Critical Social Justice Teacher Education: Beginning Teachers' Pedagogy and Practice

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Abstract

Teaching for social justice is an attempt by classroom teachers to promote equity within their classrooms. Researchers have analyzed the impact of pre-service teachers' *readiness* to address social justice issues in their classrooms upon exiting their teacher preparation programs. However, despite reports of already practicing K-12 teachers' attempts to teach for social justice in their classrooms, there is little connection to teacher education programs and/or the impact of teacher practice in the classroom.

This ethnographic qualitative study addresses the research gap by highlighting the understandings and experiences of four intern teachers simultaneously enrolled in a teacher education program while participating in a critical social justice focus group. Additionally, this study explored one of the participant's practices as she transitioned from her teacher education program into her own classroom. This study uses the conceptual framework "culturally relevant education" to serve as an analytic tool describing the participant's practice in connection to the literature as a narrative case study.

Between 2011-2012 data was collected from the critical social justice focus group from six focus group meetings that were transcribed. Other research methods including observations, field notes, interviews, and archival data were collected September 2012-January 2014 from the one practicing teacher in the study. A thematic analysis was produced to analyze the focus group and observational data.

Findings from the critical social justice focus group revealed intern teachers' understandings of social justice included: (1) embracing a *critical awareness,*(2)*"it's about the students,"* and (3) *structural obstacles.* Findings from the narrative case study revealed the teacher implemented culturally relevant education through (1) a caring community, (2) holding high expectations, (3) cultural competence, and (4) sociopolitical awareness as a teacher. Implications for teacher education programs, teacher educators, and educational leaders conclude this study.

Preface

I know you don't want to hear about the pain and suffering that goes on in 'that' part of the city. I know you don't want to hear about the kids getting shot in 'that' part of the city. But little do you know that 'that' part of the city is your part of the city too. This is our neighborhood, this is our city, and this is our America. And we must somehow find a way to help one another. We must come together- no matter what you believe in, no matter how you look- to find some concrete solutions to the problems of the ghetto. (Jones & Newman, 1997, p. 200)

Journey from Teacher to Teacher Educator

My interest in the historical, sociological, philosophical, and political implications impacting schools was sparked in my own teacher preparation program. After graduating from an elementary education program, which emphasized multiculturalism, I received a Master's degree from a program that challenged many of my preconceived *Eurocentric*, *Whitestream* beliefs.[1] I taught public school over four years in varying diverse settings and often witnessed the impact of the inequalities I had studied while in college. It was not until after I finished teaching elementary school and returned to earn my doctorate that I realized not every teacher had the same educational experiences as me. That is not

[1] I will the terms "Eurocentric" or "Whitestream" when referring to curricula taught in schools that are primarily from the perspectives of Americans and Europeans. For example, the discovery of America is often viewed from a Eurocentric perspective alluding that America has been *discovered* giving little acknowledgement to a nation and peoples that already existed here (Banks & McGee Banks, 2007). Additionally, Urietta (2010) defines "whitestream schools" as, "all schools from kindergarten through graduate school and to the official and unofficial texts used in U.S. schools that are founded on the practices, principles, morals, and values of white supremacy and that highlight the history of [W]hite Anglo-American culture. Whitestream indoctrination or the teaching (either formally or informally) that white supremacy is normal in whitestream schools is not exclusively the work of whites. Any person, including people of color, actively promoting or upholding white models as the goal or standard is also involved in whitestreaming" (p. 181).

to say that I believe I possessed all the *important* knowledge that has influenced my pedagogy over the years, as I will explain later on. Rather, I believe teachers' learning should be an ongoing process that continues throughout one's career. In agreement with Horton (1998):

> Your job as a gardener or as an educator is to know that the potential is there and that it will unfold. Your job is to plant good seeds and nurture them until they get big enough to grow up, and not to smother them while they are growing. (p. 133)

As teachers, I believe we cannot plant the seeds Horton refers to in our students if we hold stereotypes or deficit views of them. As such, teacher educators need to also plant seeds in future teachers if we wish to promote "political clarity" (Antonion & Freire, 1992) and "transformative intellectuals" (Gramsci, 1971) to gain a better understanding of praxis in the classroom. I have since learned that while I did possess a decent understanding of the dynamics of schooling and education in this county, there was still much more to be critical of that would in turn aid how and what information I presented to my students. My own journey from a K-12 classroom teacher to a teacher educator much resembles the stages of a fire. I have watched the spark in my passion and commitments to social justice begin as embers, growing into a full-out flame. The process continues to influence my own evolving pedagogy and the experiences that largely informed and shaped my work in teacher education. This dissertation is a cultural

studies project that aimed to document the experiences and evolving pedagogies of four intern and one novice teacher throughout teacher preparation.

My Cultural Studies Education

My experience in my doctoral program led to this cultural studies project. To better understand the evolution of this study, I will begin by explaining how cultural studies and critical pedagogy are connected, which has informed my understandings and influenced the process of developing this dissertation. I will then explain how my own experiences as a teacher educator affected the choices I made in my class, as well as how it served as the impetus in creating critical social justice focus groups (CSJFG). I believe this background information is pertinent to explain why I feel this study is relevant and necessary in the field of education and to set the tone and scope of this dissertation.

