, culturally compatible, culturally relevant, and multicultural to describe a variety of effective teaching approaches in culturally diverse classrooms. These terms all imply that teachers should be responsive to their students by incorporating elements of the students' culture in their teaching. (Irvine & Armento, 2001, p. 4).

In order to become culturally responsive, preservice teachers preparing to enter the workforce must begin to strengthen their understanding of other cultures, explore their own biases and beliefs about people from different cultures and promote educational equity for all students from all cultures (Lazar, 2011; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Achieving these tasks requires preservice teachers to recognize the complex nature of culture.

Preservice teachers must also recognize that culture involves a students' race, religion, ethnicity, values, socioeconomic status, sexuality, tradition, and region of birth (Gunn, 2010).

> A society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members. Culture is not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behavior, or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the form of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them (Goodenough, 1957, p. 167).

The role of culture in the classroom influences the relationships formed between students and teachers from varying backgrounds. Students whose culture differs greatly from the dominate school culture face challenges in meeting, adapting to and acquiring the dispositional expectations and curriculum content. Culturally responsive teachers have the desire and ability to make cultural connections between students' home and school environments. Positive cultural connections can help students achieve personal and academic goals in educational, residential, and community settings.

Summary

The failure of teacher preparation programs to produce culturally responsive teachers is of paramount concern to the field of teacher education. As American schools become more racially diverse, steps must be taken to ensure that the teachers who serve in these schools have the means to provide instructional experiences that are inclusive of their students' cultural backgrounds. Culturally responsive teachers take the necessary strides to make certain that their students' academic needs are met in a way that is supportive of and sensitive to their cultural backgrounds. This chapter demonstrates the need to train preservice teachers to meet the educational needs of children from culturally diverse backgrounds.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In many areas across America, public schools are failing to meet the literacy needs of students of color (Geisler, Hessler, Gardner, & Lovelace, 2009). For decades, African Americans, Latino/Latinas, and Native American students have significantly underperformed Whites on national achievement tests of reading and writing (National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), 2009). According to the Annie E. Casey National Kids Count Data (2009) report, 79% of fourth graders in Title One schools scored below proficient in 2009 on standardized tests of reading compared to 58% of fourth graders in non Title One schools. The 2011 Kids Count Data report revealed that 84% of African American and 82% of Hispanic American fourth graders scored below proficient in reading. In contrast, 58% of Whites scored below proficient in reading in 2011 (Annie E Casey National Kids Count Data, 2011).

Students from families of low socioeconomic status experience lower levels of literacy achievement than their middle class counterparts. In 2011, 8th grade students who were eligible for the national school lunch program scored 18 points lower on national tests of reading of achievement than students who were not eligible for the program, while 4th graders involved in the national school lunch program scored 28 points lower than students who did not qualify for the lunch program (NAEP, 2011).

National writing tests conducted in 2011 revealed similar results (NAEP). Eighth grade students who were not enrolled in the national lunch program scored 27 points higher than those students who were enrolled in the lunch program. This chasm in literacy performance represents an opportunity gap that illustrates the lack of equality for low income students of color. Furthermore, the discrepancies between White students and students of color suggest the need for reform in the area of literacy education.

Educational researchers have identified many factors that lead to lower levels of literacy achievement for poor students and students of color (Hoffman & Pearson, 2000). One factor that accounts for the decline in the academic performance of culturally diverse students is the failure of teachers to recognize and address the unique literacy needs of this particular segment of the school population. Teacher education programs regularly produce educators that are unable to devise and implement culturally relevant literacy-based instructional practices that will meet the needs of all learners (Hoffman & Pearson, 2002). While also making efforts to attract more teachers of color, teacher education programs must commit to effectively preparing White teacher candidates to teach in a culturally responsive manner. New teachers must adhere to the changing definitions of literacy that exist in the globalized world. Hoffman and Pearson (2002) posit, "Yesterday's standards for teaching and teacher education will not support the kinds of learning that tomorrow's teachers must nurture among students who will be asked, in the next millennium, to meet the literacy demands that our grandparents could not fathom" (p.28).

Culturally Responsive Teaching in Literacy-Based Methods Courses

Several literacy scholars have contemplated ways to integrate culturally responsive teaching (CRT) into English language arts and writing methods courses for undergraduate students (Allen & Labbo, 2001; Bennett, 2010; Fry & McKinney, 1997; Lazar, 2011). Allen and Labbo (2001) used photographic and written cultural memoirs to promote self-reflection as a means of assisting their preservice teachers in better understanding their own cultural backgrounds. The researchers also immersed their undergraduate education students in a long-term clinical tutoring experience and modified their language arts curriculum to include a focus on culturally responsive teaching practices. The researchers concluded that the combination of the transformed curriculum, self-reflection activities, and tutoring experiences helped build students' awareness of culturally responsive teaching and sparked a "dawning commitment" to the concept of culturally responsive pedagogy.

In their multicultural-centered language arts methods course, Fry and McKinney (1997) used personal biographies and reflections to help their White preservice teachers create culturally sensitive lessons for students in a diverse school setting. The researchers conducted interviews, surveys, and class-discussions to determine how participants approached their curriculum-planning for the diverse student populations in the schools where they were placed for clinical experiences. Findings from the study were mixed. While the participants self-reported that they were "maybe prepared to teach culturally different children," there was little change in their overall understanding of how to teach language arts.

Bennett (2010) followed eight preservice teachers enrolled in a writing methods course as they tutored students from diverse backgrounds at a local community center. The author sought to investigate how the participants developed understandings about culturally responsive pedagogy and infused the elements of CRT within the writing curriculum they developed for the students they tutored. Bennett (2010) analyzed interview transcripts, course documents, student reflections, and field notes to determine how the participants approached the concept of culturally responsive pedagogy throughout the study. Findings from the study indicated that preservice teachers were receptive to CRT when they confronted their own personal beliefs and biases about different cultures. However, the participants felt that overall the course content did not influence their understandings about culturally responsive pedagogy. Nonetheless, the preservice teachers were especially receptive to certain culturally responsive activities that were conducted as part of the course.

The studies mentioned above involve curricular changes in methods courses that seek to help preservice teachers become more culturally sensitive to the needs of diverse learners. To a certain extent, the participants in all of the studies gained a better understanding of the principles of culturally responsive teaching. However, there was evidence in each of the studies to suggest that the participants' personal commitment to becoming culturally responsive in their instructional practices was minimal. The participants seemed to understand and accept the concept of culturally responsive pedagogy, but failed to transfer it into their own teaching.

The purpose of this study is to examine the ways in which preservice teachers in a language arts methods conceptualize culturally responsive pedagogy over the course of

one semester. Like the studies mentioned above, this study seeks to explore the process that preservice teachers engage in as they learn and personally experience the tenets of culturally responsive teaching. However, the intent of this study is to move beyond the level of simply informing students of the tenets of culturally responsive teaching and seeks to help students develop a much deeper understanding of the underlying factors that make culturally responsive pedagogy a necessity for today's global world. The intention of this study is to educate preservice teachers about the social, economic, political, and academic forces that lead to lowered literacy performance for diverse student populations. Participants will study the use of culturally responsive teaching as a means to combat three specific aspects of oppression within literacy education. Additionally, the study will examine the ways that preservice teachers respond to culturally responsive literacy pedagogy and investigate their use of culturally responsive strategies during a field experience in an urban classroom.

This rest of this chapter examines three essential elements of literacy education that prevent diverse student populations from reaching their full potential. Using the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination framework, this study explores oppressive elements of literacy education in public schools. First, the chapter the chapter outlines three significant components of literacy education that operate within the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination and describes how each of the essential elements fits within the context of the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination. While there are many levels of domination that exist within the matrix, this study specifically examines how the lack of culturally responsive literacy teachers, predominance of biased basal reading textbooks, and teachers' deficit approach to linguistic differences in oral language lead to lowered

literacy performance for students of color. Next, the chapter defines literacy as a set of cultural practices and considers the funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) that students bring to the literacy classroom. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of what research says about how preservice teachers come to understand the principles of culturally responsive teaching.

The Need for Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: A "Drop" of Discrimination in the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination

"Culturally responsive pedagogy is an approach to teaching and learning that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 17). Ladson-Billings (1995) defines culturally responsive teaching (CRT) as a pedagogy of opposition which emphasizes collective empowerment. According to Gay (2000) culturally responsive teaching aligns classroom instruction with the cultural orientations of ethnically diverse students. Culturally relevant teachers embrace their students' cultural experiences and perspectives, and use these elements as tools for disseminating academic content. Further, teachers who employ culturally relevant pedagogies help students recognize and confront issues of power and privilege (Gay, 2000). As a result, students from diverse backgrounds are more engaged in the learning process and see themselves as capable, productive change agents. In an effort to intentionally make connections between their students' personal background experiences and the academic content, culturally relevant teachers incorporate authentic artifacts and examples, social media, and other lived experiences to help their students strengthen the relationships between their home and school lives. Examples of culturally responsive instructional

practices include reading and writing assignments that specifically reflect students' cultural background; lessons that involve the literary media with which students regularly engage (digital music, Twitter, Facebook, etc.); activities that highlight positive aspects of the students' community and modified assessment tools that are reflective of students' culture. Despite efforts to incorporate culturally responsive instruction, some schools have been reluctant to adopt this type of pedagogy (Sleeter, 2011).

Culturally responsive teaching has its roots in multicultural education. Popularized in the 1970's, multicultural education was established in response to growing concerns about the poor academic performance of racial minorities. Multicultural pioneers Abrahams and Troike (1972) believed that teachers should value students' cultural differences and create learning experiences that accentuate the positive aspects of those differences. Additionally, Abrahams and Troike (1972) stressed the importance of having educators reflect on their own cultural biases, attitudes, and assumptions that may prevent them from creating optimal educational environments for minority students.

Other early multicultural proponents supported multicultural education as a way to acknowledge the struggles of diverse minority populations. Chun-Hoon (1973) contended that multicultural education could prevent the homogenization of diverse populations such as Asian Americans based on media-reinforced stereotypes. Forbes (1973) devised a curriculum based on Native American culture. He recommended that Native American students be taught strategies for preserving tribal groups and customs. Gay (1975) proposed the use of ethnic academic materials to reinforce reading skills. She posited that "students can learn reading skills using materials written by and about Blacks, Mexican Americans, Italian Americans, and Jewish Americans" (p. 179). In

1973, Aragon transformed the research on multicultural education to place an emphasis on teacher preparation. He accredited students' lack of success to ill-prepared teachers rather than students' inability to achieve. The work of multicultural researchers planted the seeds that serve as the ideological foundation for culturally responsive teaching.

Since its inception, culturally responsive teaching has benefitted both minority and majority student populations (Haberman, 1995; Forbes, 1973; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Sleeter, 2001). However, for culturally responsive teaching to be effective, three essential criteria must be met (Ladson-Billings, 2011). First, students must *experience academic success* (Ladson-Billings, 2011). Regardless of their demographic, economic, or academic status, students must acquire basic functional reading, writing, and math skills. Freire (1970) advocated a similar mandate for oppressed citizens seeking praxis for social transformation. Secondly, students must *exhibit cultural competence.* This requires that students maintain cultural ties to defining aspects of their cultures even when they attain mainstream social practices that provide access to unwritten codes of power (Delpit, 1995). Finally, students must *establish a critical consciousness*. Having critical consciousness allows students to evaluate sociocultural norms that perpetuate inequality (Ladson-Billings, 1995). This theory parallels Freire's (1970) idea of *conscientization* in which learners approach the world around them from a critical stance.

Preservice Teachers and Culturally Responsive Teaching

Several teacher education programs have proven successful in helping teacher candidates meet the criteria for culturally responsive teaching. *Teachers for Alaska* is a teacher education program designed to help prepare preservice teachers for teaching

positions in the state of Alaska. Native Alaskan children purport lower than average scores on state and national standardized tests; however, these students have rich, cultural heritage that when activated and integrated into the curriculum could serve as motivation and documentation of native Alaskans' environmental, academic, and sociocultural contributions to America (Delpit, 1995). *Teachers for Alaska* adheres to the essential criteria for culturally responsive teaching and encourages preservice teachers to infuse students' cultural backgrounds and experiences into the curriculum (Sleeter, 2001).

Noordhoff and Kleinfield (1993) examined the teaching practices of preservice teachers involved in Teachers for Alaska. The researchers videotaped preservice teachers using culturally responsive teaching strategies to teach lessons over the course of the program. They found that preservice teachers drastically improved their practice after studying the tenets of culturally responsive teaching. At the beginning of the program, the videotaped lessons portrayed preservice teachers simply talking to their students about issues of race and power. By the end of the program, preservice teachers were adept at engaging their students in meaningful conversations based on their newly attained culturally relevant knowledge (Sleeter, 2001).

Similarly, Villegas and Lucas (2002) conducted a study on a preservice teacher of African American and Latino students to examine her implementation of culturally responsive teaching. The student teacher used rap to introduce the concept of rhythm in poetry. Recognizing her students' enjoyment and appreciation of rap, she hypothesized that rap could contribute to their understanding of poetry. To begin her lesson, the student teacher played a portion of a popular rap song. Next, she engaged her students in a conversation about the rhythm in the selection. Then, the student teacher skillfully

connected the rhythm in the rap to the rhythm in a poem by Robert Frost. In turn, students gained knowledge of new concepts by connecting them with familiar ideas rooted in their cultural backgrounds. This study demonstrates one preservice teacher's ability to use culturally responsive teaching to refine her teaching practice.

Barnes (2006) also demonstrates preservice teachers' success with culturally responsive teaching. After studying multicultural literature and the three dimensions of culturally responsive teaching, preservice teachers were required to participate in a 15-visit field experience at a low-income elementary school. Each of the teacher candidates was paired with two struggling readers. The preservice teachers devised culturally relevant lessons that met their students' reading needs, while encompassing the essential criteria of culturally responsive teaching. Barnes (2006) noted several positive outcomes of the study. First, preservice teachers learned to consider the impact that their own beliefs about diversity could have on their teaching and ultimately their students' performance. Secondly, the teacher candidates proved successful in using culturally responsive teaching strategies in different content areas. Additionally, preservice teachers demonstrated an understanding of the role that students' sociocultural backgrounds play in academic and social endeavors. Finally, preservice teachers became adept at using a variety of pedagogical practices to enhance the academic experience for their students.

In short, culturally responsive teaching can enhance the beliefs, perceptions, and knowledge base of future teachers. As exemplified in the success stories, preservice teachers benefit from instruction in culturally responsive teaching techniques. In turn, students from all ethnicities will experience a renewed sense of pride in their cultural backgrounds and experiences when exposed to culturally responsive teaching practices.

These studies exhibit the success that can be garnered when preservice teachers are exposed to culturally responsive pedagogy. While the studies described above shed positive light on the benefits of preparing preservice teachers to become culturally responsive, there is an abundance of research to suggest that preservice teachers are hesitant to adhere to the essential criteria of culturally responsive pedagogy (Fry & McKinney, 1997; McNair, 2008). There is also research to suggest the limited progress that can be made by simply introducing teacher candidates to culturally responsive teaching practices (Fry & McKinney, 1997; Leonard, Napp & Adeleke, 2009; Patchen & Cox-Petersen, 2008; Sleeter, 2008). This study will extend the use of culturally responsive pedagogy to include a focus on the process that preservice teachers engage in as they matriculate through a language arts methods course that includes a focus on culturally relevant teaching.

The Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination and of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

The Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination highlights issues of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation that exist within the field of literacy education. In some cases, oppression arises as a result of the absence of attention being given to issues of importance. The lack of culturally responsive pedagogy in literacy instruction represents yet another drop of discrimination in the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination. The cultural divide between middle class teachers and low-income students of color often prevents minority students from reaching their full potential in literacy education. Culturally responsive pedagogy transcends the lines of content or subject area. Nonetheless, the absence of culturally responsive pedagogy in literacy education warrants special consideration. Literacy education forms the foundation of learning in all other

subject areas (Shanahan, 2008). If students are denied access to a just and equitable literacy education, it could potentially affect their performance in other content areas. The importance of embracing a culturally responsive pedagogy is itself evidence of the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination. The art of teaching influences not only what is taught, but how it is presented. These interrelated factors have specific implications in regards to the intricate nature of the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination. It is essentially impossible to separate what is presented as literacy education from how it is presented. Teachers who fail to adopt culturally responsive pedagogical practices unknowingly propagate long-term detrimental repercussions.

Culturally Biased Basal Readers: A "Drop" of Discrimination in the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination

The textbook plays a central role in American public schools. Reading textbooks, also known as basal readers, serve as the dominant means of literacy instruction in 75% - 95% of elementary schools across America (Apple & Christian-Smith, 2001; Gunning, 2002; Pirofski, 2003). Not surprisingly, textbook purchases constitute a significant portion of school budgets. In 2006, over $6 billion was spent on textbooks for students in America's public schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). The prevalence of the textbook has significant relevance in the context of literacy education (Stover & Glover, 2012). A large percentage of textbooks used in American public schools represent a Eurocentric perspective (Fields, 1996; vanBelle, 2010). Public schools with high populations of students of color are frequently staffed with young, inexperienced teachers that rely heavily on basal reading programs for literacy instruction (Kozol, 2005; Kincheole; 2004). According to Apple (1988), "It is the textbook which

establishes the material conditions for teaching and…it is the textbook that often defines what is elite and legitimate culture to pass on" (p.81). Given the diverse demographic make-up of U.S. schools, the cultural bias that exists in literacy textbooks can hinder the academic success of diverse student populations.

Cultural bias in basal readers can negatively impact the socio-cultural, emotional, and intellectual well-being of ethnic minorities (van Belle, 2010). When the cultural and societal norms presented in instructional textbooks differ from those of the students who use them, the result is a cultural discontinuity that can interfere with learning. As American schools become more and more diverse, it is imperative that the literacy materials used to teach young students reflect the changing U.S. demographic. The use of socially conscious textbooks and instructional materials can help combat the negative messages that children receive about different ethnicities from other media forms (McNair, 2008).

Research studies on racism in textbooks have unearthed disturbing results. VanBelle (2010) found that African American, Latino/a, and Asain characters were vastly underrepresented in the textbooks she studied. Furthermore, she found that the number of stories written by African American authors represented only 13% of the pages in the basal reading textbooks. In a content analysis of basal readers, vanBelle (2010**)** concluded that the texts reproduced White, middle-class privilege, while marginalizing people of color, particularly working-class African Americans. Whites were presented as "largely academically successfully, print-literate, scientifically literate, mathematically literate, financially savvy, and middle-class", while African Americans were portrayed as "working-class individuals who engage in labor that does not require

or build these multiple literacies". In addition, Whites were viewed as "gatekeepers to institutions and knowledge related to print-based literacy, science, mathematics, and money." Brown-Levingston (2005) found a shortage of African American family portrayals in the state-adopted textbooks she researched as part of a detailed content analysis. Furthermore, she found that African- Americans were portrayed mainly as filler characters, athletes, and musicians and were rarely used as main characters.

These studies indicate the need for more attention to be given to the cultural content of basal reading textbooks. Beginning teachers who rely heavily on basal readers for literacy instruction need opportunities to explore alternative instructional tools that are inclusive of students' cultural backgrounds that can be used to supplement the widely-used basal reading textbooks that are readily available to them. Without adequate preparation to implement a variety of culturally relevant instructional tools, preservice teachers will enter the classroom unprepared to assist students achieve academic success in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Basal Readers and the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination

The cultural bias in basal reading textbooks is an intricate and complex form of domination. As represented by the interconnectedness of oppression in the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination, it is difficult to separate the varying facets of cultural oppression within basal readers. The misrepresentation of African American characters coupled with gender and economic bias illustrates the inseparable "drops" of discrimination within basal reading textbooks. Additionally, the exclusion of minority characters, authors, and illustrators within basal readers serves to further marginalize a large portion of the public school population. Basal reading textbooks offer a hegemonized version of society that

presents mainstream cultural values as the norm. Students of color who are subjected to culturally biased basal reading textbooks in school become saturated in the discriminative 'drops' within the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination.

Oral Language: Another "Drop" of Discrimination in the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination

Another factor that negatively affects the literacy performance of students from diverse backgrounds is oral language. Children enter the classroom with a variety of linguistic differences. The characteristics of children's speech are reflective of the language or languages and dialects spoken in the home. While some immigrant children bring the cultural richness of their native tongue, others come to school as speakers of non-standard English dialects. Often, these dialects differ greatly from the commonly accepted forms of Standard English spoken in schools (Cheatham & Ostrosky, 2009). Speakers of non-standard dialects such as African American Vernacular English, Southern Appalachian, and Hawaiian Creole experience a certain level of discrimination based on their inability to converse within the academic code of school (Cheatham et al., 2009). When teachers are unable to make connections between a students' home dialect and the standard forms of English spoken in schools, it places non-standard speakers of English at an academic disadvantage. This is especially true for African American children in urban schools.

Many African American children adhere to a linguistic dialect that differs from the form of Standard American English (SAE) used in American schools. This dialect is most frequently spoken in large urban centers and has been coined with several different names including Black English, Ebonics, African American Vernacular English, African

American Language, and African American English (O'Grady, Archibald, Aronoff, & Rees-Miller, 2005). While names given to this linguistically rich dialect differ depending on the preference of the educational researcher studying it, African American Vernacular English (AAVE) is a systematic, rule-bound, syntactic speech system that promotes cultural unity among its speakers (Rickford & Rickford, 2000). For the purposes of this study, I will employ the term African American Vernacular English (AAVE).

Despite educational research documenting its validity, AAVE is generally viewed as deficient and inferior to SAE (Thompson, 2002). Speakers of AAVE are mistakenly deemed unintelligent by the public, their European American peers, and their middle-class teachers. Teachers of African American students regularly underestimate the extent of their students' knowledge about language (Wheeler, 2008). These teachers often correct students' use of AAVE and encourage the solitary use of SAE by African American students in reading, writing, and speaking activities. Furthermore, teachers' negative attitudes toward AAVE have been linked to lowered teacher expectations for speakers of AAVE as well as lower student performance (Godley, Sweetland, Wheeler, Minnici & Carpenter, 2006). Children receive the message that their way of speaking is wrong and should be replaced with SAE. Dundes and Spence (2007) suggest that the "devaluation of a way of speaking is based on the power structure and not on the inherent value of a dialect [which] reveals how our social norms unfairly disadvantage an entire segment of the population" (p. 85). Thus, teachers of AAE speaking students have the unique responsibility of helping students succeed in tasks that require the use of SAE without belittling or devaluing students' home language. However, research suggests that very few teachers are prepared to accomplish this task (Dyson & Smitherman, 2009).

Teacher preparation and professional development programs do little in preparing educators to meet the literacy needs of AAVE speakers (Wheeler, 2008). Teachers lack knowledge of the oral and written features of AAVE as well as its historical evolution and significance. Without this knowledge, teachers are likely to overlook the strong ties between students' home language and their cultural identity (Dyson & Smitherman, 2009). Teachers must acknowledge African American students' home language and help students make connections between the features of AAVE and those of SAE. Since standardized assessment, mainstream curriculum, and instruction are based on SAE, students who are unable to make the connections between AAVE and SAE are markedly disadvantaged (Thompson, Craig, & Washington, 2004).

Communicative disconnects between teachers and AAVE speakers.

Speakers of AAVE are mistakenly viewed as cognitively deficient. According to a study conducted by Bowie and Bond (1994), a majority of elementary school teachers equate AAVE with the use of faulty, illogical grammar, and view AAVE speakers as being "lazy and sloppy" in their speech. This deficient view of AAVE and its speakers is prevalent among a large majority of SAE speakers. Teachers' perceptions of AAVE create covert biases in the classroom and negatively influence the instruction that African American children receive. Many White middle class teachers view SAE as correct while other English dialects are seen as subpar. As a result, teachers engage in a corrective approach with AAVE speakers. Many teachers exclusively employ corrective methods when teaching reading and writing to children that speak AAVE. When well-meaning educators correct students' use of AAVE without acknowledging the documented features of AAVE that represent Sociocultural ties to a student's home, family, and

community (Wheeler & Swords, 2006), students receive the message that their way of speaking is wrong and should be converted to SAE without regard to the context in which it is used. Furthermore, speakers of AAVE are led to believe that they are the only population that speaks a dialect which deviates from SAE (Wolfram, 1999). These unharmonious relationships lead to communicative disconnects between teachers and students and negatively impact students' academic performance.

Oral Language and the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination

The way we speak influences how we are perceived and treated by others. Oral language is a reflection of the way that children are socialized from a young age. Not surprisingly, it is difficult to isolate the effects of oral language from other factors that influence literacy potential and attainment. In accordance with the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination, oral language represents a drop of discrimination that is diffused into larger pools of ineffective literacy practices. Students whose oral language differs from that of the mainstream culture must account for the differences between their speech and the speech that is considered acceptable in schools. Meanwhile, these students are expected to comprehend literacy instruction that is exclusively presented in Standard American English. Students must find ways to become a part of the dominant discourse without sacrificing the unique elements of their native culture and speech. In this way, oral language takes on the persona of multiple drops within the literacy ocean of oppression. Thus, the complex nature of the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination is perhaps the only way to represent the compounding levels of domination that exist in relation to oral language in literacy education.

The three components of the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination highlighted above represent a small segment of the intricate system of oppression that restricts the achievement of minority student populations. The lack of culturally responsive teachers, the use of culturally biased instructional materials, and the deficit approach to linguistic differences are all significant factors that contribute to the gap in literacy achievement between White students and students of color. This study seeks to analyze preservice teachers' awareness and developing understanding of culturally responsive teaching using the lens of the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination. The goal of the study is for preservice teachers to not only grasp the tenets of Culturally Responsive Teaching, but for them to understand the culminating factors that deem it necessary. This study seeks to examine the process of developing cultural responsiveness within the context of a language arts methods course.

Literacy: A Cultural Practice

Sociologists, Anthropologists, Linguists, and psychologists have posited the social nature of language and literacy (Gee, 1992; Lewis, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978). According to sociocultural perspectives on language and literacy, language and social interaction are intricately involved in the processes of human development and learning. Furthermore, language acquisition affects the development of thinking. Thus, literacy from a sociocultural perspective occurs through dialogue or interactions reflecting the historical development, cultural values and social practices of the societies and communities in which educational institutions exist. According to Lazar (2011), "Literacy…[is] a set of culturally situated practices that are determined by the needs and goals of particular social communities" (p. 8). The language we use to communicate our

thoughts, express our feelings, and embody our culture informs these social practices. Students whose culturally-based literacies differ greatly from the literacies valued in school experience a cultural clash that can affect their academic performance on literacy tasks (Lazar, 2011). The failure to master the "discourse of school" may leave students feeling inept and unsuccessful (Gee, 1992; Delpit, 1995; Lazar, 2011).

Educational scholars have examined the role of language in the social practices of a community or group. In her seminal research on language in practice, Brice-Heath (1983) explored the language and literacies of two contrasting groups of people within a small southern town. Brice-Heath determined that the linguistic preferences and communication styles of families living in Roadville and Trackton played a vital role in the children's academic success in school. Children from Roadville, whose speech and language most closely resembled the standard codes of language spoken in school, were able to easily adapt to the literacy instruction provided in schools. Conversely, children from Trackton were less successful in the school-based literacy endeavors because the instructional tasks they encountered stood in stark contrast to the natural ways in which language was used within their own communities.

Lewis (2001) examined the literary culture of a multi-age upper elementary classroom in her year-long study of four classroom practices involving literature. Specifically, the author studied how read-alouds, peer-led literature groups, teacher-led literature discussions, and independent reading were "shaped by discourses and ritual within the classroom and by social codes and dominant cultural norms beyond the classroom" (p.4). Lewis found that students were influenced by the culture and social practices of those around them both individually and collectively. Age, ability and

gender were all factors that fashioned the relationships between students and dictated the social roles that students assumed.

In an eye-opening study on the inherent biases in classroom texts used for instructional purposes, Kesler (2010) depicted the ill-fated repercussions of the assumptions made by teachers when selecting or comprising texts to be used for literacy instruction. The author found that his own neglect to deeply consider the ramifications of using specific texts led to hurt and animosity for his students. While unintentionally marginalizing some of his students, Kesler discovered that his choice of texts related to classroom assignments privileged other students. When he assigned his third-grade students to compose a family tree and reflect on the activity in writing, Kesler neglected to consider how the activity would affect students whose cultural background were more complex as a result of adoption. After learning how upsetting the assignment had been for one student, Kesler began to place more focus on designing literacy-based instructional lessons that were culturally-inclusive of all students. Kesler concluded that teachers have an obligation to consider the ways that certain texts will be perceived by students and take action to modify literacy assessment instruction so that it offers all students an equal opportunity for success.

Funds of Knowledge

The idea of literacy as a cultural practice is not new; for decades, researchers have contemplated the relationship between students' home and school cultures (Lazar, 2011). Moll et al. (1992) explored how the 'funds of knowledge' that students bring with them from their homes enhance their learning in formal instructional settings. The majority of a student's opportunities to interact socially occur at home or in school. The social

interactions that occur at a student's home or in school serve to promote individual development (Pontecorvo & Sterponi, 2002). Thus, it is essential that educators make attempts to merge these two sources as a means of supporting student growth and development. The importance of bridging funds of knowledge with school learning is also based on the theoretical distinction Vygotsky makes between scientific and everyday concepts (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Vygotsky, scientific concepts develop as a result of formal instruction in schools whereas everyday concepts are the result of children's daily contact with their immediate surroundings.

Moll and Greenburg (1990) sought to design instructional units that incorporated the "funds of knowledge" their students from culturally diverse backgrounds brought to the classroom. The researchers collaborated with parents, teachers and community members to create lessons that would facilitate student involvement and participation based on their personal interests and background. Interviews and observations conducted in the homes and classrooms of the participants provided the data necessary to understand the needs and concerns of both teachers and students. In the end, the researchers were successful in creating instructional units that allowed students to access their funds of knowledge and foster a sense of pride and accomplishment in their personal achievements.

Summary

Research indicates that students of color benefit from instruction that is relevant to their cultural backgrounds (Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2003). Nonetheless, many teachers fail to recognize the value of implementing culturally responsive literacy strategies to engage diverse student populations and maximize student learning.

Practicing and preservice teachers often reject the notion that multicultural education is necessary. By acknowledging the funds of knowledge that students bring to the classroom, educators can bridge the gap between a student's home and school cultures. The academic success of students from diverse backgrounds is heavily dependent upon the inclusion of culturally responsive pedagogy, attention to bias instructional materials, and awareness of differences in nonstandard language patterns and dialects.

The three elements of literacy education that were presented in this chapter demonstrate the need for reform in teacher preparation programs. Although this chapter presented the factors as three separate challenges, these "drops of discrimination" are muddled within the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination along with countless other forces. The Critical Matrix of Domination offers a platform for evaluating unjust practices that fall within the realm of literacy education. Given the diverse makeup of today's public school population, it is vital that preservice teachers gain exposure to the literacy practices that negatively affect the academic performance of students from diverse backgrounds. However, carefully calculated steps must be taken to move beyond simply acknowledging the existence of ineffective literacy and taking action to alleviate the damage they cause. If we are to help students achieve academic success, we must equip them with the tools they will need to overcome the obstacles they encounter in the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination. Teacher education programs must adopt a culturally responsive stance that promotes refined teacher practice and pedagogy, culturally relevant curriculum and content standards, and a positive socio-cultural context for all learners.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLGY

In this chapter, I describe the research methodology, my role as the researcher, the setting, participants and methods and procedures of the study. I begin by reviewing my research purpose and questions. Next, I provide a description of the study design and describe how the site and participants were selected. I also offer an explanation of my role in the study and include a descriptive outline of how data will be collected.

Merriam (1998) defines qualitative research as "an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible" (p. 5) Qualitative researchers are primarily concerned with the study of peoples' experiences within the world (Merriam, 1998). For many, the goal of qualitative research is to gain a deeper understanding of a particular lived experience. Qualitative researchers continually seek opportunities to gain information that will aid them in answering research questions. According to Ezzy (2003) qualitative research seeks to find the voice of the 'other' and share diverse perspectives with a broader audience. Rossman and Rallis (2003) contend that all qualitative research begins with questions and ends with learning. Qualitative researchers use multiple research methods to gather data and draw conclusions about their research questions.

In seeking answers to my research questions, I chose to use a qualitative research design for this study because I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of the process that

preservice teachers undertake as they learn about culturally responsive literacy teaching. I wanted to develop a stronger sense of how the participants in the study personally responded to the instructional activities that involved the use of culturally responsive literacy teaching in a language arts methods course. It can be difficult to separate individuals from their culture, relationships, and other aspects of their everyday life (Bennett, 2010). Thus, I chose to employ a case study design to examine how the participants make sense of culturally responsive teaching using the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination as a guiding framework.

Case Study Design

Case studies are used to describe, explain, or explore a particular topic (Yin, 1993). They involve thick, rich descriptions of real-life events or situations within their natural settings. Using a sociological perspective, case studies explore all aspects of a particular situation or experience (Patton, 2002). Qualitative researchers conduct case studies to gain detailed information about an experience or situation through detailed data collection (Creswell, 1998).

Case studies are represented by three main criteria (Merriam, 1998). First, case studies are viewed as being *particularistic*. When used to reference case studies, the term *particularistic* suggests specificity or refers to the specific case being examined. Secondly, case studies are *descriptive* and offer thorough, detailed presentations of the topic or case. Finally, case studies are considered *heuristic* based on the deep level of understanding gained by the reader about the case being studied. A key characteristic of case study research is the use of a bounded system of analysis (Stake, 1995). In the field

of education, a bounded system can be represented by a school district, a school, a classroom, or even a small group of students.

I used a qualitative case study design to examine the ways in which preservice teachers enrolled in a language arts methods course adapt to culturally responsive literacy instruction. I selected a case study design because it was the most effective method for answering my research questions. Case studies are an efficient means of gathering information within a specific context or experience (Stake, 1995). The preservice teachers in this case study represent a bounded system of analysis (Stake, 2000) studied within their natural context (Yin, 2003). The goal of this case study was to explore the thoughts and actions of preservice teachers in a language arts methods course regarding the use culturally responsive literacy instruction. Following are the research questions that guided the study:

1. How does cultural background influence preservice teachers' receptiveness to culturally responsive literacy instruction?
2. How do preservice teachers' understandings about culturally responsive literacy teaching change as they matriculate through an undergraduate language arts methods course designed to promote culturally responsive pedagogy?
3. In what ways do preservice teachers demonstrate culturally responsive literacy teaching during a three-week integrated clinical experience?

Role of the Researcher

This study emanates from my work with preservice teachers. For the purposes of this study, I acted as a participant observer. This is a natural paradigm for naturalistic

research used in anthropology and education. It is important that qualitative researchers have a deep level self-awareness and a clear understanding of their role in the setting (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). This allows the researcher to distinguish between his own thoughts and beliefs and those of the participants in the study (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The researcher's perspective is known as the etic, or outsider perspective, while the participant's perspective is referred to as the emic, or insider perspective (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The goal for qualitative researchers acting as participant observers is to acknowledge their position as outsiders while making attempts to accurately represent the insider, or emic perspective.

I was naturally curious about the ways my students' cultural backgrounds influenced their perceptions about children from different ethnicities. More specifically, I was interested in learning how my students' cultural backgrounds will influence the type of literacy instruction they provide as future teachers. I wanted to make students aware of the inherent biases that permeate many of the instructional tools, such as basal readers, that are used for literacy instruction. I also wanted to bring awareness to linguistic differences and the ways in which culturally responsive teaching can help teachers highlight the funds of knowledge that students bring to the classroom.

As a college lecturer at a large, southeastern university, my classes are primarily comprised of White, middle-class females from the South. Some of my students have never been taught by a Black educator during any of their educational experiences and have had little interaction with people from different racial and ethnic groups. This places them at a disadvantage as they prepare to enter the ethnically diverse field of public education.

During this study, my role was that of both researcher and instructor. I acted as a facilitator of knowledge about the concept of culturally responsive teaching. My goal was for my students to see how other scholars in the field have embraced and further developed culturally responsive pedagogy. It is not my intent for students to see me as an instructor pushing my own personal agenda. Throughout the study, I encouraged students to provide open, honest reflections about the instructional activities we complete in class. I aimed to create a classroom environment where students felt safe expressing their views, even if their opinions differed from my own or other members of the class. I worked hard to establish a climate of trust. At the beginning of the semester, I spent a great deal of time creating a classroom community that was supportive and inclusive of all members of the class. It was my hope that the steps I took to help students feel welcomed and comfortable in the class, allowed me to conduct research in a setting in which I held a position of authority without hindering the authenticity of the data. However, I recognize that some participants may have felt hesitant about revealing their personal thoughts if they felt that it may in some way impact their grade. I made every effort to ensure that students understood that their participation in the study was voluntary and if they chose to participate, their identities were kept confidential.

Research Context

The study took place at a large university located in a mid-sized metropolitan area in the Southeastern United States during the fall 2012 semester. This site was chosen because it houses the teacher education program in which I work. As such it provided me with access to undergraduate preservice teachers as a routine part of my duties as a clinical lecturer. The participants were all undergraduate students enrolled in a language

arts methods course. There were 24 female students and two male students. Nineteen of the students were White, two students were Asian, two students were Hispanic, two were African American and one student was biracial. The students ranged in age from 20-42 years old. They were all juniors and were elementary education majors. Participation was completely voluntary. Students were invited to participate in the study after approval from the Internal Review Board (IRB) had been attained. Since each component of the study, was a regular part of the class, all students participated in each activity or assignment, however only the work of students that agreed to participate in the study was used in the data analysis.

The study took place over the course of 10 weeks. Each week, students engaged in classroom activities and discussions designed to strengthen their knowledge of culturally responsive pedagogy. The participants gained knowledge about the underlying factors that made it necessary to implement culturally responsive teaching practices in their classrooms. Using a variety of data collection methods, the study documented the ways in which preservice teachers conceptualize culturally responsive teaching as they progress through a language arts methods course.

Data Collection Methods

I collected data for this study from several different sources during the Fall 2012 semester. The primary data sources included interviews, classroom observations, and a variety of classroom documents. I conducted both individual and small group interviews with the participants at three different times throughout the semester. The individual and focus group interviews (see Appendix A) were conducted with the participants at the beginning and end of the study. During the study, I conducted small group interviews of

students as they examined basal reading textbooks that contained some form of bias (see Appendix B). I also collected several different classroom documents throughout the study including cultural autobiographies and personal narratives (see Appendix C and D), written reflections of classroom readings, and photographs of cultural artifacts. Finally, I took field notes to document the interactions that occurred during classroom observations.

Interviews are one of the most frequently used qualitative research methods. Rossman and Rallis (2003) cite in-depth interviewing as the "hallmark" of qualitative research. Interviews provide access to the rich, thick descriptions that characterize qualitative research. There are varied approaches to interviews, each with their own unique style and purpose (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). However, the overarching purpose of all interviews is to obtain relevant information from the participant. Kvale and Brinkman (2009) highlight the co-dependent relationship that exists between the interviewer and interviewee during an interview. According to these authors, an interview extends beyond a simple conversation between two individuals and instead exists as an interview of the convergent and divergent beliefs and opinions of the participants. As participants navigate through the interview process, the mutual construction of knowledge formulates evidence in the form of data to be analyzed by the researcher. Qualitative researchers interpret the meaning of data collected through interviews and other methods to obtain answers to their own research questions which will in turn be used to make useful contributions to the body of knowledge in their respective fields of study.

Interviews were useful in obtaining information to help answer the research questions that guided this study. Using data from the interviews, I collected data that provided evidence of the participants' thoughts and feelings about the classroom discussions and activities. Specifically, I sought to find out how the participants' view of culturally responsive teaching changed over the course of the study.

Participant observation has a rich and varied history that has been embraced by anthropologists since ancient times (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). Participant observation has been used by qualitative researchers to collect data while engaging in authentic field experiences. Qualitative researchers use participant observation as a means to study different cultural groups in their natural settings (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). It is often used in conjunction with other data collection methods to compile thick, rich descriptions common in qualitative research (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011; Geertz; 1973). Participant observation involves the use of field notes to record descriptions of what is observed during fieldwork experience.

Purcell-Gates (2004) describes the relationship between participant and observer as a continuum. According to Purcell-Gates (2004), the researcher locates herself at different points along this continuum depending on the community being studied and the design of the study. While some studies allow the participant observer to take on a more subdued role as he or she collects data via participant observation, other research requires the researcher to learn the language, customs, traditions, and rules of the culture being studied (Purcell-Gates, 2004). The researcher must maintain a delicate balance between fully immersing herself in the culture being studied and remaining objective enough to collect unbiased data that accurately represents the cultural group (Purcell-Gates, 2004).

Qualitative researchers employ the data that is collected during participant observations to formulate answers to their research questions.

As a participant researcher, I had the advantage of serving as an insider during this study. My pre-established relationship with the participants eased the pressure or tension that may have been associated with having an outsider conduct observations. It is my hope that my previous attempts at establishing a cohesive classroom community made it easier for me to be an unobtrusive observer in the classroom as students participated in the various activities and instructional lessons associated with this study. However, I acknowledge that my role as an instructor most likely had an initial influence on the participants' actions and responses. I made a concerted effort to help participants feel at ease and free to share their open, honest reactions to the concepts and ideas that were presented during the study.

Document analysis is a widely used qualitative research method that seeks to gather relevant information about an individual, cultural group, topic or phenomenon through the thorough investigation of pre-existing artifacts (Caulley, 1983). Artifacts may include photographs, letters, maps, brochures, diary entries, minutes, websites, diagrams, and more. According to Garman (1982), document analysis is a "systematic process, beginning with an hypothesis or hunch about how the event came about, who was involved, the sequence of activities and causal relationships" (p.8). While often used in congruence with other qualitative methods such as interviews and participant observation, document analysis is frequently employed by qualitative researchers to provide foundational or supplemental information regarding a research study. Certain documents can help situate and strengthen current knowledge of a topic being studied.

Once documents have been identified for analysis, they are subjected to a process that involves careful examination and scrutiny. Documents are questioned for their relevance, authenticity, use, original intent, creator, and potential in answering the research question. Qualitative researchers look beyond the surface to find unique perspectives that authenticate and legitimate the documents being studied. Prior (2003) cautions, "If we are to get to grips with the nature of documents then we have to move away from a consideration of them as stable, static and pre-defined artifacts. Instead, we must consider them in terms of fields, frames, and networks of action" (p. 2). Prior's assertions suggest the somewhat subjective nature of documents that requires researchers to acknowledge any subjectivity or bias that may precede their examination of documents.

The documents that were collected were chosen because they represented the most favorable sources for gaining information that assisted me in answering the research questions guiding this study. The written reflections, cultural autobiographies, and memoirs were used to document the participants' personal reflections regarding their background experiences. Data from these sources allowed me to determine if there were any connections between the participants' upbringing and their acceptance or rejection of culturally responsive pedagogy. The lesson plans provided evidence of the participants' ability to integrate culturally responsive teaching practices in the elementary classroom. The remaining classroom documents, the reflection and recording sheets from the instructional activities on dialect and the recording sheets and small group interviews from the lessons on cultural bias demonstrated the journey that students take as they

attempt to understand the role that discrimination plays in the literacy achievement of students from diverse backgrounds.

Phase I: Planning

I began the first phase of this study eight months ago when I met with my committee chair to discuss my topic. I also met with other faculty members to present my ideas and solicit feedback on the purpose, questions, and data collection methods framing my study. The feedback I received was instrumental in helping me modify my study and clearly define the contribution that my study would make to the field of literacy education for preservice teachers. Most importantly, speaking with other faculty members helped me to reexamine the purpose and goals of my study so that I could articulate my research in a way that will allow others to see its inherent value. As a result of the input I received from other faculty members, I redesigned my language arts methods course to include eight new instructional activities designed to increase my students' knowledge and awareness of culturally responsive pedagogy. The new additions to my course, which form the foundation of my study, are outlined in the next section.

Phase II: Data Collection

After receiving approval from the Internal Review Board (IRB), I began Phase II of the study. I collected data from several different sources during the eight to 10 week study as I closely examined the participants' experiences with culturally responsive teaching from the lens of the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination. During the first week of the study, I interviewed the participants using the initial interview protocol (Appendix D). Participants were interviewed individually or in focus groups depending

on their availability outside of class. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

The following week, I began introducing the concept of culturally responsive teaching during class. Students were invited to bring in three cultural artifacts that represented their personal background. Participants shared the artifacts with other members of the class, citing their significance. I took observational notes during the presentations documenting the students' responses to the items being shared. Students wrote a personal reflection describing the experience. Students were asked to note the similarities and differences in the cultural backgrounds of their peers and their own experiences. Students were also asked to read two research articles that described authentic examples of culturally responsive literacy teaching. In both articles, researchers described their experiences, both positive and negative, as they began their journey of becoming culturally responsive teachers of literacy. There was a discussion of the articles in class and participants posted their written reflections on the articles in the weekly online class forum.

During the third week of the study, participants continued reflecting on their own cultural backgrounds. Each participant wrote a cultural autobiography that outlined the religious, socio-economic, gender, regional, ethnic, political, structural or racial factors that have shaped their lives. Participants also had the option of choosing to elaborate on their family structure, geographic location, sexual orientation, personal beliefs and/or family history. The cultural autobiographies were used to encourage students to reflect on the personal perspectives and biases that they bring to the classroom. The students also participated in a poverty simulation designed to not only help participants understand the

financial struggles the students in their future classrooms may face, but to examine how socio-economic status can impact the literacy achievement of students from diverse backgrounds. As part of the poverty simulation, students were immersed in a series of scenarios in which they had to make decisions about how to solve financial issues regularly faced by families in poor and low-income areas. The poverty simulation connected the economic struggles of low income families with the academic performance of children from such communities.

Week four of the study was a continuation of self-exploration and discovery as participants engaged in a self-selected experience that placed them in the role of an outsider. Students chose an activity or event that was unfamiliar to them and one in which they were viewed as a minority. Students created a written reflection of the experience describing what it felt like to be viewed as different from the majority. This activity and writing assignment placed participants in the shoes of diverse school children that are asked to conform to the mainstream values and belief systems present in schools. Via class discussions, participants pondered how the infusion of mainstream culture can inhibit the academic performance of students from diverse backgrounds.

During week five of the study, participants created and taught a lesson in an elementary classroom. Field notes were taken as part of an observation of the students in their assigned elementary classrooms. Since it was not feasible to observe all 26 participants in the study teaching their lessons, I aimed to visit six to eight classrooms to view the students and take field notes as they taught their lessons. Later, the lesson plans and field notes were analyzed to determine if, and to what extent, the students infused culturally responsive teaching practices into their lessons.

In week six, participants took part in a lesson on non-standard English dialects. As part of the lesson, students studied the features of two popular dialects used by students in the southeastern United States. Participants were asked to consider how the literacy performance of students that speak these dialects may be affected by their language use. Participants learned strategies for improving the performance of dialect speakers while valuing and celebrating the funds of knowledge that these students bring to the classroom. The participants also read a research study on the topic titled *Ya'll Listening* (Cheatham, Armstrong & Santos, 2009).

The seventh and eighth weeks of the study focused on cultural bias in literacy instructional materials. The subjects participated in two separate small group interviews as they examined both basal reading textbooks and literacy assessments that contained cultural bias. The data from the small group interview transcripts were audio-taped, transcribed, and analyzed to determine whether students were able to identify instances of bias. The data also revealed students' responses to instances of overt and covert bias within the instructional materials they investigated.

Phase III: Follow-up

At the conclusion of the study, I conducted final interviews with all of the participants. Students were interviewed to get their overall reaction to the various components of the study. Some of the interviews were conducted individually, while others were offered in a focus group format. The format of the interviews was determined based on the students' availability outside of class. The interviews sought to answer the research questions and establish how the participants make sense of culturally responsive teaching. The interviews attempted to gather information about the participants' use of

culturally responsive teaching in the future. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed for analysis. Furthermore, the data collected throughout the study was triangulated to formulate a detailed and thorough case study of the experience of preservice teachers enrolled in my language arts methods course with a focus on culturally responsive teaching through the lens of the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is an integral component of any research study. According to DeWalt and DeWalt (2011), the goal of data analysis is "the summation of large quantities of data to understandable information from which well-supported and well-argued conclusions are drawn (p. 179). Rossman and Rallis (2003) contend that data analysis involves categorizing, grouping, or sorting data into meaningful piles and then grouping and regrouping those piles to better understand the information that lies within them. Rossman and Rallis (2003) suggest that qualitative researchers describe, analyze and interpret data throughout a study. For the purposes of this study, I adopted qualitative data analysis methods to answer my research questions.

Ezzy (2003) posits the simultaneous nature of data collection and analysis and insists that choices made during the data collection process significantly affect the ways in which data are analyzed. He insists that data analysis is a natural and necessary component of data collection. Ezzy purports that the analysis of data during the data collection process allows researchers to revise or create additional research questions based on the information they uncover.

Coffee and Atkinson (1996) promote the importance of simplifying data into manageable segments through the use of coding. Coding allows researchers to synthesize their data for the purpose of analysis. Glesne (2006) defines coding as the process of sorting and defining the pieces of the data that are relevant to your study. Thematic analysis offers one form of qualitative data analysis that involves the use of coding. Thematic analysis is an inductive process that seeks to identify themes present within the data (Ezzy, 2003). These themes or categories evolve during the analysis process. Since researchers do not know the themes that will emerge from their data at the start of the study, thematic analysis blends data from various sources to create a narrative that provides answers to the research study.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) outline three stages of the coding process during thematic analysis. They refer to the first stage as *open coding*. Open coding is a way to "generate an emergent set of categories and their properties" (Glaser, 1978, p. 56). Strauss and Corbin define open coding as "the part of analysis that pertains specifically to the naming and categorizing of phenomena though close examination of the data" (1990, p.62). Axial coding is the second stage of the coding process during thematic analysis as defined by Strauss and Corbin (1990). During this stage, researchers examine relationships between the open codes and seek to confirm or create more precise forms of the existing open codes (Ezzy, 2003). The final stage of the coding process is selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Selective coding occurs when researchers identify the "core category or story around which the analysis focuses" (Ezzy, 2003, p. 92).

I began the process of data analysis by reviewing the interview transcripts, field notes from observations, and classroom documents several different times. I approached

all of the data analysis through the lens of the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination. I attempted to determine how the findings were shaped by my theoretical framework. I used the interviews as primary sources to help answer my research questions. The observations and classroom documents were used as secondary sources to confirm or disconfirm the codes and themes that emerged from the primary sources. I attempted to develop general open codes as I thoroughly reviewed the data looking for words, lines, or phrases that had relevance and significance to the research questions and purpose. Next, I revisited the open codes to identify relationships that may have existed between the codes. I also made revisions or amendments to the open codes as necessary. My goal during this stage of the analysis process was to gain a new perspective on how the pieces of the data puzzle fit together. Finally, I looked for broad themes or categories that helped shape the data and tell a cohesive story that addressed the research questions guiding the study.

Framework for Analysis

During the 1920's and 1930's L.S. Vygotsky became an influential figure in the development of sociocultural theory. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory supports the notion that human activities take place in cultural context, are mediated by language and other symbol systems, and can be best understood in the context of their historical development (John-Steiner & Mahn,1996). Vygotsky emphasizes the social and environmental influences on human development and suggests that both consciousness and cognition result from social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). He explores the influence of sociocultural context on the shared relationships and experiences between people and examines human use of cultural tools such as speech and writing (Vygotsky, 1978).

Socio-cultural perspectives on literacy place emphasis on the social, mediated, and cultural or genetic aspects of literacy learning. Using this lens, literacy is viewed as a social practice rather than an individual cognitive act. According to sociocultural perspectives on literacy, language and social interaction are intricately involved in the processes of human development and learning. Thus, literacy from a sociocultural perspective education occurs through dialogue or interactions reflecting the historical development, cultural values and social practices of the societies and communities in which educational institutions exist.

I used a sociocultural theory of literacy to frame my analysis of the data that I collected in this study. As I examined the primary data sources, I considered how the information students revealed in the transcripts was shaped by their personal sociocultural perspectives on literacy teaching. Secondary data sources including observation field notes and classroom documents served as confirmation or disconfirmation of the themes that emerged from the information present in the primary sources. For example, I sought to uncover the ways in which my students' understanding and acceptance of culturally responsive teaching was mediated by various tools such as the basal reading activity, the examination of culturally biased basal readers, and the clinical experience. I also examined how students' identity development was mediated by their associations with culturally responsive pedagogy throughout the study. Using a sociocultural framework for data analysis allowed me to organize and categorize the information I collected according to the culturally responsive, socially-mediated experiences students encounter in my language arts methods course.

I employed a Bahktinian framework of analysis as I used critical discourse analysis to investigate how the participants interacted and responded to one another as they examined culturally biased literacy assessments. Bahktin focuses on the dialogic nature of language. He believes that all forms of language including speech and writing are comprised of dialogues. Each dialogue contains three elements: a speaker, a listener, and the ongoing relationship between the two. Bahktin contrasts the concept of dialogues with monologues and recognizes the term utterance as a monologue in which an individual expresses a thought or idea that is interpreted, responded to, or influenced by the "other." Bahktin looked at language in use to determine how identity is constructed. My study involved the use of critical discourse analysis as a means of examining the relationship between students' identities and language use as they examined culturally biased literacy assessments. As Bahktin studied language-in-use to analyze identity construction, I used CDA to consider how my students use language to express their thoughts, ideas, and feelings about their experiences with culturally biased literacy assessments. Using critical discourse analysis allowed me to gain new insight on the ways in which my students' perspectives are shaped by their interactions with peers.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of a study is closely tied to the credibility and dependability of the research (Creswell, 2003). There must be consistency and reliability in the procedures and methods involving the collection of data. The researcher must make a concerted effort to ensure that the data is collected and maintained in a manner that is fair and respectful of the participants. Throughout this study, I took careful measures to protect and promote the trustworthiness of my research. I collected data from multiple

sources, conduct member checks, include peer debriefing, and maintain personal reflexivity.

Qualitative researchers employ the triangulation of data from multiple sources to strengthen the validity of their research. During this study, I conducted interviews, observations, and focus groups to gather personal insight from the participants. I also collected several different classroom documents to examine how the participants come to terms with the concept of culturally responsive teaching throughout the study. By comparing the data collected from a variety of sources, I increased the likelihood that the data represents a fair and accurate depiction of the participants experience with culturally responsive teaching in my language arts methods course.

I also used member checks and peer debriefing to enhance the trustworthiness of my study. Member checks help verify the accuracy and authenticity of the researcher's interpretations of the data. Peer debriefing allows researchers to gain an outside perspective to their research. Throughout this study, I shared my progress with my dissertation chair and committee to gather their feedback and suggestions for enhancing my research. Consulting others encouraged me to examine my own personal perspectives and biases that influenced my analysis of the data.

Finally, I employed personal reflexivity to ensure that I was transparent with the ways in which my personal experiences and biases impacted the study. Reflexivity allows researchers to acknowledge and develop a deeper understanding of their own perspectives as they relate to qualitative research (Patton, 2002). I used a reflective journal to document my reflective process as I collected data during this study. I regularly

reviewed the reflective journal and monitored the bias that may have been present in my thoughts and actions to ensure the trustworthiness of my study.

Summary

This study used qualitative research methodology and a case study design to examine preservice teachers' cultural responsiveness in a language arts methods course. The study involved seven undergraduate preservice teachers and took place during the 2012-2013 academic year. I served as a participant observer as I collected data in my language arts methods course. The goal for the study was to investigate the process that preservice teachers undergo as they are introduced to culturally responsive pedagogy using the Critical Matrix of Literacy Domination framework as a lens for analysis. Data was collected for 10 weeks during the fall of 2012 and later analyzed using thematic analysis.

CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS

This study was designed to examine how preservice teachers' understandings about culturally responsive teaching change as they encounter pedagogy designed to encourage culturally responsive literacy instruction. Specifically, the aim was to explore the relationship between preservice teachers' cultural background and their receptiveness to culturally responsive teaching. The study also investigated the preservice teachers' developing understandings of culturally responsive teacher throughout the course of one semester. Finally, the study documented the ways in which preservice teachers adopted culturally responsive teaching strategies during a three-week clinical experience.

In chapter one, I outlined the statement of the problem, purpose of the study and significance of the research. Chapter two provided a review of the literature on culturally responsive pedagogy and defined the theoretical framework guiding the study. Chapter three described the methodology that was used during the study. It also included the research questions guiding the study:

1. How does preservice teachers' cultural background influence their receptiveness to culturally responsive literacy instruction?
2. How do preservice teachers' understandings about culturally responsive literacy teaching change as they matriculate through an undergraduate language arts methods course designed to promote culturally responsive pedagogy?

3. In what ways do preservice teachers demonstrate culturally responsive literacy teaching during a three-week integrated clinical experience?

Chapter four delineates the findings from the study. In this study of preservice teachers in a language arts methods course, I could not tell the story of each individual student in the class. The size, type, and amount of data collected prevented me from writing about the each participant. Rather, I opted to pursue embedded case studies on seven students from the course. The embedded case studies allowed me to demonstrate a depth of understanding on smaller segments of the larger group (Stake, 2005). A case study employs extensive examination of a complex set of events or circumstances, while an embedded case study details specific components of the phenomenon that exists within the entire case (Rossman & Ralis, 2003).Using the data collected on seven participants in the study, I provide detailed descriptions of the stories that developed during my research.

In the first part of this chapter, I introduce the seven preservice teachers who volunteered to be interviewed and observed as part of this study. Using descriptions, interpretations, and direct quotes from the participants, I present the data in an effort to accurately and fairly tell the stories of the participants. My own thoughts, observation notes, and analytic memos are written in italics.

In the second part of the chapter, I present the four major themes that emerged from the data collected in the study. I demonstrate how each theme is connected to the research questions guiding the study. The four themes that emerged from the data are: *1. The Role of Cultural Background*, 2. *Personal Connections and the Desire to Help,*

3.*Understandings About Culturally `Responsive Teaching,* and 4. *Clinical Experiences: Lesson Plans and Student Teacher Interactions*.

The Participants

Table 1 summarizes selected demographic characteristics for each of the participants.

Table 1 Preservice teachers' demographics

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Hometown, State (self report)	Childhood Socioeconomic status (self-report)
Nancy	22	White	Suburban, Southeastern State	Lower class
Harold	21	White	Rural, Southeastern State	Lower class
Dana	21	Hispanic	Suburban, Southeastern State	Lower-middle class
Tonia	32	White	Rural, Southern State	Lower class
Hannah	21	White	Rural, Southeastern State	Lower class
Katie	29	White	Rural, Southwestern State	Lower-middle class
Jennifer	22	White	Suburban, Southeastern State	Middle class

Nancy

Nancy is a soft-spoken, 20-year-old White female from a suburban town in a southeastern state. She grew up in a poor family on a large piece of private property that served as the backdrop for all of her outdoor childhood adventures. Although both of her parents were from upper-middle class families, they chose to live simple lives removed from the distractions of the world.

As the third oldest of seven children, Nancy said that she learned a lot about sharing, sacrifice, and collaboration. According to Nancy, her family home was a constant buzz of energy, excitement, and love. The lack of money was never a factor in Nancy's childhood although there were very few luxuries afforded to Nancy as a child. For birthdays, she received necessities like coats and mattresses. Her mother sewed most of the clothes she wore. Without commercially-made toys, Nancy and her siblings relied on the environment and their imagination to spur their entertainment: "We never had things that were just one person's. We were really into community and working together. So I love to work together. I love to be with people."

Nancy's education was different from that of her friends in that she was home schooled from second grade through high school. She believes that her background with home schooling gave her a different perspective on learning and education than students who attended more traditional schools.

> We did a lot of hands-on learning. We learned though museum work and experiences. We went outside a lot and learned about science. We learned about life through living outside and experiencing nature. It helped me connect with people of different ages because I wasn't surrounded with only my grade. I was surrounded by a lot of adults and young children and everyone in between. So that kind of helped me get a well-rounded respect for different people and the different places they are in their life.

Throughout the study, Nancy presented herself as introspective and wise beyond her years. Despite her similarity in age to her peers, she often expressed views that stood in contrast to the other students in the class. Unlike many of her middle-class White counterparts, Nancy indicated a strong desire to teach students from diverse backgrounds. She attributed this desire to her travels abroad.

> I've traveled a lot overseas, mostly third world countries and I've seen a lot of devastation and I've seen a lot of situations where people are so poor that they don't have anything…and they don't have a way of getting an education. My sister lives in the Philippines and so I've been there many, many times. They really value education over there, but don't have a lot of qualified people to teach and so that kind of gave me even more of a desire to teach kids that are less fortunate…and work with people that really need help.

Harold

Harold is a self-described "old-fashioned southern boy." He grew up in what he refers to as a "very small, uncivilized country town" where "most of the people are drunks, druggies, or settling for less." Growing up, Harold and his younger brother spent a lot of time around adults and he attributes his more mature perspective on life to these experiences. However, Harold reports being different from the other "White, low-income" people that populate his hometown in that he "doesn't necessarily want to return home and live like that" rather he "wants to do more with his life."

Harold excelled academically at school, however he had difficulty making friends with the other kids in his town. During his initial interview, Harold recalled spending much of his time alone growing up. He blamed his tendency to withdraw socially on his struggles with weight. Harold says he often felt jealous of his brother who was easily able to sustain friendships with a group Harold refers to as the "rednecks" in the high school. Harold, however, could not remember having any friends of his own.

Harold's father suffered from a mental illness that left him in and out of mental institutions throughout his life. When Harold's mother could no longer cope with his father's mental instability, the two divorced and Harold's mom received custody of him

and his brother. According to Harold, the divorce left him even more confused. His mother was forced to work longer hours as a nurse and Harold and his brother often lived with his mother's friends, his grandparents, or other relatives for long periods of time. Despite the constant transition, Harold remembers these times fondly:

> This was one of the best periods in my life because I got to live with some of my best friends in life and I never got bored with any guardian that I had. My aunts and uncles were very helpful and I always recall the times they brought us food and clothes…they were very supportive. I still cherish those times today and value my friends and family that helped us out when we needed it.

Tonia

Tonia is a White, nontraditional student and mother of three. Once her youngest started kindergarten, 32-year-old Tonia returned to school to "finish what she started years ago." In her interviews and cultural autobiography, Tonia often referred to herself as a "red-neck Cajun from Louisiana." Although she says she is "proud to have a different background than most people", after spending a semester getting to know Tonia better, I can't help but wonder if she resents the way outsiders view people from the South. In one of her interviews she described an experience in which a male classmate joked about her accent. "I have such a different cultural background than everyone around here, since I'm like the lone Cajun. Sometimes, it's just cuz my accent sometimes it comes out and some words I say, I still get picked on, and I know it's in fun, but like little, he [male classmate] always tells me to 'say quarter, say water.'"

Currently Tonia, her husband and kids live in a small rural town where they have resided for the past 13 years. This type of residential consistency is unlike what life was like for Tonia as a young girl. She recalls her nomadic lifestyle as a youngster: "By the time I was in ninth grade I had been in nine different schools. And there was one year,

my 5th grade year, two different schools. So that was kinda rough. And I know a lot of families do that. Especially military families, but my dad just liked to move. We just moved all the time."

Tonia's parents placed little value in education and "could care less" about whether she and her siblings performed well in school or went to college. Although her mother graduated from high school, Tonia's father dropped out in eighth grade. For a while, Tonia's father passed his disdain for school and education on to Tonia and her brother.

> I didn't start first grade when I was supposed to. My father kept me as well as my brothers, out of school. He intended for us to learn from home, but we really didn't get schooling at home. It wasn't until an officer seen us in the park and requested that my father send us to school that we got any schooling that year. We went back to school for the second half of that year, but it was a different school than the one we went to the year before. I was very much behind all of the other students and I had a very hard time catching up.

Things finally started to improve for Tonia once she made it to high school and encountered the teacher that would influence her desire to become an educator.

> My high school years were the only school years that I stayed in the same school (for more than one year). I think that helped a lot and added to my success. I was able to catch up and graduate as a North Carolina scholar. I was also part of the band. My band teacher, Mr. N was a very good teacher and he inspired me to want to teach. I think being a part of the community helped me find what I love feel like I was a part of something.

Dana

Born in a small Mexican town, Dana is a quiet, reserved 22-year-old Mexican American female who rarely speaks unless spoken to directly. She enjoys arts and crafts, music, and spending time with her nieces and nephews. Dana says she has a special knack for recreating ideas she sees on Pinterest, one of her favorite social media websites. Dana belongs to a large, tight-knit family and spends every Sunday with her five siblings,

their spouses, children, and other members of her extended family. Her parents have been married for 35 years and are devout Catholics, although Dana reports that she is "still kind of deciding on her religion."

At the age of two, Dana and her family moved from Mexico to the western United States where she started school and completed kindergarten, first and second grade. When she was eight, Dana moved to suburban town in the southeastern United States where she has lived ever since. Dana developed an interest in teaching in high school:

> I've always been good around kids. I tutored elementary kids my ninth and tenth grade years and then eleventh and twelfth I tutored middle school kids with the Navy DRCC. And then my senior year was when I started tutoring at Central Latino which is an afterschool program for at-risk Hispanic kids. And I think it was there that I really realized that I wanted to be a teacher because I got to see kids that were from completely different backgrounds. Some were ahead, some were struggling. Some had learning disabilities and it was amazing to see all the different types of students and their abilities. It was a really good experience.

After observing Dana in class and taking note of her introverted personality, I was surprised when she volunteered to be interviewed and observed as part of this study. Later, I discovered that Dana was intrigued by the concept of culturally responsive pedagogy and hoped to learn more about how to help immigrant students like herself sustain successful academic careers. Dana's personal school experiences served as a catalyst for her interest in teaching bilingual students. She often expressed her discontentment with the ELL program in her current state.

> In [name of state], the school was mostly Hispanic so it was mostly bilingual, so I was never pulled out of any classrooms. The teachers taught in English and in Spanish. So I never knew what ELL or ESL was until I moved to [name of state] and then when I moved to [name of state], I was put in the ESL program it was called at that time for my third grade year and I did get pulled out of classes. I was just pulled out for extra help and then when I would come back into the classroom I would have assignments handed to me that I wasn't in the classroom for, that I wasn't present for so I had extra homework.

Jennifer

Jennifer is a White, 22-year-old identical twin who was raised in a suburb of a large metropolitan city in the south. Although Jennifer classifies her family as middle class today, things weren't always easy for her family when she was growing up. "I just remember going to school and not having the nicest clothes, having hand me downs, and I was a little bit overweight. So I felt like I looked hideous."

Jennifer's family is very religious and has attended the same church for several generations dating back 200 years. However, Jennifer became estranged from the church and religion a few years ago after a "bad experience" with her pastor:

> The men of my church go to a local bar every Monday, when I turned 21, my pastor asked me if I wanted to go one Monday and the men of the church would buy my drinks. I went, but I saw my pastor flirting with the waitresses and even gave one his phone number. My pastor has a wife and children. This disgusted me! I cannot sit through his sermons without thinking about that night.

The past six years have been a time of transition for Jennifer as she welcomed a biracial nephew into her White family. According to Jennifer, several members of her family are racist. When her older sister became pregnant by her African American boyfriend, Jennifer and her family members were shocked. For the first time, Jennifer began to seriously contemplate the role of race in society:

> My older sister is the first and only person in my family to date a person of a different race. You know my nephew is half Black, half White. It's so funny because before he came along, my family….they are pretty racist. I come from a southern family. They are very…I grew up hearing the N word constantly. Not from my parents, but from my grandparents. They lived right down the road; I saw them a lot. And so it hurts me, you know? My grandfather even said one day, pulled me aside, and was like, "I know your sister made a mistake, but why did it have to be a n****r?' And I'm like what do you say? Cause I'm totally for it. I don't care. They love my nephew to pieces and they don't treat him differently, but it kinda made me sick because I love my grandfather and I respect him, but I do not respect the way he…because there are people who…probably teachers who still treat students differently, and my nephew had no part in that.

Jennifer's internal struggles with her family and the construct of race are a constant presence in her life today. Each time I interviewed, observed, or communicated with her at all, she alluded to "the issue" of having a biracial nephew in a racist family.

Katie

Twenty-nine year-old Katie was born in a small town in a southwestern state to a single mom of three girls. For most of her life, Katie was considered poor. Her mom worked two or three jobs to support Katie and her sisters.

> My mom was a single parent. Three girls. And she struggled. She worked two to three jobs all the time and she didn't have time to help us with school work or even ask us if we did our school work because half the time we wouldn't even see her until she just came home and crashed on the couch. And half the time she didn't make it to her bed because she was so tired and so she wasn't around that much.

Katie enjoys art and writing and hopes to one day become a children's book author. It was Katie's love of writing that sparked her interest in becoming a teacher.

> I sat down and thought about what I like and I love writing. So one day I'd love to use my own books in my classroom and in the summers I'll have time to write and that's really why I chose teaching because I knew I liked working with kids and I knew that I loved writing children's books and I think that working with children will keep my mind young and creative. And once I started the classes I just I loved it and then I started the clinical experiences and I loved it even more and so I'm definitely where I belong.

After growing up in a low-income family, Katie says she left her small home town to pursue a career in the medical field. "I loved the job. I did very well and it was a great opportunity, but I just didn't think it would be a lifelong career." Later, she met her husband and the two of them built comfortable lives for themselves. I worked very hard before I came back to school, so I did well on my own. And now with my husband we can get pretty much anything we want." Their mutual love for travel has taken Katie and

her husband to places all over the world. As a result, Katie is intrigued by the different ways people around the world live.

> Actually, I love learning about different cultures. My husband and I love to travel. I grew up in a small town, but um once I moved, well, I turned 18 and moved to [name of state] I started seeing a little bit of the world. And my husband and his family loves to travel. We're actually going to China next summer. And we, umm we've been to different places in Europe and Mexico and Hawaii and all over the U.S. We try to see different places and we love to learn about different cultures, and eat different food and I think that bringing that into the classroom and letting them [elementary students] know that there's so much out there and letting students bring their own bit of their culture into the class…. I think that just gives students a well-rounded education and um opens their eyes to the world instead of thinking that everything is one way.

Hannah

Hannah is 21-year old White female from the rural south. She describes herself as a "talker" and says she enjoys being around others. Hannah was an only child until her mother remarried when she 13. Hannah insists that this is the reason she enjoys talking so much today. According to her, she "has to make up for all those years she spent talking to her stuffed animals." Her mom's status as a single parent made life tough.

> I pretty much grew up lower middle class because it was me and my mom for so long and it was pretty much paycheck to paycheck. She worked two jobs. It took my mom a while to get back up on her feet because you're going from two incomes to one and being a single parent.

When asked why she chose to become a teacher, Hannah insists that it was something she was born to do.

> I've known since I was little. I would line up my stuffed animals according to their names alphabetically. I've always known from that point on and it's just the fact that I feel like I can relate to those kids who struggle. Even though my parents divorced, they were both very prevalent in my life. And so they always told me that I could do whatever I wanted to do as long as I set my mind to it.

Despite her determination to become a teacher, after spending lots of time with Hannah I noticed that she grappled with some of the issues she will face as a classroom teacher.

> I think about when I become a teacher a lot. I think about like what if I have kids that fall asleep in my class when I start teaching, am I supposed to wake them up? Or should I you know let them sleep…what do I do because what if that's the only time they get sleep. Like what if their parents are up fighting all night and it wakes them up and they're crying theirself to sleep. What do you do about stuff like that?

Hannah's quest to be the perfect teacher made self-questioning sessions like the one cited above a fairly common occurrence for her.

The participants in the study were all relatively similar in age and demographics. With the exception of Dana, all of the participants were English speaking White students from the south. Harold was the only male. After interviewing the participants in my study, I initially became concerned about their similarities in race, ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic status. However, educational research suggests that the sample in my study represents a majority of the preservice teachers in America (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2004; Landsman & Lewis, 2006). Furthermore, it is not in the nature of a qualitative case study to create a randomized sample or to generalize findings.

In the next section, I outline the four themes that emerge from an analysis of the data- primarily from interviews with the informants. The themes represent the participants' developing understandings about culturally responsive teaching; illustrate the relationships between the participants' personal background and their receptiveness towards culturally responsive teaching; and demonstrate the students' experiences with culturally responsive teaching during their clinical fieldwork. The first and second themes, The *Role of Cultural Background* and *Personal Connections and the Desire to*

Help are directly connected to the first research question. The third theme, *Understandings about Culturally `Responsive Teaching* provides answers related to the second research question. The fourth theme, *Clinical Experiences: Lesson Plans and Student Teacher Interactions* sheds light on the final research question.

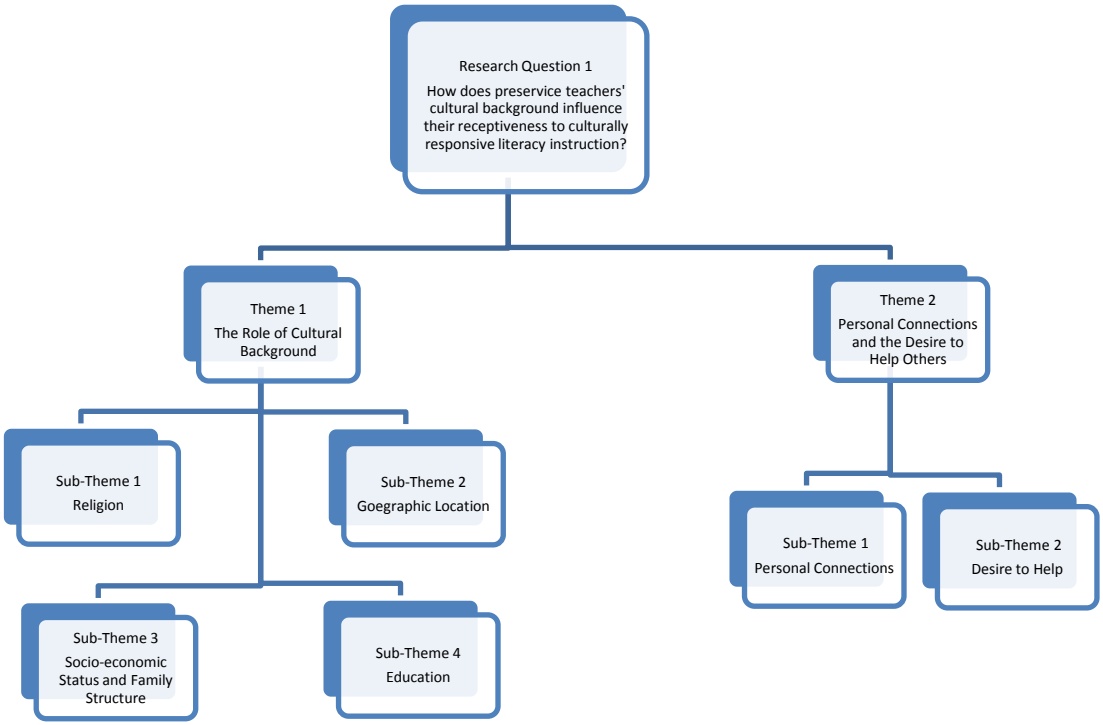


FIGURE 4.1 Research question 1: Themes and subthemes

Theme 1: The Role of Cultural Background

During their initial interviews, each of the participants was asked to describe their cultural backgrounds. They were invited to comment on aspects of their background which they felt were significant to shaping the person they have become today. The

students also wrote cultural autobiographies as a class assignment. Several key areas surfaced from the initial interviews and cultural autobiographies as meaningful in shaping the students' lives and influencing their receptiveness to culturally responsive pedagogy. The participants reflected on religion, race/ethnicity, geographic location, family structure/socioeconomic status, education, and family beliefs and considered the ways in which these significant areas of their lives have shaped their personalities and impacted the type of teachers they see themselves becoming. Figure 4.1 illustrates the relationship between research question one and its relevant themes and subthemes.

Religion

While outward expressions of religion are often prohibited within public school classrooms, it remains a salient factor in the lives of children from certain cultural and ethnic groups. For students from these populations, religion governs their daily actions and behaviors both at school and in their home communities. To ignore the religious beliefs and values of these students is to discount a major attribute of their cultural background. During the initial interviews for this study, several of the participants indicated their lack of, or opposition to, religion and its role within the classroom setting. The informants had opposing opinions about how religion should be handled in a classroom setting. For example, Jennifer felt strongly about excluding religion and religious celebrations of any form from the classroom.

> Because of the [inappropriate] actions of my pastor, I think it's okay to not believe in God or go to church. I've learned that not everyone believes in and no one should be forced to go to church or sit through something that they do not believe in. That's why I will not celebrate Halloween, Christmas, or any other holiday in my classroom. If students want to celebrate those things, that's fine, but they need to do it at home.

Jennifer's comments suggest that she is unwilling to allow students' religion to enter the classroom in any form. Her own personal experiences with religion have tainted her view of religious leaders. Jennifer indicates that students' religious perspectives will not be welcome in her classroom. In this way, her own cultural background negatively influences her receptiveness to culturally responsive pedagogy. Culturally responsive educators are knowledgeable about the cultural beliefs of the students in their classrooms and adjust their instruction appropriately (Rychly & Graves, 2012). Jennifer's refusal to acknowledge her students' religious beliefs could demonstrate a disregard for culturally responsive pedagogy.

Like Jennifer, Tonia's personal beliefs regarding religion have an impact on her receptiveness to culturally responsive teaching. She too feels that religion should be kept out of the classroom entirely. Tonia's perspective on religion is also attributed to her own cultural background. However, Tonia has some doubt about how this will affect her ability to become culturally responsive. The following quotes from our interviews demonstrate how Tonia grapples with the role of religion in the classroom.

> My family and I do not celebrate religion or holidays, and it is our cultural belief. This has been a hard situation while my children are going through school. Every year having to explain it to each teacher. No, I would not like my children to have to color, draw, and/or write about ghost and witches, Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, etc. in school. Although, my children have had some very good teachers that have accepted our cultural difference, there were a few that didn't care. My children would come home and be upset that they had to write or color or read about something that they knew we didn't recognize or like. On the other hand, as a preservice teacher, I have multiple thoughts and feelings about becoming a teacher. Am I going to be able to be culturally diverse when it comes to these issues? I have struggled with this issue, but, my goal is to be able to teach each and every child to the best of my abilities, and to understand and accommodate to each child.

Tonia's uncertainty about how she will handle religion indicates her desire to become a culturally responsive educator. Although she is not personally connected to any specific religious beliefs, she recognizes that her values may influence the type of teacher she becomes. She posits a desire to reach all of her students and appears to suggest that this may involve making modifications to her classroom instruction. For Tonia, there are multiple connections between her religious background and her receptiveness to culturally responsive pedagogy.

Religion was viewed differently by other participants in the study. Both Harold and Hannah attributed their successes in life to what they described as their relationships with God. They admitted that religion often governed the decisions they made as people and as teachers. Harold insisted that religion helps him "deal with everyday problems and gives [him] hope," while Hannah insisted that her life would be totally different without God. Nancy, who considers herself a Christian, believes that religion will play a fundamental role in her teaching. In the following passage, she discusses her efforts to understand religions that differ from her own.

> My family is a Christian family. All my life religion has been very important to the way I live and the way I view the world. I love people despite their religion, yet I tend to view other religions through the mindset of my own. I am not one to judge others for believing in other things. I have been interested with what different religions believe and have spent some time studying the main religions in the world. I think this will help me better understand my students who may be of a different religion.

Nancy's comments illustrate the ways in which her religious background influences her receptiveness to culturally responsive pedagogy. She expresses a desire to know more about religions that differ from her own. Nancy appears to recognize the importance of understanding the religious views and perspectives of the students she will

teach. Although Nancy admittedly feels strongly about her own religious beliefs, she is open to allowing space for her students' beliefs within the classroom setting.

All of the participants considered the ways in which religion has shaped their lives and affected their opinions about its role in the classroom. For some, the absence of religion defines their approach to holidays and other cultural celebrations in the classroom. For others, religion not only provides a source of strength and comfort, but also influences the way they will approach instruction within the classroom. In each case, religion affected the participant's receptiveness to culturally responsive pedagogy

Geographic location

Culturally responsive teachers are reflective about their own cultural frames of reference (Rychly & Graces, 2012). They recognize that their personal "worldview" can influence their instructional practice (Gay, 2000; Howard-Hamilton, 2000; Rychly & Graces, 2012). When teachers fail to recognize the bias that exists within their own worldviews, they can unintentionally marginalize students' whose perspectives and values differ greatly from their own.

The majority of the participants were from small rural, towns in the south. Several of the participants reported that their hometowns were comprised exclusively of Whites. Most of the participants believed that interactions with diverse populations would have been beneficial to them during their childhood. All of the informants felt that their geographic location impacted the way they view teaching today. Jennifer admitted that prior to the birth of her biracial nephew, "she never thought about" how her geographic location would influence the type of teacher she will become. Once her nephew was born, she began to consider how she would create a welcoming classroom environment for

children from diverse backgrounds. Hannah saw her lack of experience with people from different ethnicities as a disadvantage to her as a teacher. Throughout the study, she repeatedly spoke about her desire "learn about other kids' backgrounds." These examples demonstrate Jennifer and Hannah's receptiveness to culturally responsive teaching as it relates to their geographic location as children.

Nancy, who is also from a small southern town, displayed receptiveness to culturally responsive teaching based on her geographic location. In her cultural autobiography, Nancy considered the impact that her geographic location would have on her future students. She worried that her unfamiliarity with the way of life in other parts of the country would hinder her ability to relate with children from those areas.

> I lived in [name of town] my whole life. While I have traveled around the world, this has always been my home. In the United States, I'm really only familiar with [name of state] and a few surrounding states. If I have students that are from this region, I will be familiar with their experiences as they connect with the environment and such, however, if my students come from other regions in the U.S. or around the globe, I will be less familiar with their experiences.

Like Jennifer, Hannah and Nancy, Dana reported a sensitivity to culturally responsive pedagogy based on geographic location. Dana saw her immigrant status as a plus or an added benefit that she could use to her advantage as a future teacher in an increasingly diverse society.

> I'm very glad that my family came to the United States when I was very young. Seeing the lives of people in the Mexican town I was born in made me realize how lucky I am to have the opportunities I have today…I feel like I have an advantage by being fluent in Spanish and English especially with the growing number of Hispanic students in schools.

For most of the participants in the study, geographic location greatly affected their openness to culturally responsive pedagogy. Several of the subjects pondered the ways in which their geographic location would alter their teaching. There was a consensus among

the participants that living in urban areas promotes a more diverse approach to life and teaching. After growing up in small rural towns, four of the participants reported their desire to remain in a large city like the one in which they currently attend college. According to these subjects, the cultural diversity which exists in a large city, results in more open and accepting attitudes among the people that reside there. In this case, geographic location had a positive effect on the preservice teachers' approach to culturally responsive teaching. As a result of their limited geographic locations, the subjects wished to broaden their perspectives and approaches to teaching.

Socio-economic Status and Family Structure

During the initial interviews, all of the participants mentioned their socio-economic status and their childhood family structure when describing their cultural backgrounds. The preservice teachers described the ways in which their childhood family structure would inform their approach to working with children from nontraditional family settings. Four of the participants were raised by single mothers, while three grew up in homes with married parents. Interestingly, all of the subjects indicated that they were from low or lower middle income families and felt that socioeconomic status impacted their lives as children and ultimately their attitudes towards teaching.

The participants whose parents were married reported similar financial instability to those informants who came from single parent homes. Jennifer maintained an allegiance to helping students from broken homes. Her inspiration was her biracial nephew who is being raised by his grandparents (Jennifer's parents). After observing the way her own nephew has been impacted by the absence of both his father and mother, Jennifer pledged to "do her best to work with kids like my nephew who don't have both

parents in the home." Nonetheless, she acknowledged that having both parents around does not equate to prosperity.

> My parents, even though they were married and we had two incomes, my parents had three children so we lived paycheck to paycheck. I remember going to the grocery store and having to put things back…I mean the whole cart…like my parents didn't have the money and we had to put everything back.

Like Jessica, Dana's acceptance of culturally responsive pedagogy is due in part to her own socio-economic status and family structure as a child. To this day, family plays a large part in Dana's life. According to Dana, this is not uncommon in the Hispanic community. "Families work together to help each other out." The financial hardships her family faced when she was young inspired Dana to help children in similar situations succeed.

> I come from a working class family. Neither of my parents completed high school. My dad did return to community college to learn English and get a welding certificate. Since I have a large family, it was harder for us to get what we needed when I was younger.

Although her family's financial situation improved as she got older, Dana says she never forgot what it felt like to struggle. She is often reminded of her childhood when she volunteers to work with at-risk Hispanic children. During multiple conversations, interviews, and reflections Dana reiterated her belief in culturally responsive pedagogy and frequently attributed it to her own socio-economic status as a child.

The participants from single parent homes were also influenced by their socio-economic status as children. When describing their personal feelings about the use of culturally responsive pedagogy, these informants all indicated their approval of the framework. They referred to their single parent families and low-income households as justification for their favorable stance toward culturally responsive teaching. Harold

discussed his own socio-economic status and how it impacted his desire to become a teacher

> I grew up in a low-income family with my dad always in and out of the hospital. I always had a difficult time when the school season came around because we barely had enough money to buy school supplies and clothes. I never really understood why back then, but I really value this part of my life because I think it made me value a lot more than some of my wealthier friends and I also believe that it has been a main motivator for me to go to college….and try to [become] a teacher who can be there for support of students in situations like I was in.

Katie also grew up in a low-income, single parent home. Because of her own financial instability, Katie vowed to "keep an open mind" towards children from disadvantaged homes. Katie demonstrated her willingness to become a culturally responsive teacher after recalling the way she felt when her wealthy friends unknowingly made fun of the neighborhood where she lived calling it the "ghetto." Katie described her embarrassment and humiliation in her cultural autobiography. This theme of shame as a child was prevalent throughout Katie's experience in the study, but her gratitude and appreciation was also ubiquitous. It appears that the combination of these dichotomous emotions initiated Katie's enthusiasm for culturally responsive pedagogy.

> When we lived with my grandmother, we were comfortable and considered middle class. When my mother moved out however, we were somewhere between working and underclass. It was hard for my mom and for us. We had enough to get by, but not enough for any luxuries. My husband and I work hard and are of a much higher status than when I was a child. I am very thankful for all that we have, but I will never forget what it's like to live without all of it.

The participants in this study shared a similar economic background. Many of the informants referred to this common trait as a catalyst for their sensitivity towards culturally responsive pedagogy. Having experienced financial hardship themselves inspired several of the participants to readily accept certain tenets of culturally responsive teaching. The data regarding the preservice teachers' socio-economic status and family

structure illustrates how these characteristics influenced the informants' receptiveness towards culturally responsive pedagogy.

Education

Education was another factor that influenced the informants' receptiveness to culturally responsive pedagogy. During the initial interviews all of the participants in the study made mention of their own educational experiences and the role that education played in their lives as children. As natives of small, rural or suburban towns, Harold, Hannah, Jennifer, and Katie all attended segregated schools where the student population was majority White. For these participants, diversity was something they rarely, if ever, thought about as children. Their first school experiences with students from different ethnicities were in college. When they began taking education classes and spending time in elementary schools for college course clinical experiences, the participants noted the differences between the demographic makeup of the schools they visited and their own elementary schools.

Nancy, who was homeschooled, had educational experiences that included interactions with other children from different ethnicities in her community. She maintained that these experiences would be useful to her as a future teacher. Dana and Tonia were exposed to different educational settings as they moved from different locations in the country.

As a child, Tonia's family moved frequently and her education suffered as a result. Tonia felt that her lack of consistency put her behind and robbed her of the opportunity to reach her potential in all subject areas. She often articulated her belief that students like her need extra help transitioning into the classroom. Low income, urban

students of color are most likely to come from transient homes as their families struggle to find affordable housing (Kozol, 2005). Tonia's pledge to modify her instruction to assist students in similar situations exemplifies a certain level of acceptance in regard to culturally responsive pedagogy. She considered the impact of her childhood education in her cultural autobiography.

> As I reflect on my personal experience with school, I began to realize what may be important to students. Having a safe place, a feeling of belonging, stability and a community environment can mean the world to a child. These simple things can make a student strive in their academics as well as their social lives. My experiences can definitely help make me a better teacher.

Culturally responsive teachers are caring and empathetic towards their students needs (Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2003; Rychky & Graves, 2012). Tonia demonstrates these characteristics as she considers the ways in which she will help students from transient homes. Dana's receptiveness to culturally responsive pedagogy was also impacted by her own educational experiences. She recalled the frustration of being placed in ESL classes and missing out on other assignments in the classroom. Dana had strong feelings about how bilingual students should be taught in the classroom.

> I don't know how much I missed when I was pulled out of class for ESL, but now that I'm studying to be a teacher I see that students are pulled out all of time for different reasons and I feel like they would do better if they were in the classroom and taught in their own language. Because I am Hispanic, I want to start working in a school that does have a lot of needs just so I can get some of that background. I do feel that I do want to include the ELL students more in my classroom because I've had personal experiences where I'm pulled out of classrooms and I don't think that's great for students. I know I can't teach with all of the languages, but I could teach one little group.

The participants' personal experiences in school formed the foundation of their beliefs about culturally responsive teaching. For various reasons related to their own education, the preservice teachers were motivated to adopt culturally responsive

pedagogy. Tonia and Dana hoped to ensure that students from transient homes and bilingual students had more positive school experiences than the ones they faced themselves. Nancy hoped to capitalize on the diversity she experienced in her home school setting to help the learners in her classroom form a multicultural community. Several other participants hoped to overcome their own segregated educational experiences to become culturally responsive literacy teachers that highlight diversity and make it a central part of instruction. In short, the educational experiences of the participants positively affected their attitudes and receptiveness towards culturally responsive pedagogy.

Analysis of the data revealed four key components of the informants' background that influenced their receptiveness towards culturally responsive pedagogy. The participants indicated that religion, geographic location, socio-economic status, and education impacted their openness towards culturally responsive pedagogy. In most instances, the key areas that influenced the participants' attitudes about culturally responsive teaching had a positive influence on their attitude towards becoming culturally responsive. This finding aligns with current research on preservice teachers' self-proclaimed attitudes about culturally responsive teaching (Lazar, 2011). However, in the case of religion, three of the participants were unwilling to allow aspects of their students' culture to play any role in their instructional practice. In this way, their cultural background made the participants less receptive to using culturally sound instructional practices in the classroom.

Data analysis also revealed another interesting phenomenon regarding cultural background and the participants' receptiveness to culturally responsive teaching.

Although the participants' receptiveness to culturally responsive pedagogy was clearly impacted by specific components of their cultural background, even more impactful were their written reflections on cultural background. When the students were initially invited to describe their own cultural background, they recalled facts, events, and experiences that had occurred in their lives. However, over the course of the semester, the participants began to reflect in writing on the ways in which these aspects of their lives have come to shape their values, beliefs, and ultimately their approach to teaching. Then, and only then did some of the participants move from a more deficit-oriented approach to culturally responsive teaching to one in which they saw value and strength in the cultural backgrounds of the students in their classroom. The students' reflections indicated the importance of positionality. The participants appeared most receptive to areas of culturally responsive pedagogy in which they viewed themselves from a position of oppression as opposed to one of privilege.

Unfortunately, this transformation occurred to varying degrees among the participants. Tonia, Jessica, and Harold professed to support culturally responsive pedagogy, but by the end of the study they were still committed to a "you poor soul" view of helping the culturally and linguistically diverse students in their clinical classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 2011). The participants' comments about helping students who "probably have a bad home life" exhibit two characteristics of a deficit mentality. First, the participants exhibit a lack of faith in the students' ability to achieve academic success. Secondly, the informants' actions suggest their unwarranted beliefs that their students' families do not support their education. This finding suggests the need for ongoing

professional development and support related to culturally responsive pedagogy for preservice teachers.

Theme 2: Personal Connections and the Desire to Help Others

In addition to aspects of their cultural background, the participants' receptiveness to culturally responsive pedagogy was also influenced by their personal connections to students and their desire to help others. According to Rychly and Graves (2012), culturally responsive teachers are reflective about their attitudes and beliefs about other cultures. The participants in this study illustrated this characteristic when they sought to make connections with students from different cultures based on their commonalities as opposed to placing an emphasis on their differences. Citing their personal connections and a desire to help as motivating factors, the preservice teachers illustrated their receptiveness to culturally responsive teaching.

Personal Connections

In both the initial interviews and cultural autobiographies, all of the participants recalled personal experiences or events, which they felt, would allow them to connect with students from diverse backgrounds. In several instances, the participants recounted their low socio-economic status during childhood and suggested that this aspect of their cultural background would form the basis for the connections they would make with children from similar backgrounds. According to Rychly and Graves (2012) culturally responsive teachers are reflective about their attitudes and beliefs about other cultures. The participants in this study illustrated this characteristic when they sought to make connections with students from different cultures based on their commonalities as opposed to placing an emphasis on their differences. Citing their personal connections

and a desire to help, the preservice teachers illustrated their receptiveness to culturally responsive teaching.

All of the participants whose families experienced some form of adversity such as poverty, divorce, or mental illness were receptive to idea of culturally responsive pedagogy. These informants implied that their personal experiences would allow them to empathize with students who encounter similar barriers. They discussed specific examples of ways in which they felt they could personally connect with children from diverse backgrounds. Hannah commented about the difficulties she experienced growing up in a single parent home. She felt that the struggles she encountered would give her insight into working with children whose parents are not together.

> I can relate to kids who are struggling if they're with a single parent family because I know what it's like. I've been there. I think it's shaped me as a person because I can see both sides. I mean I'm not super rich now, but I'm not destitute. I can relate to kids who I feel like struggle or have not much stability. I feel like that's shaped how I look at things.

For Hannah, having experienced economic burdens as a child has influenced her outlook on life. As a teacher, she predicts that she will form natural bonds with students who come from single parent or low-income homes. She also feels that she will make accommodations in the way she runs her classroom in order to make children from all family structures feel welcomed and supported.

Katie also grew up in a single parent home. Her family struggled financially, but her life changed drastically when she left home, began working and living on her own, and then married a man from a wealthy family. Like Hannah, Katie was receptive to the use of culturally responsive instruction within her classroom. During the final interview, she described the way she would approach her instructional practice.

> I'll be open minded to everything that all my students have to say because I know what it was like for me in the past and I know what it's like for me now. So….I guess I can relate to children from families with less and those who have families with a little bit more. I can relate to both sides.

On various occasions Katie expressed her gratitude for the life she has today. However, she was always quick to point out her financial hardship as a child. She was confident that her past was key to keeping her grounded and helping others in need become successful. Jennifer expressed a similar sentiment as she described a story about a student in her clinical class who purchased a brownie on a field trip and asked her to hold on to it for him. At the end of the field trip, which took place on a Friday, Jennifer forgot to return the brownie and worried about it all weekend. In the following quote, she explains her worry:

> If my parents gave me money for something, I took pride in whatever I bought. I remember if I lost something that my parents gave me money for at school, I was in tears because I knew the value of a dollar and you never know, you really don't…you never know if he might have gotten in trouble. That really could have happened… That boy spent like 15 minutes in the bakery picking out what he wanted when we went to [Field trip location]. He was the last one in there. That's why I was like, "I have to return this brownie" and I thought about it all weekend. The teacher was like, 'You didn't have to do that'[come to school to return the brownie] and I was like, 'Yes, I did. I know what it's like.' That little boy might have had a panic attack when he got home.

Although Jennifer appears to be projecting some of her own feelings onto the boy from her clinical classroom, it is obvious that she feels some sort of connection to the student. Jennifer's fear of forgetting to return the brownie clearly stems from her own experiences with money as a child. She alludes to scenarios in which she lost items of value and implies that her experiences qualify her to understand what the young boy must have felt. This scenario clearly illustrates Jennifer's willingness to modify her instructional practices to accommodate what she perceives as students' individual needs.

This behavior is reflective of a culturally responsive teacher and demonstrates her receptiveness to the framework.

Like Jennifer and Hannah, Tonia feels that her childhood experiences will impact the type of teacher she becomes. After moving more than nine times as a child, Tonia insists that she understands the perspectives of students whose families move frequently and are constantly replanted in new schools. She, too, displays openness to culturally responsive pedagogy by outlining her plans to help students assimilate into her classroom community.

> As a teacher, I will understand when students come in that have moved, even if it's just one or two times. I can understand and relate to what they're going through ad welcome them into the classroom and make them feel welcome and make it a community. They can come in and they're a part of it.

The focus on personal connections with students resonates with several participants in the study. The participants posit that having a similar background with students in their classrooms will provide them with a sense of awareness and understanding as teachers of children from diverse backgrounds. These personal connections also appear to positively impact the participants' receptiveness to culturally responsive teaching.

Desire to help

During the initial interviews, several of the participants expressed a strong desire to help those who are less fortunate than themselves. In some cases, the subjects professed to being "drawn" to children that appeared to be in need. This common trait was noted in the subjects' cultural autobiographies and personal memoirs as well. The idea of helping others in need was often expressed in response to questions regarding

culturally responsive teaching. Thus, the participants that spoke of helping others also readily embraced the need for culturally responsive pedagogy.

Katie often discussed her charity work with children. She spent a great deal of her free time purchasing and organizing book parties for children in need. Katie saw this as an important part of her life and accepted this role with pride and humility. Katie's desire to help others was a prominent theme throughout the study. Her receptiveness to culturally responsive pedagogy was linked to her strong desire to help others.

Hannah also frequently expressed her desire to help others. She was adamant about wanting to assist children during the difficult times in life. Hannah saw her role in the classroom as more than an educator. She aspired to be a confidant and cheerleader to students who come from disadvantaged homes. Hannah's comments provide evidence of her receptiveness to culturally responsive pedagogy.

> I knew I didn't want to become a teacher just because I like kids. It's because I want to inspire those kids that struggle. I want them to have that escape if they have a bad home life. Those kids who don't come from as a good a background, they have those insecurities where they don't know if they fit in…Where they struggle on the inside with what they want to do and where they fit in. I want to be able to inspire those kids and prove to them that just because you don't have this wonderful life that you can make something of yourself, that you are somebody…they may not get that attention at home or anywhere else.

Although commendable, Hannah's words show hints of a savior type mentality. She covertly suggests that her intervention will be what "saves" the children in need. Despite her good intentions, Hannah seems to imply that children from diverse populations don't have "good backgrounds" or "may not get attention at home." This approach to helping at-risk student populations can be damaging to children who need to enhance their self-confidence and self-esteem (Ladson-Billings, 2011). Culturally responsive teachers not only see the possibilities within their students from diverse

backgrounds, they teach from a place of "informed empathy" versus a position of sympathy (Ladson-Billings, 2011). Hannah seems to fall somewhere in between these two positions. Although she professes to believe in the potential all children possess, she implies that their source of strength will come from the outside. Rather than empowering the children to see their own strengths, Hannah hopes to be their source of inspiration. While she reveals her own insecurities as a child, she still appears to imply that she will be the vehicle for change in the lives of the students she teaches. Hannah exemplifies her sentiments in the following quote.

> I always stood out cuz I was like seven foot tall in the fourth grade (laughs) and I was this weird looking kid and that doesn't matter because they'll come into who they are and they'll figure theirself out and I want to be able to prove that to them and show that to them and inspire them more than anything.

As a former "awkward teen" Harold also felt compelled to help the students who appeared to be in need. He spoke openly about his struggles with weight and his loneliness and depression in high school. Harold felt that these experiences have impacted the way he approaches teaching. "I always notice the students that are different because I was…especially in high school, so now I'm just kinda drawn to those kids. They are the ones I really want to help." Like Hannah, Harold's desire to help appears to stem from his own experiences as an outsider in high school.

Jennifer's desire to help others is closely connected to her relationship with her biracial nephew. For Jennifer, her nephew's birth marked a significant turning point in her life. Throughout the study, Jennifer reported adopting a new outlook on life as a result of her nephew's birth. Now, as a future teacher, she often feels compelled to help other children from biracial families.

> I don't know why every time I go into a classroom, if there's a mixed kid in there, I'm immediately attracted to them. I just want them to know that I'm not going to treat them differently and I won't let anyone else treat them differently….because I would hate for someone to judge my nephew by the color of his skin.

Jennifer's remarks illustrate a desire to support students from all racial backgrounds. However, her guarantee to not treat biracial students differently mimics a colorblind mentality. Not treating students differently suggests treating all students the same. Jennifer contends that she is open to the use of culturally responsive pedagogy, but her comments indicate the fear and vulnerability she feels about the inevitable discrimination her nephew will face as a biracial child in a small, rural, and sometimes racist town. It appears that Jennifer is still wrestling with the conflicting ideas she harbors about equity versus equality.

For the participants in the study, the desire to help those in need fueled their quest to become culturally responsive teacher teachers. The personal experiences they endured as children of poverty, outsiders, or members of broken families spawned the participants' need to improve the lives of the children they will encounter in their classrooms. The personal experiences of the participants and their desire to help those in need surfaced as reoccurring themes that positively impacted their overall receptiveness to culturally responsive teaching.

Theme 3: Understandings about Culturally Responsive Teaching

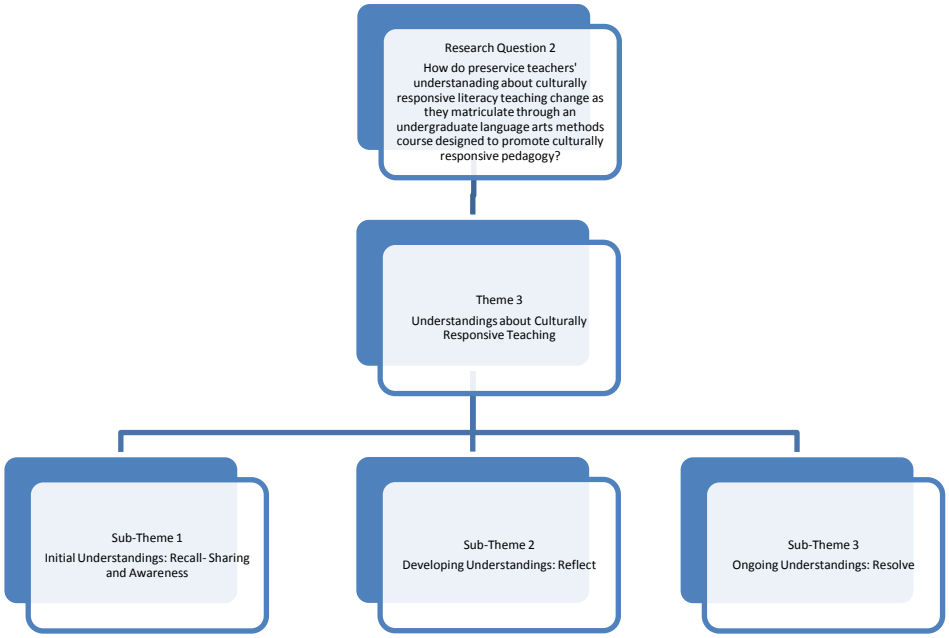


FIGURE 4.2 Research question 2: Themes and subthemes

One overarching purpose of this study was to examine the ways in which preservice teachers' understandings about culturally responsive teaching developed overtime. The study was designed to expose participants to a variety of activities in which they encountered, reflected on, or experienced culturally responsive pedagogy. Prior to their exposure to any of the classroom or clinical experiences, students were interviewed to uncover information about their cultural background and their understandings about culturally responsive teaching. Throughout the semester, participants were asked to submit written reflections on their changing understandings about culturally responsive pedagogy following course activities or discussions. This section outlines the progression that occurred as the participants began to consider the benefits of adopting a culturally responsive framework in an elementary school

classroom. Figure 4.2 illustrates the relationship between research question two and its themes and subthemes.

Initial understandings: Recall-sharing and awareness

The subjects were asked to define culturally responsive teaching during the initial interviews. The responses were vague and filled with uncertainty. A few of the participants appeared to "guess" at what they thought the term meant, but were unable to give more detailed answers when asked to elaborate. In general, the participants felt that being culturally responsive meant *having a certain level of awareness for students' backgrounds* and *allowing students to share their perspectives*. The students' initial understandings about culturally responsive pedagogy could be described as *recall*. With the exception of two participants, the preservice teachers parroted what they had been told about culturally responsive teaching. In most cases their lack of familiarity with the term was obvious.

Although most of the initial definitions were sparse and lacked depth, Tonia's response was the most incomplete. "I'm not really familiar with the terms [Culturally Responsive Teaching]. I'm learning more and more, but from what I gather, it's just being sensitive to other students' culture." Like Tonia, Dana and Katie provided limited definitions of culturally responsive teaching at the start of the study. Katie envisioned culturally responsive teaching to mean "just listening to everybody," while Dana considered it to mean "being aware of students' cultural background and being responsive to them….just making sure that all students know that there are other backgrounds they need to learn about and be aware about."

When portraying his interpretation of culturally responsive teaching, Harold presented an interesting perspective.

> Just by looking at a person, you can't always tell what their background is. Teachers automatically assume that a students gonna…. just because of the way they are now, not get any better. I just always try to treat each student the same, the best that I can. I know it's hard to, but…

Taken literally, Harold's goal of treating all students the same, stands in stark contrast to the tenets of culturally responsive teaching. Culturally responsive teachers adapt their instruction to meet the needs of the learners they serve. If Harold chooses to design instruction that is the same for all students in all situations, he has failed to grasp one of the key characteristics of culturally responsive pedagogy.

Although Harold was the only student to mention this concept when describing culturally responsive teaching, he was in the majority in that he made no connection between culturally responsive teaching and actual classroom instruction. Only one of the preservice teachers mentioned instruction when outlining their initial definition of culturally responsive pedagogy. Nancy explained what she believed culturally responsive pedagogy to be and briefly mentioned how it impacted classroom instruction.

> Being aware of children and the homes they come from and the mindsets of the families because there's an overall culture, but then there's a family culture. Each family has things they see as important and the things that they respect and things they value and it's different from family to family and so I see it as important to take those things into consideration when you're teaching.

While Nancy was the only informant to mention classroom instruction when defining culturally responsive teaching, she provided a very limited explanation. She did not elaborate on the way she would use students' cultural background to alter her instruction. None of the other participants made direct connections to instructional practice. Their initial definitions all seemed to refer to the way students were treated in

the classroom and failed to consider how culturally responsive pedagogy influenced teaching and learning. What they did describe about culturally responsive teaching seemed to be regurgitated from information they had heard or been taught. I refer to this stage of their development as *recall.* The students simply *recalled* what little they knew about culturally responsive pedagogy. They did not attempt to include examples or support their definitions with personal experiences or observations.

This level of understanding can be paralleled to the remembering level of Bloom's taxonomy which classifies levels of intellectual behavior important in learning. The understanding was rote and in some cases even felt forced. Although the participants appeared sincere in their efforts to define culturally responsive teaching in the beginning of the study, they were limited by their inexperience and inadequate exposure to the concept of culturally responsive pedagogy. Overtime, most of the participants progressed beyond the recall stage. However, there were times throughout the study when their words and actions indicated a digression into the recall stage. For the most part, the participants showed a steady progression into the next stage of understanding which I termed *reflection.*

Developing understandings: Reflection

Once the initial interviews were completed, the study proceeded with various classroom and clinical activities designed to infuse a culturally responsive framework throughout the course. Each class session included an activity, discussion, and reflection. Whole and small group discussions were audio recorded. I also took field notes as I observed the students reactions to the concepts being presented in class. Following each

class session, I created analytic memos using the notes taken in the field. Table 2 outlines the weekly activities that occurred throughout the study.

Table 2 Study Timeline

Week	Activity	Data Collected
Week 1	Initial Interviews	Interview Transcripts
Week 2	Intro to Culturally Responsive Teaching	Photographs of cultural Artifacts Written reflections of artifact activity Online Posts Field notes from classroom observation of cultural artifact activity.
Week 3	Create Cultural Autobiographies	Cultural Autobiographies
Week 4	Write Narrative Essays or Memoirs	Narrative Essays or Memoirs
Week 5	Complete clinical experience in an elementary school classroom	Student Lesson Plans Field notes from observations of participants teaching lessons
Week 6	Complete clinical experience in an elementary school classroom	Student Lesson Plans Field notes from observations of participants teaching lessons
Week 7	Lecture on non-standard English dialects Read article *Ya'll Listening* by Rosa Santos	Recording sheets from lesson on non-standard English dialects Written reflections on the article *Ya'll Listening* by Rosa Santos.

Week 8	Examine Basal Reading textbooks for cultural bias	Transcripts of small group interviews about culturally-biased reading textbooks.
Week 9	Examine Standardized Literacy Assessments for cultural bias	Transcripts of small group interviews about culturally-biased literacy assessments.
Week 10	Final Interviews	Transcripts of final interviews.

As the participants began to explore the concept of culturally responsive pedagogy through class assignments, some interesting discussions ensued. In general, students remained open and receptive to the concept of culturally responsive teaching. There were notable differences in the students' understandings about culturally responsive teaching. Some of the participants made more direct connections to the classroom. Their discussions and reflections were centered around *materials* and *instructional practices*.

This direct connection of culturally responsive pedagogy to classroom instruction appeared frequently in the students' reflections. Unlike their initial explanations of culturally responsive instruction, the participants' subsequent definitions included more reflection and even specific examples of culturally responsive classroom instruction. One of the classroom assignments was to read an article in which a classroom teacher discusses his missed opportunity to include culturally responsive "texts" in the classroom (Kesler, 2010). In the article, text refers to any document, written media, instructional tool, or digital literacy instrument used within the classroom. Kessler had his students create family trees and encounter a problem when an adopted student was unable to complete the assignment because she did not have information on her backgrounds.

Dana pointed out Kessler's missed opportunity in an online post. She recognized that the classroom assignment was inappropriate for one of the students, Natasha, because it did not take her cultural background into account. Figure 4.3 illustrates Dana's online post.

Re: Online Class

by ***** - Sunday, 21 October 2012, 03:20 PM

The classroom "texts" were not culturally responsive because they were not structured so that all students could modify it to fit their lives. In Natasha's story her mother described how devastating it was to Natasha that her family did not fit the mold of what the original family tree depicted. In today's society there are many different family types now more than ever we have to be aware of how to create classroom materials so that every student will be included in our lessons. The family tree project could easily be modified to be culturally responsive by presenting different examples of family tree structures and how each could be modified.

FIGURE 4.3 Dana's online post

Not only does Dana acknowledge the teachers failure to include all students' cultural background in the assignment, she also offers a suggestion for modifying the assignment. By doing so, Dana demonstrates a move beyond her initial definition of culturally responsive instruction in which she commented on merely being aware of students' background. Now, it appears that Dana recognizes the need for culturally responsive teachers to make relevant changes to instruction to accommodate the needs of all learners. Dana's words are evidence of her growth from simple recall to reflection. She does not merely recall the definition of culturally responsive pedagogy, she reflects on ways to enhance instruction to make it appropriate for students from diverse backgrounds.

Several of the other students had similar reactions after reading the article. In an online post, Katie shared a thoughtful reflection on the article. She, too, felt that family tree assignment was in appropriate for all students in the class and questioned its cultural relevance.

Re: Online Class

by ***** - Sunday, 21 October 2012, 08:43 PM

….It wasn't a culturally responsive text. It is seldom that a single format or a form will work for everyone in the class. When it comes to the family tree activity one generic sheet did not work for the whole class. One of the students was adopted,

therefore, a tree would not properly show the structure of her family. Her family consisted of a group of people who love and care for her, not a blood line of relatives. If I used a text that included a "family tree" project, I would leave the structure of the diagram up to the student. The "tree" could be one possibility, or example. The student could change, modify, or choose a different way to show how their family is structured. This could also mean that their family is not family at all, it could be a group of close friends and neighbors as well, or anyone they considered "family"…

FIGURE 4.4 Katie's online post

Katie's post exhibits her expanding definition of culturally responsive teaching. She is starting to consider ways in which teachers can modify instruction to match the cultural backgrounds of the students they teach. Katie offers her perspective on how the family tree assignment should be handled. Even more significant is Katie's reference to what "family" means. Here she seems to indicate that the term "family" can have different meanings to different people. What one student considers family may vary greatly from what others view as family. In some ethnic groups, family extends beyond blood relatives. To students from different cultural backgrounds, the varied meanings of this colloquial term could influence the way they approach this or other assignments involving family. Katie's thoughtful responsive is confirmation of her transition from the *recall* stage to one of *reflection*.

The participants in the study read another article which featured a classroom teacher of low-income, low-performing students. The article documents the teacher's lack of cultural responsiveness towards her students. When the first grade students in the

article attempted to relate aspects of their personal lives into the classroom, the teacher ignored or discounted their attempts.

The informants in this study were offended by the teacher's reaction. They mentioned the importance of allowing students to relate aspects of their home culture to the school culture. Hannah noted the teacher's failure to capitalize on a teachable moment after the student connected her father's personality to that of the bully in a story the class was reading. "I believe that the teacher may have been able to take the uncomfortable situation and make it into a useful discussion. Showing the kids that they should not be ashamed of their own experiences is vital. Teachers must work hard to put themselves in the shoes of their students." Hannah's comment depicts a more reflective interpretation of a culturally responsive teacher. At the start of the study, Hannah's definition of culturally responsive teaching focused on awareness of students' backgrounds. In this example, Hannah shows progression in her definition. Now, she alludes to the idea of demonstrating informed empathy as a classroom teacher. Hannah has moved from simple *recall* of the tenets of culturally responsive teaching to a more *reflective* position on culturally responsive pedagogy.

Tonia also demonstrated a progression in her understanding of culturally responsive teaching. She was also unhappy with the way the teacher in the article handled the situation with her young student. Rather than embracing the students' comment about her dad being a bully, the teacher ignored it. Tonia was disturbed by the comment because she felt it not only discounted the student who made the comment, but other students in the class as well. All of the children in the class were White, lived in the same rural town, and had family members who experienced financial hardship due to the poor

economic state in their community. The students' perception of her father as a bully could have come from his constant expressions of frustration towards others based on his situation.

Tonia felt that other students in the class may experience similar situations at home with frustrated relatives. "Knowing the community and background that your students come from, and the situations that may be bothering them (without too much prying in their personal lives), can help you become an effective culturally responsive teacher." Tonia elaborated by saying that the teacher likely communicated a poor message to all students in the class that have relatives whose behavior is not ideal. Like Hannah, Tonia is demonstrating progression in her understanding about culturally responsive teaching as she begins to include more complex components of culturally responsive pedagogy in her reflections.

As the course began to focus on culturally responsive literacy instruction and materials, the students were encouraged to consider how the choices they make as literacy teachers will affect their students' performance. Discussions such as the online posts documented above became a frequent occurrence in the course as students participated in lessons specifically designed to enhance their understanding of culturally responsive teaching. While examining a basal reading textbook for cultural bias, the following interchange occurred between Harold, Hannah and Tonia.

What was your initial reaction to the story you read in the basal reading textbook?

Harold: I like it cuz it was a culturally responsive text, so right when I started reading, I was like 'oh this will be a good one' cuz I

haven't seen a lot kids books that talk about like Asians immigrating to the U.S. and stuff like that and that's what this one was about. And it was in first person and he was trying to describe all his emotions as he was going there. He thought he wouldn't have any friends and stuff like that, and he didn't have the same kind of food, and stuff and then he kinda skips to the end, but yeah I just liked it when I first started reading.

Hannah: Well, I read the *House on Maple Street* and I wasn't a big fan of mine even though it was short and to the point, it seemed to uh…not make sense to me and I'm old and so I'm not certain that a third grader will follow it and I'm also not certain that the Native American section is going be culturally responsive because I don't know anything about the buffalo tribe, but I'm not certain that they actually used teepees. I know that's something that comes up a lot, that the Indians did not typically live in teepees. They lived in wigwams or others…and so I'm worried that it may not be…I mean it may be culturally appropriate, but that was one of my first things that it wasn't appropriate or correct. And so as the teacher I would make sure to check that out before I let my student read it.

Harold: That's a good point cuz I would probably just believe it because I don't know much about it.

Hannah: Well there are Native Americans in my background and so I've heard some of this, you know. I obviously don't look that[Native American], but there are and they have issues with some of that and I've heard that from them…how offensive it is that all that's portrayed is that they lived in teepees, and put on war paint, and put feathers on their head.

Tonia: The one I read was quite lengthy, so I like skimmed it. It was pretty much a story about growth and development. It started talking about farms and your land and your crops and eventually things start to develop around you and you start to lose that and you sell it off and you can't pay your bills because of depression and stuff.

Hannah: Was it interesting?

Tonia: To me it was. How it happened you know. The farmer's market was gonna close which was owned by a good friend. So the good friend came to ask the factories if they would sell him so much land to open a farmer's market, a new one, and they agreed cuz they thought well they needed the money and it was a closer farmer's market so they could sell their crop and all that stuff too. But then it eventually got to where things were developed. The roads were starting to become developed, come around them and the realtors begged and begged and begged for them to sell their land and the crops were bad one year and they needed the money

and then they sold off their land and that's what happened to Baxter place.

Analyze the illustrations for stereotypes. What are people doing that may create or perpetuate a stereotype?

Hannah: I've already talked about that, the stereotypes and the pictures of the teepees…

Harold: Yeah, you covered it all

Hannah: Yeah, and I also talked about the Native American dress earlier, but not while we were being recorded…that I wasn't sure that that was indicative of how they would actually dress now and I'm certain that the English settlers…

Tonia: The Baxter's Place pretty much…

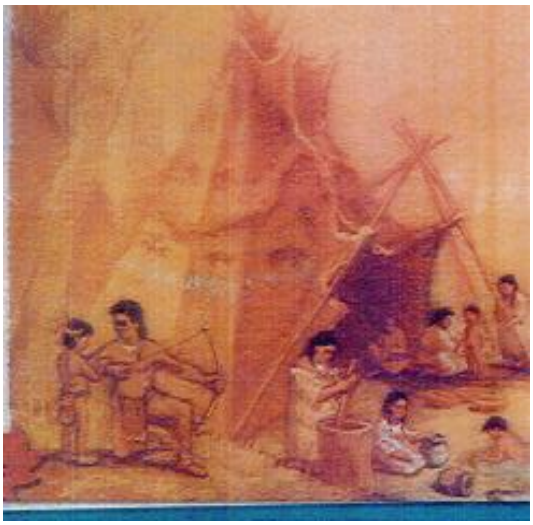


FIGURE 4.5 Illustration 1 from basal reading textbook

FIGURE 4.6 Illustration 2 from basal reading textbook

Harold: (Interrupts Tonia) Something I just realized is that a lot of time when I think about the culturally responsive texts, I'm always thinking that like if a book is about a culture that's like way different than mine , then it may be culturally responsive for kids of that culture because I think kids don't get enough of that, but like y'all are saying just connecting with like the farm and me connecting with leaving home it can be simple stuff like that too that make it culturally responsive and I didn't really notice that.

Tonia: These illustrations are pretty much from what I understand and they look pretty authentic

The participants had mixed reactions to the basal reading texts which featured both culturally responsive stories and stories that contained cultural bias. As research suggests, the majority of the realistic fiction stories featured in the textbooks contained

some form of cultural bias (vanBelle, 2010). Some of the informants easily identified the cultural bias or relevance in the stories; others failed to recognize instances of bias within the textbooks. Harold noticed some positive aspects of a story featuring Asian characters. He highlighted features of the story which would likely appeal to students from certain cultures or students whose families move to new locations. At one point, Harold appears to have an "aha moment" about what he has come to believe constitutes a culturally responsive text. He bases his new definition on the comments and opinions of the others in the group as well as his own progression in thought. This revelation is significant because it illustrates how Harold is beginning to conceptualize his developing interpretation of culturally responsive pedagogy.

Hannah unearthed stereotypes in a story featuring Native American characters. She keyed in on the inaccurate illustrations of the clothing and living structures used by the Native American. Her critical eye towards these features is confirmation of her developing ability to identify instructional materials that are culturally relevant.

Conversely, Tonia does not recognize any of the stereotypes that were present in the story she was assigned to read from the basal reading textbook. Tonia seemed to enjoy the story that she was assigned which may account for her failure to notice some of the stereotypes and biases that were present in the story. Tonia's story features a middle class, White family in which the adults and children are portrayed in stereotypical roles. The women and girls are always shown in dresses performing typical household chores such as cleaning and cooking, while the men and boys engage in outdoor activities and come home to meals prepared by the female family members. Tonia doesn't seem to pick up on these stereotypical images. In this way, Tonia appears to digress in her

understandings about culturally responsive literacy instruction. She allows her personal connection to the story to cloud her judgment of its feasibility as a culturally relevant instructional tool.

A similar scenario unfolded as Katie, Nancy, and Jennifer sifted through the same basal reading textbook. Jennifer easily recognized the stereotypes that were present in the story she read about Native Americans. Like Hannah, Jennifer noticed the discrepancies in the illustrations of the Native American lodgings and clothing. Katie, who read the same story as Tonia read in the previous example, is able to identify the stereotypes that are present in the illustrations that Tonia failed to recognize. In the following dialogue, she points out some of the traditional roles of the women and men in the story.

Analyze the illustrations for stereotypes. What are people doing that may create or perpetuate a stereotype?

Jennifer: I think this one has a lot of stereotypes.

Nancy: Did that offend you?

Jennifer: Yeah cuz, like the housing. You know they always talk about how the Natives live in a traditional teepee, but they don't show anything else. So the traditional teepee that they're in, and the traditional clothing that you always see them in. You see that all the time and (I'm sure they weren't wearing that all the time) that could potentially be a stereotype or stereotyping with the pictures.

Katie: This one about Baxter, the family portrait. They've got the dog, the mom holding a basket, like all she does is bake, the dad's holding a pitchfork and then

Nancy: (laughs) Classic country

FIGURE 4.7 Illustration 3 from basal reading textbook

FIGURE 4.8 Illustration 4 from basal reading textbook

Katie: Yeah, and then like the dad in his overall pushing a wheel barrow and stuff like that dad and the little girl with a bonnet on her head. Yeah, just kinda stereotypical.

Nancy: Definite stereotypes inside of our books.

Jennifer: This one that I have, ummm….like the pictures of Native Americans, they were stereotypical. Apparently, a lot of Native Americans didn't live in teepees. So, like they traveled a lot.

Nancy: So, they actually lived…

Jennifer: Well and in this one they do say that they travel with buffalo, so I guess that might be accurate, but if they can see this and you just show them this one. They're gonna assume that all of them used the tee pees. It's probably pretty accurate about what you should have worn. Even with the Native Americans like, I felt that they would have worn similar things to this. Just cuz that's what I've learned over time, but that could be wrong.

Nancy: But that could be a stereotype and we don't know.

What is the role of women or people of color in the story? Were you satisfied with the way all of the characters in the story were portrayed? Explain.

Katie: No because at first it seemed like the mom was in the home, like did stuff in the house, but then when they needed more help then she finally started working on the farm, like she wasn't able to do it in the beginning until they needed her, she had to stay in the house and as far as like people of color, I don't think I saw a single person of color in this entire story. It's just all White….there's not a single person of color.

Nancy: I don't think there is…

Nancy: It's just all White people and women in dresses and not wearing pants or anything with bonnets on their heads

Jennifer: That's what they're wearing? Umm, mine the first page is of a White family and they're all wearing kinda similar things that kinda very gender neutral cuz you can't really tell. I mean you can tell which ones the dad, You can kinda tell which ones the mom, or what gender the children are and I kinda like that. Of course it kinda makes you assume they are all males. There are people of color because they are Native Americans so they did show that. In this picture, you can see the women is cooking and the man's like hunting. And then in this one it looks like the women are getting everything ready while the men are just sitting on the horse. The woman are doing everything in all of the pictures, nothing of great significance, but they're doing everything. Even in this one, the woman is caring for the baby. She's obviously at home and her husband you can see is out doing field work. So she's a stay-at-home mom.

The participants in this group are adept at identifying bias within the stories they read. They all seem to notice how the stories perpetuate stereotypes based on the gender and ethnicity of the characters. The dialogue captures the participants' developing understanding about the use of culturally responsive literacy materials. The participants are able to use critical thinking skills to analyze a text for its cultural appropriateness. Following this segment of the dialogue, Katie, Nancy, and Jennifer discussed the

difficulty of choosing the appropriate texts to use for instruction. The preservice teachers admitted that they would likely have to research Native American history before selecting literacy materials to share with their students on this topic. They felt unprepared to accurately represent the perspectives of Native Americans which Jennifer commented, "have been distorted" over time. This brief conversation was an open display of the participants developing understanding about culturally responsive teaching. I noted my field notes in an analytic memo on November 12, 2012.

The participants are beginning to connect the tenets of culturally responsive teaching to our classroom lessons, discussions, and activities. It appears that they are thinking critically and making choices based on the cultural content of the instructional materials. I'm curious as to how they would do without prompting from me. Would they notice stereotypes or bias if they were selecting instructional materials on their own? (field notes)

About midway through the semester, the subjects were asked to reflect on what it means to be a culturally responsive literacy teacher. The participants' answers reflected a growth in their understanding of the framework. In many cases, the responses were directly connected to the tenets of culturally responsive pedagogy. Dana suggested that culturally responsive teachers "include books with characters of different races" in their lessons. Likewise, Katie posited that culturally responsive literacy teachers "introduce many examples that students can relate to and will help them understand the information that is being presented in the class". These responses correlate with Rychly and Graves (2012) assertion that culturally responsive teachers "use natural resources to make connections to their students" (p. 46).

Hannah's answer also included a more complex definition than the one she gave at the beginning of the study. She focused on the instructional aspect of culturally responsive pedagogy. Her new definition stands in contrast to her original definition which simple focuses on awareness and sharing.

> To me a culturally responsive teacher makes sure that each student is included when planning lessons. Books in your classroom should represent the cultures of the students in the class. As the teacher, you should set rules so that each student is not necessarily treated the same, but you should acknowledge that there are different cultures and explain that differences make you special, everyone doesn't have the same needs.

At this point in the study, Hannah seemed to recognize that being a culturally responsive educator means more than simply being aware of the different cultural backgrounds represented in your classroom. Again her transition from simple recall to reflection is noticeable as she enhances her definition to include a focus on instructional strategies and materials.

Nancy's definition of a culturally responsive teacher also increased in complexity by the middle of the study. Nancy progressed beyond her original emphasis on awareness to discuss the importance of helping students successfully manage the transition between their home and school cultures. Nancy discussed the value in helping students bridge these gaps without making them feel inadequate or out of place.

> Being culturally responsive means being open-minded and addressing the different needs of the students in your classroom based on their culture. I personally believe that it is important for teachers to keep in mind that children are greatly influenced by their home environment. Students may not always be familiar with the expectations at school, especially if they are different from their expectations at home. In order to keep ALL of the students engaged, we have to teach children in a way they can best learn, in a way that makes sense to them and represents their culture.

Nancy's desire to balance students' home and school cultural hints at Ladson-Billings' (1994, 1995, 2011) concept of cultural competence. According to Ladson-Billings, cultural competence "refers to helping students to recognize and honor their own cultural beliefs and practices while acquiring access to the wider culture, where they are likely to have a chance of improving their socioeconomic status and making informed decisions about the lives they wish to lead" (2011, p. 40). Nancy was beginning to demonstrate cultural competence as a preservice teacher who aims to help students from diverse backgrounds navigate and assimilate into the school culture without eliminating their own cultural preferences and beliefs.

Despite the progress illustrated through most of the preservice teachers' expanding definitions of culturally responsive teaching, Tonia showed little progress in hers. When asked to define a culturally responsive literacy teacher, she still remained focus on the idea of awareness and acceptance of all students. Rather than showing signs of meaningful *reflection*, Tonia seems to simply *recall* what she has learned about culturally responsive teaching.

> I believe that being culturally responsive to students is accepting all cultures within your classroom. Everyone is of a different background, heritage, culture, color, and language. As a teacher, we have to respond to each of our students and make them feel welcome and let them know that they fit within the classroom community. We can do this by adding literature which represents their culture. This not only helps students feel welcome, but shows other outside of their culture that it is okay to be different.

Although Tonia briefly mentions the use of culturally responsive literature, her response, "skims the surface" of defining what it means to be a culturally responsive literacy teacher. She remains focused on acceptance and feeling welcomed as opposed her instructional practices or efforts to ensure the success of all students. My analytic

memo generated from field notes taken on November 12, 2012 illustrate my ongoing reflection of the participants progress during the study.

I think the participants are starting to recognize that mainstream dominant culture is overrepresented in educational materials and settings. Overall, they see the need to incorporate culturally responsive literacy materials, but I'm not sure they understand what that means. Just because a book features characters from different races doesn't mean that those characters are being portrayed accurately. I'm especially concerned that Tonia's understanding of culturally responsive teaching still seems to be focused on the idea of awareness. I realize that awareness is a beginning point, but I had hoped that the participants would have gained a more complex understanding of the term, that is inclusive of the main tenets of culturally responsive teaching. I'm disappointed that they still seem to be missing the importance of using student's culture to empower and enhance their academic performance. What else can I do to drive this point home? (analytic memo)

Another exercise we did in class to address culturally responsive literacy instruction involved oral language. The students were given mini-lessons on two non-standard English dialects and were asked to translate sentences written in Standard American English into either African American English or Southern Appalachian Dialect. The activity was designed to help preservice teachers experience the struggles that non-standard English dialect speakers encounter with written expression. The lesson also served to help strengthen the participants' growing definitions of culturally responsive teaching.

As part of the lesson, the preservice teachers were instructed on the benefits of teaching code switching as well as making connections between dialect speakers' language and Standard American English. Following the lesson, participants were asked to reflect on the use of nonstandard English dialects in the classroom. Each of the subjects discussed the importance of teacher awareness and acceptance of different dialects. The participants also suggested that requiring students to exclusively use Standard American English in school could impact their self-esteem and desire to participate and oral and written activities.

As a student working on a Spanish minor, Harold was especially interested in oral language. Throughout the study, he discussed his observations about students language use in the classroom. During this lesson, he was also open to the inclusion of different dialects in the classroom. Harold saw it as beneficial for teachers to recognize the differences in dialects and help students make connections between their dialect and Standard American English (SAE).

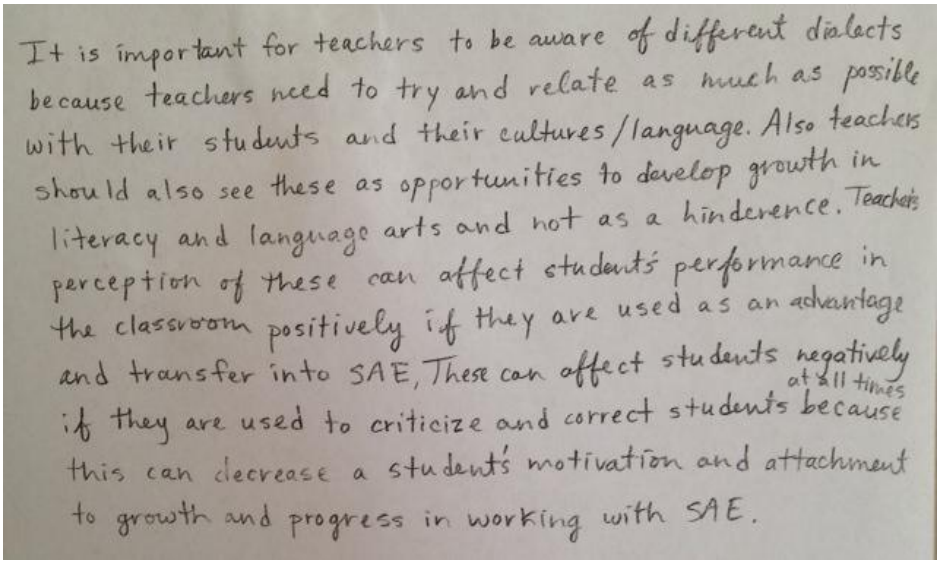
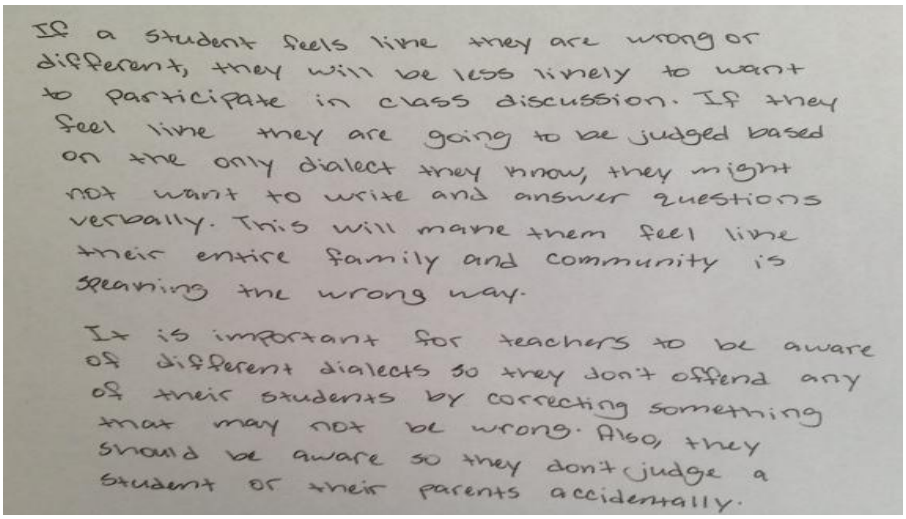

It is important for teachers to be aware of different dialects because teachers need to try and relate as much as possible with their students and their cultures/language. Also teachers should also see these as opportunities to develop growth in literacy and language arts and not as a hinderence. Teachers perception of these can affect students performance in the classroom positively if they are used as an advantage and transfer into SAE, These can affect students negatively if they are used to criticize and correct students at all times because this can decrease a students motivation and attachment to growth and progress in working with SAE.

FIGURE 4.9 Harold's Written Reflection

Harold discusses the role that teacher perception can play in situations where students speak dialects other than SAE. He recognizes that linguistic differences do not necessarily equate to disadvantages. If students are taught to code switch between their own dialects and SAE in relevant contexts, it can lead to improved academic growth and a stronger regard for their native dialect. Often students who can seamlessly code switch between different dialects have a stronger command of each dialect than those who are not equipped with the tools to do so (Wheeler, 2008).

Harold's reflection shows a developing understanding of culturally responsive teaching. He is starting to recognize the benefits of building on students' cultural strengths to further their academic progress. Katie's reflection echoed Harold's sentiments. Katie added however, her interpretation of the danger involved when teachers make judgments about students and their parents based on their dialect (see Figure 4.10).


If a student feels like they are wrong or different, they will be less likely to want to participate in class discussion. If they feel like they are going to be judged based on the only dialect they know, they might not want to write and answer questions verbally. This will make them feel like their entire family and community is speaking the wrong way.

It is important for teachers to be aware of different dialects so they don't offend any of their students by correcting something that may not be wrong. Also, they should be aware so they don't judge a student or their parents accidentally.

FIGURE 4.10 Katie's written reflection

Katie understands that non-standard dialect speakers may shut down if they are made to feel uncomfortable about the way they speak. Well-meaning teachers who correct students' speech without explanation can do more harm than good when it comes to modifying children's speech patterns for certain situations (Wheeler, 2008). Katie's reflection demonstrates a deeper understanding about the instructional needs of dialect speakers. In this case, Katie continues to develop her understanding of what it means to be a culturally responsive literacy teacher.

Most of the participants viewed oral language as an important component of literacy instruction. They all saw a need for teachers to have knowledge about and respect for the nonstandard dialects and other linguistic differences that students bring to the classroom. Nancy discussed the risks involved when teachers make judgments about the type of instruction a student needs based on their dialect or speech patterns. Tonia divulged similar concerns about teachers inadvertently contributing to non-standard English speakers' low performance on literacy tasks because of their lack of knowledge about students' dialects. In general, this lesson and reflective activity seemed to contribute to the informants developing understandings about culturally responsive pedagogy.

During a subsequent class lesson on cultural bias within literacy assessment, the students were asked to review reading and writing assessments from the state mandated End of Grade Tests. The students examined actual test items from 2008 state EOG reading exams for 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades. While reviewing the testing materials, the students were asked to consider the cultural content of the exams. Specifically, the students were encouraged to reflect on the way test items may be confusing or incorrectly

interpreted by students whose cultures were different from the dominant mainstream culture often reflected in standardized assessments.

One particular test item for fourth grade sparked an interesting discussion among the preservice teachers. The testing item featured nonsense words that the participants felt hindered a student's ability to be successful on the assessment. In the dialogue that follows, the participants debate the appropriateness of the passage for struggling readers or second language learners. Some of the informants' critiques of the passage present a strong case for its dismissal. The participants' arguments exhibit a developing understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy and the need for culturally relevant instruction materials and assessments as can be seen in this exchange.

What were your thoughts about this testing item?

Nancy: We had a hard time with the questions…. except Harold who is a superman test-taker (giggles). This giant speaks in all kinds of gibberish, and we thought that was unnecessary, some of us did anyway because this is about comprehension, this is not the decoding and phonetics skills tests!

Dana: ELL's and struggling readers are going to spend more time trying to decode those words than answering the questions.

Nancy: They're gonna look for some other kind of meaning other than just gibberish. They're gonna try and relate it to some other word and they're gonna waste so much time and energy on that that they aren't going to get the rest of it. I did! I'm an adult. I sat there and

spent a lot of time trying to read through them, so I think it's just ridiculous that to even add that with third graders.

Hannah: I didn't even know how…It's so random! There are like, no other words around them [the nonsense words] to build off of to figure out that word, so it's just random. They could have shown another…

Harold: (interrupts) But don't you think that's something they should know at this point? That sometimes there are words, like in Dr. Seuss, that don't make sense. I brought this point up earlier. This isn't so that they can just coast through and get them all right. It's supposed to be challenging and for fourth graders.

Nancy: Yeah.

Jennifer: He is right, maybe they should know it, but shouldn't they put a little bit less in there? So put some in there, but maybe take a little out…

The Giant Who Threw Tantrums

by David Harrison

At the foot of Thistle Mountain lay a village.

In the village lived a little boy who liked to go walking. One Saturday afternoon he was walking in the woods when he was startled by a terrible noise.

He scrambled quickly behind a bush.

Before long a huge giant came stamping down the path.

He looked upset.

"Tanglebangled ringlepox!" the giant bellowed. He banged his head against a tree until the leaves shook off like snowflakes.

"Franglewhangled whippersnack!" the giant roared. Yanking up the tree, he whirled it around his head and knocked down twenty-seven other trees.

Muttering to himself, he stalked up the path towards the top of Thistle Mountain.

The little boy hurried home.

"I just saw a giant throwing a tantrum!" he told everyone in the village. They only smiled.

"There's no such thing as a giant," the mayor assured him.

"He knocked down twenty-seven trees," said the little boy.

"Must have been a tornado," the weatherman said with a nod. "Happens around here all the time."

(14) The next Saturday afternoon the little boy again went walking. Before long he heard a horrible noise. Quick as lightning, he slipped behind a tree.

Soon the same giant came storming down the path. He still looked upset.

(16) "Pollywogging frizzelsnatch!" he yelled. Throwing himself down, he pounded the ground with both fists.

Boulders bounced like hailstones.

(18) Scowling, the giant puckered his lips into an "O."

He drew in his breath sharply. It sounded like somebody slurping soup.

"Pooh!" he cried.

Grabbing his left foot with both hands, the giant hopped on his right foot up the path towards the top of Thistle Mountain.

The little boy hurried home.

"That giant's at it again," he told everyone. "He threw such a tantrum that the ground trembled!"

"Must have been an earthquake," the police chief said. "Happens around here sometimes."

The next Saturday afternoon the little boy again went walking. Before long he heard a frightening noise.

He dropped down behind a rock.

Soon the giant came fuming down the path. When he reached the little boy's rock, he puckered his lips into an "O."

He drew in his breath sharply with a loud, rushing-wind sound. "Phooey!" he cried. "I *never* get it right!"

The giant held his breath until his face turned blue and his eyes rolled up.

"Fozzlehumper backawacket!" he panted.

Then he lumbered up the path towards the top of Thistle Mountain.

The little boy followed him. Up and up and up he climbed to the very top of Thistle Mountain.

There he discovered a huge cave. A surprising sound was coming from it. The giant was crying!

"All I want is to whistle," he sighed through his tears. "But every time I try, it comes out wrong!"

The little boy had just learned to whistle. He knew how hard it could be. He stepped inside the cave.

The giant looked surprised. "How did *you* get here?"

4.11 Passage from reading comprehension EOG

Tonia: Or, what you could do is incorporate these different things into your lessons. Since you know this is going to be on the EOG, use it when you teach.

Nancy: Yeah, teach them with a book like this.

Harold: They should know though, that if there's something they don't understand in the story, they should just move on. Eventually, they have to know that…

This dialogue occurred after a class discussion regarding the cultural content of literacy assessments. At the beginning of this excerpt, the participants were unhappy with the comprehension passage they were assigned to examine. They found it confusing and unfair to students such as struggling readers or English Language Learners. It appears that the participants recognized that assessment materials can offer an advantage to students from mainstream cultures. However, in the end, the participants resolved to simply teach students how to "work around" any cultural bias they encounter on standardized tests.

While the students are developing a more complex understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy in some regards, in other ways they fail to recognize the ways in which mainstream instructional literacy practices and materials can marginalize and disadvantage students from diverse backgrounds. The informants were negatively influenced by Harold's assertion that students should be familiar with the nuance of nonsense words. Their progress in regards to developing understanding about culturally responsive pedagogy, while noteworthy at times, was less than stellar in this example.

Ongoing Understandings: Resolve

As the course came to an end, each of the participants was interviewed a final time. Harold and Dana were interviewed together as were Katie and Nancy. During the final interview, the participants were asked to reflect on their experiences in the course and in their elementary classrooms. The subjects were encouraged to consider the big ideas that they felt they would take away from the course. Additionally the participants were asked to describe how they felt their understanding of culturally responsive teaching had changed over the course of the semester.

Most of the participants recalled their unfamiliarity with culturally responsive pedagogy at the start of the study. "I've heard about CRT in other classes this semester, but this is the first semester I had ever heard about it. I hadn't heard about it all before this semester and I still haven't heard about it outside of school." Another consistent theme in the informants' final summation of culturally responsive teaching was the notion of rejecting the status quo and helping students understand and appreciate more diverse perspectives. Harold explained this stance when asked about culturally responsive teaching in his final interview.

> Um, now I would say that CRT is really like helping the kids see that their experiences are valued and important in the classroom and that um, the social norm is not the only thing that is acceptable and appropriate, but that all the kids experiences are important and they [inaudible] who they are and also that there are many other things going on in the world to be aware of and to learn about and to appreciate and honor and respect that different people are doing different things as opposed to just what we know culturally.

Harold's statement is in accord with Ladson-Billings (2011) notion of socio-political consciousness. Ladson-Billings recommends that teachers "educate themselves about both the local sociopolitical issues of their school community and the larger

sociopolitical issues that impinge upon their students' lives (p. 41)." Harold shows a growing understanding of culturally responsive teaching and a budding grasp of what it means to adopt a sociopolitical consciousness.

Another similarity in the preservice teachers' definitions of culturally responsive teaching as described in their final interviews was a sense of resolve. At the start of the study, the preservice teachers' understandings about culturally responsive teaching showed a basic *recall* of facts. As the informants proceeded through the study, they developed a stronger sense of culturally responsive teaching through their self *reflections***.** By the end of the study nearly all of the students expressed a *resolve* to include culturally responsive teaching strategies as part of their ongoing practice. Katie's response is one example of this *resolve***.**

> Now, I'll be more aware of it [culture]. I think I would've… I would've tried to be as aware of it as possible, but I didn't really know about this stuff… no one had ever taught it to me. So I may have let it slip here and there and not known that I was maybe being unfair to some students or leaving some students out like especially with like my library in my classroom, I may have chosen all of one kind of book or all of what I like or whatever umm, but I think learning about it and seeing and how relevant it is to kids lives and learning that I need to be aware of it every day when I teach.

While most of the subjects shared Katie's sense of resolve about culturally responsive teaching and the growth they had experienced in the course, Jennifer felt her perspective remained unchanged. Jennifer saw herself as a culturally responsive educator prior to the start of the study and felt she had not changed her views because of the course.

> I don't think my understanding about CRT has really changed….probably not… because of my…like we talked about before, because of my nephew. I mean obviously he doesn't come from a different culture because he grew up with my family, but with him being Black *and* White, I just feel like I'm more accepting. I think for me it started when he was born. I think I've always been okay with

> everything like diversity or being culturally responsive, but I feel like my heart is more in it now because of my nephew.

With the exception of Jennifer, all of the subjects felt that the course helped strengthen their awareness and understanding about culturally responsive teaching. Those who were impacted most by the course suggested that they felt better prepared to incorporate their students' cultural backgrounds into the curriculum. They all shared a sense of resolve to be culturally responsive in their instructional practices.

Jennifer felt that her personal experiences with her biracial nephew had so greatly impacted her life that she was already prepared to meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds because she was not biased and had a special reason for doing so. Although she doesn't specifically mention how she will be more culturally responsive as a result of her nephew's birth and life, she is confident that she will be a more culturally sensitive educator than she would have been had she not had a biracial nephew.

From Recall to Reflection to Resolve

The majority of the participants in the study experienced noted levels of change in regards to their understandings about culturally responsive pedagogy. At the start of the study the participants' limited understandings about culturally responsive teaching led to a simple recall of facts when they were asked to define the term. As the participants encountered more information and participated in various lessons and activities about culturally responsive teaching, their definitions of culturally responsive teaching became more complex. The participants began to meaningfully reflect on the significance of culturally responsive pedagogy and its ability to empower learners from diverse backgrounds. By the end of the study, all but one of the participants developed a sense of

resolve to modify and adapt their instruction to meet the needs of their students. All of the participants vowed to become culturally responsive educators.

Theme 4: Clinical Experiences: Lesson Plans and Student-Teacher Interactions

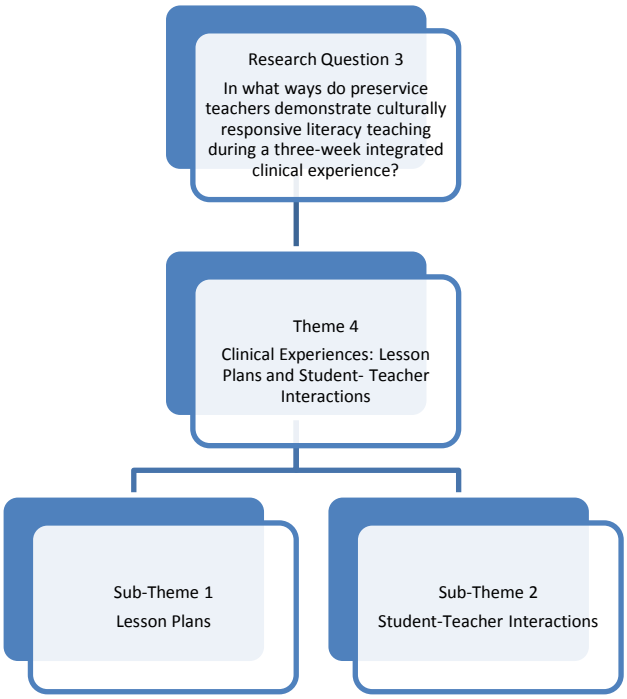


FIGURE 4.12 Research question 3:Theme and subthemes

In week six of the study, the preservice teachers began a two-week integrated clinical experience. All of the participants were involved in the Integrated Methods Block (IMB) and were enrolled in four other methods courses (math, science, social studies, reading) in addition to language arts. As part of the methods block, students were granted a two-week course release during which they completed a 30-hour minimum clinical experience. The students were assigned several projects to complete during the two weeks. The participants were also required to design and implement four lesson plans

during weeks two and three of the clinical experience. The lessons plans that the participants created were collected and analyzed to determine their cultural relevance to the students in the elementary classroom. Figure 4.12 illustrates the relationship between research question one and its relevant theme and subthemes.

Lesson Plans

During the first week of the clinical experience, all of the participants submitted two lesson plans that they planned to implement the following week. All of the lessons were written in one of two required formats from the elementary education program at the college; direct instruction or structured discovery instruction. In most cases, the lessons had already been reviewed by at least one other professor from the IMB. All 14 lessons were found to include the required components for the elementary education direct instruction and structured discovery instruction formats. However, only four of the 14 lesson plans contained a culturally relevant focus or some aspect of culturally responsive teaching.

Table 3. Culturally Responsive Teaching Present in Clinical Lesson Plans Week 1of Clinical Experience

Participant	Lesson #1	Lesson #2
Jennifer	None	None
Harold	Culturally Responsive Focus	None
Tonia	None	None
Dana	None	Culturally Responsive Components
Katie	None	None

Nancy	Culturally Responsive Focus	None
Hannah	None	Culturally Responsive Components

At the end of the first week of clinical experiences, I held a seminar with the participants to discuss their first week in the field. The preservice teachers were full of excitement and energy about the time they were spending in their elementary classrooms. As a group, we discussed the lack of culturally responsive focus in the lesson plans they submitted. The students admitted that their focus while writing the lesson plans had been on the content itself and they had not taken into consideration how culturally relevant the lessons were.

The classroom teachers with whom the participants were partnered displayed a great deal of concern about the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Many of the cooperating teachers were using the CCSS for the first time and were apprehensive about "getting it right." This trepidation had been passed on to the preservice teachers who felt pressure to address the standards in a way that would satisfy both their professors and their cooperating teachers. Katie explains,

> My CT was super nice, but she was stressed about the CCSS. She kept asking me about what I was doing to address her standards and I guess I just wanted to make her happy and do a good job.

Tonia's cooperating teacher was also concerned about the CCSS. "He's the grade level chair, so he wanted to set a good example for the other 4th grade teachers. He said they were all nervous because everything was so different. I didn't really have much say in the way the lesson eventually turned out." Hannah admitted that she simply "forgot

about" being culturally responsive when she went to write her lesson plans. "I know it sounds bad, but I just didn't think about it. I had so much going on and I wanted to make it fun and engaging and so I kept looking for ideas to make it better, like on the Internet and stuff."

During the first week of the clinical experience, the preservice teachers failed to use significant amounts of culturally responsive strategies in their lesson plans. The participants' focus on pleasing their cooperating teachers took precedence over the need to adapt their lesson plans to incorporate the elementary students' cultural backgrounds. The preservice teachers' lesson plans were inadequate and lacked instruction that was inclusive of the ethnic and linguistic differences that were represented among the students in their classrooms. The following analytic memo taken on October 19, 2012 illustrates my thoughts during the two-week urban clinical experience.

Despite my attempts to observe all seven of the participants this week, only two of them actually taught a lesson. The other five are planning to teach all four lessons in week three of the experience. I was only able to observe the other participants as they interacted with students individually or in small groups. The two students that I observed teach a whole group lesson, Jennifer and Tonia, failed to include a culturally responsive focus within their lessons. I'm frustrated that there appears to be very little transfer between the things we are discussing in class and the students. (analytic memo)

The following week, the participants were required to submit their remaining lesson plans. Again, each participant submitted two lesson plans. This time there was a noted increase in the number of lessons that were designed to provide culturally relevant instruction for the elementary students. Although only two of the plans had a strong

culturally responsive focus, nine of the lesson plans contained culturally responsive elements in one or more components of the plan.

Table 4. Culturally Responsive Teaching Present in Clinical Lesson Plans Week 2 of clinical experience

Participant	Lesson One	Lesson Two
Jennifer	None	None
Harold	Culturally Responsive Components	Culturally Responsive Components
Tonia	None	Culturally Responsive Components
Dana	Culturally Responsive Components	Culturally Responsive Components
Katie	Culturally Responsive Focus	None
Nancy	Culturally Responsive Focus	None
Hannah	Culturally Responsive Components	Culturally Responsive Components

During the 2nd weekly seminar, the students commented on their intentional inclusion of culturally responsive teaching. Hannah relayed her guilt about not being more intentional with her use of culturally responsive pedagogy the previous week. She admits to trying harder during week two to design lessons that represented her students' backgrounds.

> Well, I felt bad after last week, so I wanted to make sure I did a better job of including students' background into the lessons. It was a lot harder than I thought it would be. I had to think about it and ask my roommate for advice. I was pretty

> happy with what I came up with in the end though. My students were shocked that I had examples from their community. I could tell they were like, 'how did you know that?

While it appears that Hannah primarily altered her lesson plans due to her regret about not including more culturally responsive elements the previous week, she was clearly pleased with the outcome. The fact that her students responded so favorably to her lesson encouraged Hannah to continue designing culturally relevant lesson plans. Harold also received positive feedback from his students when he modified his math lesson to include problems related to the children's ethnicity. He described the experience during the second weekly seminar.

> It [social studies lesson plan] was easy to incorporate culturally responsive teaching into because of the topic. It was really already about culture, so it didn't take much extra effort. My math lesson was a lot harder to do. It felt like a stretch, but I did try. The kids loved it though! They were totally psyched up about it.

Like Hannah, Harold made a concerted effort to be more culturally responsive in the lessons he designed during the second week of the study as compared to the first week. His students in turn enjoyed the lessons and performed well on the assessment he created. Not all of the participants had instant success when creating their culturally responsive lessons. Tonia sought help when she struggled to make her science lesson culturally responsive, "After I talked to you, it started to click a little more. At first I was thinking 'there ain't no way I can do nothing with this science lesson. It's just science. I mean, how do you change that?" Although it wasn't easy, Tonia managed to include a few culturally responsive examples and questions in the science lesson she created during week two of the clinical experience. The following analytic memo taken during the second week in the urban clinical experience documents my thoughts regarding the participants use of culturally responsive teaching in their lesson plans.

> *They definitely did a better job of making their lesson plans culturally responsive this week, but I get the feeling they did it for me. Only two mentioned the impact that it had on their students' engagement in the lesson. I wish I had asked more about the elementary students' response to the culturally relevant lesson as well as the participants' perceptions about the benefits of using these type of lessons with students from diverse backgrounds.* (analytic memo)

The focus on Common Core State Standards during the first week of the field experience left little room for culturally responsive instruction in the participants' lesson plans. Despite the focus on culturally responsive pedagogy in the college classroom, there was little transfer into the actual lesson plans written by the participants. The competing demands on classroom teachers often detract from other instructional goals. By the second week, the participants began to include elements of culturally responsive teaching into their lessons. A few of the students created lessons that had an overall culturally responsive focus. In general, the lessons plans that were written during the first week of the field experience were less culturally responsive than those that were written in the second week.

Student-Teacher Interactions

The preservice teachers reported positive interactions between themselves and the elementary students during their clinical experiences. Data collected from the elementary classroom observations and the student reflection journals suggested a consistent pattern of interactions between the participants and the elementary students that involved spontaneous culturally responsive instruction. Thus, the interactions between the preservice teachers and the students in the classrooms where they taught served as

another method in which the preservice teachers displayed their cultural responsiveness during the clinical experience.

Several of the participants described situations in which they worked one on one with students to offer additional support. Katie discussed her interaction with one of her students during writing workshop. The student was an English Language Learner (ELL) and was not yet proficient in English. Katie adopted a culturally responsive stance as she assisted the student with his writing. She described the encounter during the second weekly seminar.

> He [the student] was born and raised in Italy and was fluent in Italian and he actually was writing a story in Italian the other day. He's still learning to write in English, but I could see that he was an excellent writer in Italian. I don't know what was on the page but he wrote a lot and umm, I asked him to read it to me in Italian and then tell me what it was about in English. We worked together to translate some of it in English, but I made a big deal to the other kids about what he wrote in his Native language so that they could see him as successful and he could feel successful because he really is. You should have seen that Italian story. I think he's a great writer!

Although the student she assisted was not a fluent writer in English, Katie highlighted his strengths in his native language to help improve his written communication. She employed culturally responsive strategies as she celebrated the student's native language and also helped him make correlations between what he wrote in Italian and the SAE version of his text. Hannah's interaction with the student from Italy provides another example of how the preservice teachers displayed their cultural responsiveness during the clinical experience.

Harold also showed signs of cultural responsiveness during the clinical experience. He had a similar experience to the one Katie described with the student from Italy. While helping a Hispanic student who was struggling in math, Harold took

advantage of his Spanish speaking skills to help encourage and assist the little girl. Harold adhered to the culturally responsive tenet of embracing students' cultural background (Gay, 1975) by incorporating her native language into the conversation he had while tutoring her in math.

> One of my teachers asked me to work one on one with a student. She was Spanish and so I started speaking in Spanish. At first she looked at me like 'how did you know that?' I said 'You speak Spanish don't you?' and then she smiled and started talking back to me. I could tell she wasn't used to anybody from school speaking Spanish. After she finally got the concept I was like 'Buen trabajo'[Good work in Spanish]. She was like my best friend every time I came to class after that day. I think she felt special cuz she could talk to me in Spanish and no one else in the room could.

Harold was able to form a bond with a Spanish-speaking student who struggled academically. His spontaneous decision to speak to offer her assistance in Spanish had long lasting positive effects. Not only is the student improving in math, at the teacher's request, Harold still visits the school to help her and another little boy from the classroom next door to provide additional academic support. Harold demonstrated his knowledge of culturally responsive pedagogy during his encounter with a student during the clinical experience.

Culturally responsive instruction was also at the root of an encounter that Nancy had with a student during the clinical experience. In Nancy's case the student's family had recently immigrated to the United States. Nancy used her traveling expertise to help integrate the student's culture into the social studies unit she was teaching to the class. Like Harold and Jennifer, Nancy displayed elements of culturally responsive instruction in her interactions with the student. She described the situation during the second weekly seminar.

> There was a little girl. This was her first year in American schools. She just moved from, she's uhh, from Africa uhhhh can't remember what country and umm so she's having trouble speaking because she has a very strong accent and I believe also they speak another language at home. Her mother knows basic English, but she is not able to help her with her work or anything because she doesn't know English completely, she's still learning. So I worked with her a lot. I told her about my trips overseas and how scary it was for me to be in a place where I didn't speak the language. So in Social studies when we were doing the voting process, I asked her if she knew about voting in her country. She didn't know that much, but I could tell she was happy I asked about it. The next day, she came back with this information printed from the Internet about their voting process. She has a big brother. I know he helped her. It made me so proud to share the information with the other kids. She was just beaming that day!

Many of the participants in the study made culturally responsive instructional decisions as they helped students from diverse backgrounds in the elementary classrooms during their clinical experiences. These student teacher interactions demonstrated the participants' receptiveness to culturally responsive teaching and their desire to help others succeed. The theme of positive, culturally responsive student teacher interactions was evident in the classroom observations, final interviews, and reflection journals. The preservice teachers displayed a willingness to use culturally responsive instructional practices to benefit the elementary school children.

Summary

This study describes what happened when seven preservice teachers in a language arts methods course were introduced to culturally responsive pedagogy. An analysis of the data revealed four central themes: *1. The Role of Cultural Background*, 2. *Personal Connections and the Desire to Help*, 3.*Understandings About Culturally `Responsive Teaching*, and 4. *Clinical Experiences: Lesson Plans and Student Teacher Interactions*. Themes one and two provided findings related to research question one: *How does cultural background influence preservice teachers' receptiveness to culturally responsive*

pedagogy? These themes illustrate how the participants' cultural backgrounds influence their receptiveness to culturally responsive pedagogy. The findings from theme three provide context for research question two: *In what ways do preservice teachers' understandings about culturally responsive teaching change as they matriculate through a language arts methods course?* Theme three documents the participants' changing understandings of culturally responsive teaching throughout the study. Theme four addresses research question three: *In what ways do preservice teachers demonstrate culturally responsive literacy teaching during a three-week integrated clinical experience?* This theme portrays the ways in which preservice teachers exhibit culturally responsive teaching strategies during an urban field experience. The next chapter includes a discussion of the themes as it relates to current research, implications regarding the findings, and recommendations for future research in this area.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In chapter four, I described the significant findings from my study. I introduced four themes that emerged from the data collected in the study and provided detailed examples to support those themes. The four major themes that emerged from the data are: *1. The* R*ole of Cultural Background*, 2. *Personal Connections and the Desire to Help*, 3.*Understandings About Culturally `Responsive Teaching*, and 4. *Clinical Experiences: Lesson Plans and Student Teacher Interactions*. In this chapter, I closely examine the major themes identified in chapter four to draw conclusions regarding their significance. I also delineate implications based on the findings and outline the contributions that this study makes to the field of teacher education with regard to culturally responsive pedagogy and literacy instruction. I conclude the chapter with a personal reflection and suggest future research studies that will expand upon and enrich the information that was gained throughout this study.

The purpose of this study was to explore the process that preservice teachers go through as they become familiar with culturally responsive pedagogy in a language arts methods course. The study also sought to examine the relationship between preservice teachers' cultural backgrounds and their receptiveness to culturally responsive pedagogy. Finally, I investigated the ways in which preservice teachers adopted culturally responsive pedagogy during a three-week clinical experience.

According to 2010 census data, the United States population is becoming increasingly more diverse. As a result, the demographics of students in American public schools are more varied than ever. The teaching force however, remains relatively unchanged as White, middle-class, females account for more than 85% of public school educators (Castro, 2011; Sleeter, 2008). Teachers in today's public schools must be prepared to provide instruction that is successful in meeting the needs of diverse student populations. Failure to adopt culturally responsive pedagogy could render school districts incapable of reaching students of color. Worse still, the indoctrination of Eurocentric curriculum that promotes mainstream values and morals will serve to isolate traditionally marginalized populations and maintain the chasm between the academic performance of White students and students of color. As such, educational scholars support the notion that teacher education programs contribute to the low performance of students from diverse backgrounds (Bennett, 2010; Gilmore-Skepple, 2011). Colleges of Education must rise to meet the challenges of preparing teachers to meet the academic needs of students from all cultural backgrounds.

This study was designed to examine the process that preservice teachers go through as they become familiar with the concept of culturally responsive teaching. The data collected in this study included interviews, cultural autobiographies, narratives, written reflections, classroom documents, lesson plans, and classroom observations. Using a constant comparative method of analysis, I identified four major findings in the study: *The Role Of Cultural Backgrounds, Personal Connections and the Desire to Help, Developing Understandings About Culturally Responsive Teaching, and Clinical*

Experiences: Lesson Plans and Student Teacher Interactions. Table 4 illustrates how each significant finding relates to the research questions guiding this study.

Receptiveness to culturally responsive teaching

The preservice teachers in the study were all relatively open to the idea of culturally responsive pedagogy at the start of the study. Although they were not entirely familiar with the term, they claimed to see the importance of designing instruction that integrates students' culture into the classroom and promotes the academic achievement of students of color. The preservice teachers' cultural backgrounds played a significant role in their overall receptiveness to culturally responsive teaching. Five elements-religion, socio-economic status, family structure, geographic location, and education- influenced the way participants viewed culturally responsive pedagogy.

Religion

Beliefs about religion compelled certain preservice teachers to consider the ways they would approach this topic in their classroom. Some students felt that religion had no place in the classroom. These students indicated that they would be unwilling to acknowledge or celebrate religious holidays in the classroom. What the students failed to consider was how their own beliefs about religion may undermine students whose religions affect day-to-day aspects of their lives such as eating habits, dress, appearance, school attendance on religious holidays, or beliefs that stand in opposition to those of main stream society. For students who adhere to religions that conflict with the European values upheld in school, "regular" classroom activities may be offensive or contradictory. When the preservice teachers vowed to exclude religion from their classrooms, they

failed to consider how the standard curriculum they planned to uphold may unknowingly support or oppose certain religions.

Conversely, the students with strong religious convictions professed the benefits of having a relationship with God. Although these preservice teachers were steadfast in their personal beliefs, they were confident in their ability to accept students whose beliefs may differ from their own. However, these participants admitted to having limited knowledge of other religions and in one case suggested that they viewed other religions from the perspective of their own. For these preservice teachers, bias, both overt and covert, can impact the decisions they make regarding curriculum and instruction in the classroom. Preservice teachers who view students through their own religious lens may unknowingly impart their values and beliefs on to students (Ladson-Billings, 2011). This may lead to cultural conflict between teachers and students from diverse background and negatively impact the students' academic performance (Kesler, 2010).

Geographic location

The majority of the participants in this study were raised in small rural towns. As such, these students had limited interactions with people from different cultural backgrounds during childhood. The participants reported viewing the way they lived as "normal," giving little regard to the way others lived. This limited outlook on life impacted the participants in different ways and for very different reasons. Harold was dissatisfied with the way people in his town lived and wanted a different lifestyle for himself. Hannah had an innate curiosity about different geographic locations that fueled her strong desire to learn about others. Both Nancy and Katie saw other ways of life through their travels and realized how fortunate their lives were in comparison to others

living around the world. Dana and Tonia were impacted by the need to assimilate into different environments when their families moved as children. Jennifer felt that despite growing up on a farm, the birth of her nephew gave her insight into two different worlds: the one she grew up in and the one in which her nephew lives.

For varied reasons, the significance of the participants' geographic location as children plays a role in their approach to teaching and receptiveness to culturally responsive teaching. A teacher's geographic origin is often closely connected to their beliefs and values (Lopez, 2011). Lopez (2011) examined the impact culturally responsive pedagogy presented by an African-Canadian teacher to a diverse group of students from varying geographic locations. She found that the teacher encountered obstacles in her attempts to present culturally responsive pedagogy, one of which was directly connected to the geographic origin of the students and herself (Lopez, 2011). As future teachers, the participants in this study will encounter children from different geographic locations. If preservice teachers are to acknowledge and accept the perspectives of students from geographic locations that are different from their own, they must work to purposely recognize the beliefs, values and biases that govern their own day-to-day interactions with others (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2011). This study demonstrates how teacher educators can develop coursework that assists preservice teachers in making meaningful connections between their geographic location and their perspectives on diversity and culturally responsive instruction.

Socioeconomic Status and Family Structure

Being members of low-income families seemed to give several of the participants an appreciation for students living in poverty. The students whose families struggled

during their youth were openly receptive to learning about culturally responsive pedagogy. Those students were also more adept at identifying cultural bias within school structures, curriculum, and materials. The participants who grew up in with low SES admitted to feeling a kinship towards students from poor or low-income families.

While participants from lower and working class families reported openness to culturally responsive pedagogy, they did not readily grasp more complex features of this framework. All of the participants welcomed the idea of learning about ways in which they could make accommodations to improve the overall success of students of color, but they did not all recognize the systematic marginalization of certain populations which warrants such modifications necessary. This gap is consistent with research that suggests many preservice teachers harbor a deficit mentality towards teaching students of color. Rather than seeing promise in children from diverse backgrounds, they pity the children's personal situations and in turn hold them to lower expectations (Ladson-Billings, 2011; Sleeter, 2011). This study makes a contribution to the field of urban literacy by encouraging students to consider how challenges in their own lives can help them bridge cultural and economic gaps.

Education

The participants reflected on their own educational experiences as they considered the type of teachers they hoped to become. Education was linked to the informants' receptiveness to culturally responsive teaching. Two of the subjects, Dana and Tonia attended multiple schools as children and were forced to adapt to different instructional styles. As a result, these pre-service teachers were very receptive to the idea of designing instruction that would reflect their students' personal backgrounds as well as their

individual academic needs. Nancy was homeschooled and felt that her cooperative learning experiences would contribute to her ability to adapt instruction in ways that reflect the varied cultural backgrounds of the students in her future classroom. Hannah, who attended racially segregated schools, acknowledged the disadvantages of this type of education. She promoted a course of study much different from the one she received.

The framework of culturally responsive pedagogy was appealing to those participants who felt their own educational experiences were inadequate or incomplete. For these students, culturally responsive teaching offered an alternative to the mainstream education they received as children. Despite their resolve to approach education from a culturally positive stance, prior research suggests that without continued support and education on culturally responsive pedagogy, the participants in the study will most likely replicate the type of education they received when they are left to their own devices in the classroom (Wilkinson, Morrow & Chow, 2008). If their performance during the two-week clinical experience is any indication, this will certainly hold true. The results of this study support ongoing professional development to ensure that beginning teachers have the support necessary to successfully implement culturally responsive literacy instruction.

Personal Connections and the Desire to Help

Throughout the study, the participants referred to experiences in their childhood that impacted their lives in a significant way. In several instances, the participants experienced a financial, emotional, or physical setback which left them, or members of their family, at a disadvantage. Having persevered through these experiences gave the subjects a sense of empowerment and a drive to succeed. An example of this phenomenon occurred when Harold discussed the mental illness from which his father

suffered for his entire life. Watching the struggles his family endured as a result of his father's mental illness initiated a sense of confidence and preparedness on the part of Harold. He posited that the difficulties he overcame as a child would strengthen his ability to connect with children who experience similar tribulations.

The data suggests that the preservice teachers in this study who encountered significant obstacles in their own lives were receptive and eager to adopt the principles of culturally responses teaching. There was a similar trend among the subjects regarding their desire to help others. While it is fair to assume that most teachers enter the profession because they exhibit some sense of compassion and concern for others, several of the participants in this study described a strong desire to help those in need. They specifically spoke about wanting to help students who "struggled", were "different," "stood out" or "need somebody in their life to show they care". The participants who felt driven to help others in need were also receptive to the use of culturally responsive teaching in the elementary classroom. After examining the data collected from all of the participants, there was clear evidence to suggest that preservice teachers with some type of personal connection to underserved populations felt an overwhelming desire to provide assistance to students with similar characteristics. This also increased the students' receptiveness to culturally responsive pedagogy.

Despite the preservice teachers' desire to assist students who had experienced some form of misfortune, they appeared to view these students from a deficit perspective. The preservice teachers saw themselves as potential heroes poised to come in and rescue students who need to be saved. The preservice teachers failed to consider the strengths that low-income or disadvantaged students possess. Rather, the preservice teachers

assumed that these students were all in a position of weakness and would require healing and assistance from a stronger, more knowledgeable source. This sentiment appeared to be universal among the participants in the study. Students of teachers with a deficit perspective of their strengths and abilities are less likely to reach their full potential (Brown & Tylka; 2011; Delpit, 1995; Fryberg, Troop-Gordon, D'arrisso, Flores, Ponizovskiy, Ranney, & Burack, 2013). At-risk student populations flourish and thrive under the watch of educators that recognize their inherent strengths and the cultural richness they bring to the classroom (Brown & Tylka, 2011 ; Fryberg et. al, 2013).

Changing understandings

The study sought to examine the process that preservice teachers go through as they become familiar with culturally responsive teaching during a language arts methods course. At the beginning of the study, the participants were vague on their definitions of culturally responsive teaching. The major consistency in the participants' definitions of culturally responsive teaching was the notion that culturally responsive teachers are aware of the cultural backgrounds of the students in their classrooms. Additionally, the participants suggested that being a culturally responsive educator involved active involvement on the part of students. In other words, the preservice teachers felt that students should be allowed to share their cultural backgrounds and perspectives with other students in the class. The initial definitions of culturally responsive teaching in no way addressed the actual instructional strategies or techniques that culturally responsive teachers use to promote the academic achievement of students of color. The participants also neglected to address the ways in which culturally responsive teachers view

themselves or the students they teach-both key factors in identifying culturally responsive educators (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2000, 2011).

The preservice teachers' initial understandings about culturally responsive teaching suggest their unfamiliarity with the term. Two of the participants reported having never heard the term culturally responsive teaching before beginning the language arts course. Two others admitted having not heard the term prior to the current semester. The remaining participants indicated that they were familiar with similar terms (diversity, multicultural education) which they felt were similar, if not the same, as culturally responsive teaching. Thus, all of the participants were only beginning to grasp the concept of culturally responsive pedagogy at the start of this study. The participants' limited understanding of culturally responsive teaching at the start of the study is somewhat justified given their exposure to the topic. However, the lack of knowledge about culturally responsive pedagogy among preservice teachers enrolled in a teacher education program aimed at preparing teachers for work with diverse learners yields further implications. If preservice teachers are to successfully meet the needs of students from varying cultural backgrounds they must be equipped with the tools necessary to accomplish this task (Rosenberg, 2003; Waddell, Edwards, & Underwood, 2008). Information about culturally responsive pedagogy, as well as other equity pedagogies must be dispersed in multiple courses and formats throughout a teacher education program (Rosenberg, 2003; Waddell, Edwards, & Underwood, 2008). It is counterproductive to have such vital information restricted to one or two courses within the program.

As the study continued, the preservice teachers' understandings about culturally responsive teaching expanded. They began to focus on the instructional aspects of being a culturally responsive teacher. The participants' modified their former definitions of culturally responsive teaching to include an emphasis on the type of materials, curriculum, and instructional strategies. The participants suggested that culturally responsive educators consider the culture of the students in their classroom when designing their instruction. While the participants' understandings about culturally responsive teaching showed this new understanding, they still included a focus on awareness and sharing when defining the term. The preservice teachers also made assumptions regarding the use and appropriateness of certain types of instructional tools.

Like the preservice teachers in this study, many educators spend too little time considering the overall impact of the instructional tools they adopt in their classrooms (Hughes-Hassell & Cox, 2010). When students from diverse backgrounds encounter trade books, textbooks, or assessment materials that conflict with their on cultural beliefs or values, the results can prove detrimental to their success. In some cases, well-meaning educators make attempts to purchase educational materials that are inclusive of various cultures, but fail to recognize the messages being sent about the cultures represented. Based on the comments of the participants in this study, they fell into this category of educators with good intentions, but poor execution of culturally responsive practice. This study supports the use of culturally responsive literacy instruction with preservice teachers. It outlined several specific strategies for helping preservice teachers become familiar with culturally responsive pedagogy. The participants' reactions indicate the

need for ongoing integration of the ideas presented in the language arts methods course documented in this study.

By the end of the study, the participants had been involved in a variety of classroom lessons and activities designed to increase their awareness and understanding about culturally responsive teaching. The preservice teachers had also spent a great deal of time reflecting on their own background experiences as they considered the impact of culturally responsive pedagogy. Six out of seven participants were able to describe specific ways in which they felt their understanding of culturally responsive teaching changed over the course of the semester. In their final explanations of what they felt defined culturally responsive teaching, the majority of the preservice teachers focused on the importance of acknowledging students' cultural differences and celebrating those differences in the classroom. The preservice teachers offered suggestions for including culturally responsive materials as well as instructional strategies.

Also present in the preservice teachers' descriptions of culturally responsive teaching was a deficit view of students from diverse backgrounds. When discussing the role that classroom teachers play in assisting speakers of nonstandard English dialects, one of the participants remarked that students "can't help how they were raised" and "shouldn't be punished for how they were raised." In this statement, the subject is suggesting that a student's upbringing may be different from the dominate or mainstream way of life, but it isn't his or her fault. In this way, the participant is regarding the student's lifestyle as subpar, but capable of improvement if addressed accurately. The participants' comment suggests that while the informants made changes in their approach

to culturally responsive pedagogy, some still harbored feelings of bias with regard to cultural practices and beliefs that differ from their own.

Although there was noted change in the definitions of culturally responsive teaching provided by the preservice teachers in the beginning and end of the study, there were startling features that remained present in some of the participants' final interviews. Despite studying the importance of modifying instruction to reflect the cultural backgrounds of students in the classroom, Harold still hinted at the strong desire he felt to "treat everyone the same." In this way, it appears that Harold's personal experiences as the victim of bullying produced a tainted view of equity. During interviews as well as many of his written reflections, Harold described feeling like an outsider during high school. He was treated so poorly by his fellow students that he still carries feelings of resentment about his high school years. Harold's reaction suggests that our personal experiences as teachers can shape the way we view our students and may influence the ways in which those views change over time.

Jennifer, the only participant to profess that her outlook on culturally responsive teaching had not changed as a result of the course, felt that events which took place in her own life had a greater impact on her approach to teaching students from diverse backgrounds than the any of the information she had learned during the course. Jennifer's stance stemmed from the birth of her bi-racial nephew six years earlier. According to Jennifer, seeing the world from the perspective of her nephew completely changed her approach to teaching and her outlook on life. This finding suggests that certain life experiences trump what can be taught in the classroom. Nonetheless, Jennifer insisted that she would approach her instructional practice through a culturally responsive lens.

Jennifer's optimistic forecast of her role as a classroom teacher is not uncommon. Preservice and practicing teachers routinely inaccurately assess their practice of designing instruction that is inclusive and supportive of students from varying cultural backgrounds (Lazar, 2011). These teachers may also overlook the hidden biases and beliefs they harbor about people from different backgrounds. Culturally responsive teachers not only hold themselves in high regard, but also think highly of the strengths and abilities of the students they teach (Ladson-Billings, 2011). They constantly seek out ways to refine and improve their practice (Ladson-Billings, 1994; 2011). Culturally responsive teachers do not assume that their current state of knowledge regarding the work they do and the students they teach is sufficient. Rather, they aim to continually increase their knowledge base regarding the ways in which they are able to form meaningful connections between students' home and school culture (Gunn, 2010).

Culturally responsive pedagogy is a sophisticated and complex approach to educating students from diverse backgrounds. There are no prescriptions or formulas that instantly transform teachers into culturally responsive educators. Becoming culturally responsive requires the difficult work of examining one's own personal beliefs and biases about people from different cultures and strengthening ones understanding of cultures that differ from your own (Lazar, 2011; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). As exemplified by the participants in this study teacher educators can employ strategies and techniques to help teacher candidates begin the journey towards becoming culturally responsive.

Demonstrating culturally responsive literacy teaching

During the fifth and sixth week of the study, the participants were released from all of their methods courses to spend time in a local elementary school. Each of the

participants was placed in a 3rd, 4th, or 5th grade classroom. The preservice teachers were required to write four lesson plans. All four of the lessons were taught during the clinical experience. The lesson plans served as evidence of the preservice teachers' demonstration of culturally responsive teaching during the clinical experience. Throughout the experience, I observed several of the students as they taught their lessons. I was unable to observe all of them. However, I was able to hold a debriefing session with each participant within one day of teaching their lessons. I also held a group seminar with all of the participants at the end of each week.

Lesson Plans

When the students submitted their lesson plans for the first week of the clinical experience, there was a remarkable absence of culturally responsive strategies, techniques, materials, or assessment. All but four of the lesson plans were void of any culturally responsive elements. When asked about their neglect of culturally responsive pedagogy, the preservice teachers admitted to overlooking this framework when designing instruction. The participants were focused on meeting the newly introduced Common Core State Standards and gaining the approval of their cooperating teachers. The participants fell victim to many of the competing demands that teachers face as they make efforts to address essential components of the curriculum.

Although the preservice teachers were developing a better of understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy, they failed to see the value of adopting this approach to help students from diverse backgrounds achieve academic success. There was very little transfer between what students described as being important to teaching diverse student populations and what they actually incorporated into their instructional plans. The lack of

consistency on the part of the preservice teachers suggests that their developing understandings of culturally responsive teaching were still limited. Without the capacity to apply the foundations of culturally responsive pedagogy, the participants essentially possessed the most basic level of understanding of this framework.

By the second week of the clinical experience, the participants were more intentional in their use of culturally responsive pedagogy. Eleven of the 14 lesson plans submitted in week two contained some aspect of culturally responsive pedagogy. The participants offered varying explanations for the sudden increase in their use of culturally responsive pedagogy as compared to the previous week. However, there was group consensus regarding feelings of remorse about not including any culturally responsive elements in their first set of lesson plans. Despite the increase in the use of culturally responsive elements in the lesson plans submitted from week two, only two of the fourteen lesson plans had a culturally responsive focus, or a lesson in which the central theme stemmed from an intention inclusion of elementary students' culture within the lesson.

While the participants made efforts to make their lessons more culturally responsive during the second week of the clinical experience, their reasons in doing so conflict with the tenets of culturally responsive teaching. Culturally responsive teachers advocate for their students and seek opportunities to highlight and incorporate their students' culture within the curriculum (Delpit, 1995). Culturally responsive teachers believe that their students are capable of achieving high levels of success and find ways to help students reach their goals (Rychly & Graves, 2012). The participants in this study reported taking a more culturally responsive approach because of feelings of guilt about

not doing so the previous week. Their actions indicate a disconnect with the tenets of culturally responsive teaching. This suggests the need for ongoing instruction on culturally responsive pedagogy throughout the teacher education program.

Student-Teacher Interactions

The interactions between the participants in the study and the elementary students in the classrooms where they completed clinicals served as another example of how the preservice teachers displayed culturally responsiveness during the clinical experience. There was evidence in the data to suggest that the preservice teachers engaged in spontaneous culturally responsive instruction while completing their clinical experiences in the elementary school classrooms. While interacting with the students they taught, the preservice teachers often incorporated cultural aspects from the children's background to reinforce the concepts being presented. This visual display of culturally responsive pedagogy indicates that the subjects were able to think critically about the most appropriate and effective type of instruction they could employ to meet the academic needs of the students in their classrooms.

When working one on one with a non-native English speaker, Katie helped the student translate his writing from Italian to English. Likewise, Harold communicated with a Spanish speaking student in her native tongue as he helped her comprehend the math word problems she was struggling with. Nancy allowed an immigrant student to share the government election process from her country of birth with the other students in the class. All of these examples demonstrate how unplanned student teacher interactions allowed the preservice teachers to incorporate students' background into instruction. In

doing so, the participants illustrated their cultural responsiveness during the two week clinical experience.

Implications

The findings in this study have important implications for teacher education programs, educational scholars, classroom teachers, school administrators and other educational leaders. As we seek to prepare teachers to meet the academic needs of students from diverse backgrounds, we must remain mindful of the factors that impede their progress. The cultural mismatch that exists between the overwhelmingly White middle class teachers and the growing numbers of students of colors in America's public schools warrants time and attention. While many cultural issues impact student performance, the preparation of culturally responsive teachers is an indispensable factor in bridging the divide in the academic performance of White students and students of color. Discovering ways to assist teachers in finding ways to reach students from traditionally marginalized populations overcoming historical barriers that prevent them from must remain on the forefront of teacher education.

Recommendations for teacher education programs

The need for culturally responsive teaching across the curriculum

In order to effectively communicate the value of culturally responsive pedagogy, teacher training institutions have an obligation to provide students with a balanced educational program which includes facets of culturally responsive teaching throughout the curriculum (Wadell, Edwards, & Underwood, 2008). Several participants in this study had little exposure to culturally responsive teaching outside of their language arts methods course. This isolated introduction to such a complex and expansive pedagogy

left some of the participants with a limited perspective on the topic. Without multiple opportunities to practice, engage, experiment, apply, and reflect on culturally responsive pedagogy, preservice teachers are likely to disregard the importance of using this framework to educate students from diverse backgrounds.

Beginning teachers enter the classroom with a multitude of requirements, duties, expectations, and obligations placed on them by their school districts. As they attempt to navigate the landscape of assessments, curriculum, and standards, they make critical decisions about what to include in their daily instruction. When teacher education programs fail to present culturally responsive pedagogy to preservice teachers as an integral component to their success with students of color, teacher candidates are likely to regard it as indispensable. With considerable pressure to address other critical components of the school program, preservice teachers will undoubtedly abandon attempts to be culturally responsive in lieu of implementing other essential facets of the curriculum.

In this study, preservice teachers included little to no culturally responsive teaching elements in their lesson plans during the first week of their clinical field experience. In that short period of time, the subjects were overwhelmed with the duties and expectations of them as student teachers. They chose to exclusively focus on the Common Core State Standards and discount the importance of infusing culturally responsive practices within their instruction. The implications behind this seemingly simple act are significant. If a majority of preservice and early career inservice teachers adopt a similar mentality to the teacher candidates in this study, the number of students that are consequenatly affected will be significant.

In order to prevent the continuation of such neglect, preservice teachers must recognize the potentially catastrophic results of excluding certain student populations from the curriculum, materials, and assessment used in the classroom. Teacher education programs hold the responsibility of helping preservice teachers adopt this stance. One way of accomplishing this task is to infuse culturally responsive pedagogy throughout the curriculum. With rich, in-depth knowledge of culturally responsive pedagogy presented in multiple contexts overtime, preservice teachers are more likely to espouse an intricate, sustained understanding of the benefits of culturally responsive teaching and in turn implement instruction that is relevant to the cultural backgrounds of the students they teach.

The Three R's

As the participants in this study matriculated through a language arts methods course designed to increase their competency with culturally responsive pedagogy, they progressed through three distinct stages of acceptance as it relates to culturally responsive pedagogy. First, the participants exhibited a basic recall of facts regarding culturally responsive pedagogy. When asked to define culturally responsive pedagogy, subjects who fell within the recall stage simply regurgitated information or specific facts that had been presented in the assigned readings or during class. The students professed to have an understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy; however, their knowledge base was narrow in scope. The recall stage is comparable to the remembering and understanding levels of the new Bloom's taxonomy and suggests that mastery of a complex framework such as culturally responsive pedagogy requires time, attention, and experience.

As the participants entered the next stage of familiarity with culturally responsive teaching- reflect- they began to demonstrate a more complex understanding of the framework. During the reflect stage, participants made clear connections to their own backgrounds and began to consider the ways in which their own experiences have influenced their approach to teaching. As a result of their reflective connections, participants were able to engage more deeply with the key tenets of culturally responsive pedagogy. The behaviors displayed by participants in the reflect stage are consistent with the applying and analyzing levels of the revised Bloom's taxonomy. The parallel between the applying and analyzing levels of Bloom's taxonomy and the reflect stage indicate that more complex understandings of culturally responsive pedagogy can only be achieved through significant reflection and personal consideration on the ways in which experiences guide our thoughts and behaviors both inside and outside of the classroom.

For most of the informants, participation in the study ignited a sense of resolve to implement culturally responsive pedagogy into their instructional practice. Actualization of the resolve stage was characterized by a combined sense of drive and obligation to adhere to the tenets of culturally responsive pedagogy. The participants reported a commitment to fulfilling the criteria set forth by proponents of culturally responsive pedagogy. Likewise, during the evaluating level of the revised Bloom's taxonomy, students are engaged in the process of applying criteria for and judging the value of specific ideas. When considering the connection between the resolve stage and the evaluating and analyzing levels of Bloom's, one can hypothesize that adherence to culturally responsive pedagogy is incumbent upon the ability to synthesize and make

judgments regarding its relevance and significance for improving the academic achievement of students of color.

Although the participants within this study progressed through three distinct stages as they grappled with their understanding and acceptance of culturally responsive pedagogy, a review of the research supports a need for progression to a fourth stage, react (Bennett, 2010; Sleeter, 2011) . In this stage, participants would take action to execute the strategies to which they committed themselves during the resolve stage. The react stage moves beyond resolve by producing a tangible outcome to illustrate progress. Likewise, the highest level of Bloom's taxonomy, creating, involves the development or construction of a product to illustrate mastery of a concept. In this way, students use all of their knowledge and familiarity with a concept to demonstrate their attainment of it. The implications behind this notion advocate a need to have educators produce artifacts in the form of lessons, instructional tools, educational resources and materials, etc. to accompany their transition into the react stage.

Value of reflection

The participants in this study were asked to reflect on their own experiences as they contemplated the ways in cultural background influences teachers perspectives on instruction. As the students recalled their own cultural upbringing, they considered the ways in which they would be impacted by different facets of their lives such as religion, socio-economic status and geographic location. There was a connection between the cultural backgrounds and personal experiences of the participants in this study and their receptiveness to culturally responsive teaching. All of the subjects were open to the use of culturally responsive pedagogy. They consistently referred to their own experiences as

justification for their outlook on teaching and learning. Since many of the participants experienced personal barriers in their lives, they felt a strong desire to help children who may also encounter obstacles in their daily lives.

Students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are most likely to attend schools that are staffed by inexperienced teachers (Kozol, 2005). However, these students benefit greatly from teachers that exhibit a genuine interest in their success; curriculum that accounts for their cultural background; and instruction that recognizes and celebrates the cultural capital they bring to the classroom (Delpit, 1995; Gilmore-Skepple, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Siwatu, 2007). Students of color that are matched with teachers who adopt a culturally responsive pedagogy experience greater levels of success than their peers who are placed in classrooms where culture is not emphasized. Preservice teachers that enter the classroom with the tools and resources to successfully teach students from diverse backgrounds have a marked advantage over teachers that are unprepared to work with the growing number of students of color in today's schools.

This results of this study affirm that personal reflection on cultural background among preservice teachers can aid in the development and understanding of culturally responsive teaching. Other studies in which preservice teachers were given opportunities to explore their cultural history and use their experience to enrich their perspectives on teaching support the benefits of this method (Gunn, 2010; Howe & Berv, 2000). As teacher education programs seek ways to prepare culturally responsive teachers, this essential method of reflection on cultural background cannot be ignored.

Sustained exposure to culturally responsive teaching

"*If the purpose of education is to create competent citizenry, the role of teacher education should be to facilitate that process by educating women and men about the diverse cultures and individuals that compose and contribute to American society*" (Sanders, 2002, pp. 5-6).

Each year, colleges of education across America prepare a teaching force that is more than 85% White, middle class females to educate the millions of culturally and linguistically diverse students that populate public schools (Bennett, 2010; Castro, 2010). Attempts to cultivate a culturally diverse stance among a monolithic populace of teacher candidates have fallen short. Multicultural education, culturally responsive pedagogy and other types of equity pedagogies within many teacher preparation programs have been relegated to one single course or segment within a course (Sanders, 2002). With limited exposure to sound pedagogical practice and little to no experience with students from ethnically, cultural, socioeconomic and linguistic backgrounds than their own, new teachers enter the classroom ill-equipped to teach diverse student populations.

The preservice teachers in this study gradually developed more complex understandings about culturally responsive teaching as they progressed through a language arts methods course and participated in a three-week clinical experience. Nonetheless, their progress was limited. In accordance with other studies on the topic, the findings of this study indicate the need to infuse culturally responsive pedagogy throughout the teacher education curriculum (Bennett, 2010; Sanders, 2002). Preservice teacher candidates must have multiple opportunities to engage in meaningful discussion; reflect on their own biases and beliefs, and establish ongoing relationships with students

from diverse backgrounds if they are to have experience authentic growth and transition in their conceptions about culturally responsive pedagogy.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Although the findings of this study cannot be generalized to all populations, the results can used by teacher education programs to enhance their use of culturally responsive instruction with preservice teachers. The purpose of the study was to examine the process that preservice teachers in one language arts methods course undergo as they develop their understandings about culturally responsive pedagogy over the course of one semester. The study also sought to understand the role that cultural background plays in preservice teachers' receptiveness to culturally responsive teaching. Finally, the study investigated the ways in which preservice teachers adopted culturally responsive pedagogy during a three-week clinical experience.

There were several limitations to this study. Using a small, specific segment of the population of preservice teachers (students enrolled in a language arts methods course) limits this study. The study was also limited in that it took place over the course of one semester. The process of developing an understanding about culturally responsive teaching is ongoing. It may take months and in some cases years for educators to come to terms with what it means to be a culturally responsive teacher and to incorporate those strategies into daily instruction. For preservice teachers just beginning this process, progress may be delayed. This suggests the need for more longitudinal studies on preservice teachers and culturally responsive pedagogy. Another significant limitation is the role that I played as participant researcher. As the main instrument of data collection

in the study, there was the strong potential of researcher bias. To minimize these risks, I incorporated the use of peer debriefing, member checks and triangulation of the data.

This study makes a contribution to field of teacher education by illustrating the ways that reflecting on cultural background influenced preservice teachers' receptiveness to culturally responsive teaching. Educational scholars seeking to align the curriculum of teacher education programs with the needs of diverse student populations may find the results of this study especially useful. The findings in the study can also be used by researchers examining the use of culturally responsive pedagogy with preservice teachers. The need for teachers who recognize, respect and resolve to meet the needs of students of color from diverse backgrounds is of paramount concern. Studies such as this one can aid researchers in developing preservice teachers that will fulfill the needs within this realm of the American public education system.

Future studies may expand on preservice teachers' use of culturally responsive teaching with diverse student populations by considering the impact that instruction has on performance. This study aimed to investigate preservice teachers' use of culturally responsive teaching during a three-week clinical experience. The study specifically explored the type and frequency of culturally responsive elements that were adopted by the participants during the field experience. It did not consider how the culturally responsive instruction designed by the preservice teachers impacted the students in the elementary classrooms. There is limited research on the ways in which preservice teachers' use of culturally responsive pedagogy influences the academic performance of students from diverse backgrounds. It is my recommendation that studies be conducted to address this area of need within the research.

There is also a need to examine the use of culturally responsive pedagogy by more diverse populations of preservice teachers. While the findings of this study yield valuable information about the process that preservice undertake as they learn about culturally responsive pedagogy, the results can only directly be applied to the participants within this study. The demographic make-up of the participants in this study lacked diversity. All of the participants were White, lived in the South, and held a similar socio-economic status. Although, the participants in this reflect the demographic make-up of many teachers in America, it would be interesting to see how the results of the study would be different if it were conducted with preservice teachers of color from more diverse backgrounds. This underrepresented population of preservice teachers may offer key findings regarding the ways in which different groups conceptualize culturally responsive pedagogy. The recruitment and retention of preservice teachers of color represents a key area of need with the field of education.

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APPENDIX A: RESEARCH PHASES

Phase I – Planning May-September	Initial work with dissertation chair and committee members to develop an instructional framework, research timeline, and list of intervention activities
Phase II – Data Collection October-November	Initial student interviews Ongoing observation of culturally responsive literacy instruction Observations of participants teaching lessons during clinical experience Collection of classroom documents Final student interviews
Phase III – Follow Up December	Final interviews

APPENDIX B: PHASE II RESEARCH TIMELINE

Theme	Instructional Activity	Data Produced
Week 1-10/8 Intro to Culturally Responsive Teaching	• Conduct individual and focus group interviews on participants' knowledge and/or responses to Culturally Responsive Teaching.	• Interview Transcripts
Week 2-10/15 Culturally Responsive Teaching	• Participants will watch video on Culturally Responsive Teaching. • Participants will bring three cultural artifacts to share with the class. • Participants will read *Living Poverty* by Stephanie Jones and *Teachers' Texts in Culturally Responsive Teaching* by Ted Kesler. • Participants will post written reflections to readings in an online forum.	• Photographs of cultural Artifacts • Written reflections of artifact activity • Online Posts • Field notes from classroom observation of cultural artifact activity.
Week 3 -10/22 Culturally Responsive Teaching and Poverty	• Participants will write Cultural Autobiographies describing their background. • Students will participate in a poverty simulation activity	• Cultural Autobiographies • Field notes from observation of poverty simulation.
Week 4 – 10/29 Culturally Responsive Teaching	• Participants will write narrative essays or memoirs describing a time that they felt like an outsider.	• Narrative Essays or Memoirs
Week 5 – 11/5 Culturally Responsive Teaching in Urban Schools	• Participants will write and implement lesson plans during their clinical experience in an elementary school.	• Student Lesson Plans • Field notes from observations of participants teaching lessons

Week 6 – 11/12 Oral Language	• Students will participate in lesson on non-standard English dialects • Students will read the research article *Ya'll Listening* by Rosa Santos	• Recording sheets from lesson on non-standard English dialects • Written reflections on the article *Ya'll Listening* by Rosa Santos.
Week 7 – 11/27 Cultural Bias in Literacy Based Instructional Materials	• Participants will be interviewed in small groups as they examine basal reading textbooks that contain cultural bias.	• Transcripts of small group interviews about culturally-biased reading textbooks.
Week 8 – 12/3 Cultural Bias in Literacy Based Instructional Materials	• Participants will be interviewed in small groups as they examine literacy assessments that contain cultural bias.	• Transcripts of small group interviews about culturally-biased literacy assessments.
Week 9 – 12/10 Wrap Up	• Conduct final interviews with participants individually or in small groups.	• Transcripts of final interviews.

APPENDIX C: PRESERVICE TEACHER INITIAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Research Question	What understandings about culturally responsive literacy teaching do preservice teachers enrolled in a language arts methods course hold prior to the intervention (semester-long integration of culturally responsive literacy teaching)?
Warm up questions	Describe your cultural background. You may include aspects related to your gender, race, ethnicity, age, religion, geographic location, or family structure. How has your cultural background shaped the person that you are today? Describe how and why you chose to become a teacher. How do you think your cultural background will impact your teaching?
Culturally Responsive Teaching	How would you define culturally responsive teaching? What are examples of some ways that teachers can teach in a culturally responsive way? How does culturally responsive literacy instruction benefit students? What are your personal feelings about culturally responsive teaching?
Conclusion	Do you have any questions or anything else that you would like to add?

APPENDIX D: PRESERVICE TEACHER FINAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Research Question	What understandings about culturally responsive literacy teaching do preservice teachers enrolled in a language arts methods course hold following the intervention (semester-long integration of culturally responsive literacy teaching)?
Warm up questions	Describe your experiences in your language arts methods class this semester. What are the things you will take away from the class?
Culturally Responsive Teaching	How would you define culture? How would you define diversity? What is your definition of culturally responsive teaching? How have your understandings about culturally responsive teaching changed since the beginning of the course? Describe how your clinical experience changed your understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy. Has this course instructor influenced your understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy? Explain. Has the course content influenced your understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy? Explain.
Conclusion	Do you have any questions or anything else that you

	would like to add?

APPENDIX E: PRESERVICE TEACHERS' ANALYSIS OF THE CULTURAL CONTENT PRESENT IN BASAL READING TEXTBOOKS

During Reading

Analyze the illustrations for stereotypes. What are people doing that may create or perpetuate a stereotype?

Analyze the storyline. What is the role of women or people of color in the story? How are problems presented and resolved?

Look closely at the lifestyles depicted in the stories. How are different groups shown?

What people seem to have power in the stories? Who is subservient? How are family relationships and compositions represented?

After Reading

What was your initial reaction to the stories you were asked to read in the textbook?

Were you drawn to any particular story in the text? Explain.

Did you have a personal connection to any of the stories included in the textbook?

Did you notice any examples of bias or inappropriate content? If yes, give examples.

Were you satisfied with the way all of the characters in the story were portrayed? Explain.

Do you think the authors of the stories fairly represented all cultural or ethnic groups? Explain.

Whose voices or perspectives were represented in the stories?

Whose voices or perspectives were missing from the stories?

Would you use the stories in the textbook to teach literacy? If yes, explain how you would use the stories. If no, explain why you would not use the stories to teach literacy.

Conclusion

What type of content should publishers include in basal reading textbooks?

What factors should publishers consider when creating basal reading textbooks?

What factors should teachers consider when using basal reading textbooks to teach literacy?

APPENDIX F: CATEGORIES TO INCLUDE IN CULTURAL AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

A. Class (socioeconomic status)

- Underclass – below poverty level, homeless
- Working class - lower middle class, blue collar
- Middle class – white collar and low-level managerial / administrative
- Upper middle class – professionals, high-level managerial / administrative
- Upper class – professionals, top-level managerial / administrative, inherited wealth and social status

B. Race

- Caucasian (Whites)
- African American (Blacks)
- American Indian, Eskimo
- Asian / Pacific Islander
- Hispanic
- Other

C. Ethnicity

- Western European
- Central / Eastern European
- Asian
- African
- Latino
- Other

D. Gender / sexual orientation

- Male
- Female
- Heterosexual
- Homosexual
- Bisexual
- Transgender

E. Language

- Monolingual (English only)
- Bilingual (English as primary language)
- ESL (English as a second language)
- Multilingual (fluent in more than two languages)

F. Religion

- Christianity – Protestantism
- Christianity – Catholicism

- Christianity – Other (e.g. Mormon, Jehovah's Witness, Christian Scientist)
- Eastern Orthodox
- Judaism
- Islam
- Buddhism
- Hindu
- Other

G. Exceptionality

- Non-disabled
- Physically disabled
- Mentally disabled
- Learning disabled
- Gifted / talented

H. Age

- Infancy
- Youth
- Adolescence
- Young adulthood
- Middle age
- Aged (elderly)

I. Geography

- Regional (e.g. Midwest, New England, Southwest, etc.)
- Location (e.g. urban, suburban, rural)
- Environmental (e.g. mountains, desert, coastal)

J. Family Structure

- Adopted
- Raised by someone other than parents
- Parents Married
- Parents Divorced/Separated/Never Married
- Parents Divorced/Remarried
- Parent(s) deceased
- Other