Cultural Studies and Critical Pedagogy

Cultural studies and critical theory [pedagogy] historically have ties with one another. Critical theory[1] emerged from the Frankfort School formed after the devastations of World War I. A decade after its creation, the founding Jewish theorists Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, and Walter Benjamin fled Nazi controlled Germany to come to United States. Much of their fundamental writing occurred with and after their relocation to the United States. Kincheloe (2004) explains, "Piqued by the contradictions between progressive American rhetoric of egalitarianism and the reality of race and class discrimination, these theorists produced their major work while residing in the United States" (p. 47). Critical theory, especially the works

produced by Marcuse in the 1960s, led to a domino effect inspiring the "philosophical voice of the New Left" (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 47). Influenced by anticolonial liberation movements around the world, the New Left formed in 1956 by Stuart Hall in the U.K. Two different intellectual groups came together through dialogue in journals, specifically regarding economic changes, during this postwar era. Many key British intellects such as, Raymond Williams, E.P. Thompson, and Perry Anderson were involved and would later be associated with cultural studies (Kincheloe, 2004; Procter, 2004).

Critical theory forms the foundation of critical pedagogy and is difficult to describe because much like cultural studies, there are many theorists, it is always changing and evolving, and critical theory attempts to avoid conformity (Kincheloe, 2004). While there is no one agreed upon definition of critical pedagogy, there are several tenets that can help to explain its purpose and usefulness in this dissertation. Proponents of critical pedagogy aim to disrupt and challenge the status quo through a "variety of tools to expose such oppressive power politics" (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 50). A key component of critical pedagogy seeks emancipation through the uncovering of sociopolitical forces shaping schools. Critical pedagogues understand that there are multiple forms of power such as race, gender, class, sexual orientation and others shaping our human existence. These forces are legitimized as natural and inevitable through our day-to-day routines, especially in schools. Additionally, critical pedagogues recognize the discursive power of language. Kincheloe (2004), states, "Discursive practices are defined as a set of tacit rules that regulate what can and cannot be said, who can speak with the

blessings of authority and who must listen, whose social constructions are valid and whose are erroneous and unimportant" (pp. 55-56). We see this every day in school through the normalized practices of what books may be read by students, what belief systems are accepted, definitions of success (i.e. standardized testing), and the appropriate instructional methods that may be used (Kincheloe, 2004). Thus, critical pedagogues are interested in an "awareness" of these power dynamics to expose the inequities education continuously reproduces. The remainder of this section will discuss how cultural studies helped me to create a unified framework for my dissertation as well as my epistemological orientation.

The connection to cultural studies.

My doctoral program within cultural studies largely informed my view of society as unequal, stratified, and resistant to change (Barker, 2009; Nelson, Paula, Treichler, Grossberg, 1992; Wright, 1996). Additionally, cultural studies allowed me to understand the importance of praxis as the key to making transformations in society. This section will fully describe my perspectives as a student in cultural studies and as a teacher educator employing a cultural studies project as a dissertation. Because I take the field of cultural studies seriously, it is important for me to reveal how I have applied major concepts within cultural studies in a more *practical* light rather than simply adding to an already overly theorized discipline (Hall, 1992; Wright, 1995; Wright, 2003).

I believe the extension of this work in teacher education is important and encouraging thus providing a practical avenue for cultural studies projects. We must

practice what we, as scholars, theorize about if we plan to execute a cultural studies project. This dissertation is built upon the belief in the potential of teacher education to powerfully impact pre-service teachers, specifically regarding social justice issues, in order to inform and empower students in their classrooms. To better understand this, it is helpful to understand my introduction to cultural studies in my doctoral program and how it has guided me along this journey.

Experiences informing my work in teacher education.

When I returned to work on my doctorate, my eyes opened to an even broader view of education than I had ever experienced. The first course in the program, *Trends and Issues in Cultural Studies*, exposed me to the interdisciplinary work of history, sociology, and philosophy as well as how power dynamics shaped society and maintained systemic inequalities. In this course, we were not only introduced to scholars such as Paulo Freire (1970), bell hooks (1994), and Myles Horton (1998), but we were also required to participate in a critical service-learning project. Up to this point I felt confident in the fact that I understood systemic inequalities and how this perpetuated the status quo. However, it was not until my first experience visiting an urban high school that I realized service learning was *not meant to observe or teach students*, but as an outsider coming in to learn *from the students.* I had much experience with volunteering and "giving back" to the community. What I *did not* have experience with was reimaging the roles of community members such as the students, teachers, and families in the context of service learning as I *invaded* their space. As I learned in this course, "the goals

of service learning are to "ultimately deconstruct systems of power so the need for service and the inequalities that create and sustain them are dismantled" (Mitchell, 2008, p. 50). While I did not "deconstruct systems of power" in my short time at that high school, I realized how harmful it could be to send teachers into schools without social theories informing their practice. This was also the first time I realized that I could be "informed" and understand why inequalities exist, but what was I doing about it? It was in this first course in the cultural studies program that ignited a spark in me. Cultural studies was more than simply recognizing the inequalities existed in schools, it also charged me with a *call to action* to seek change.

The next semester I enrolled in *Social Justice in Education*. This course aimed to deepen "one's understanding of commitment and responsibility to issues of inequity" (Course Syllabus, Spring 2011). At this point I believed I understood inequity and held a desire to make change, but I think I still held onto an element of meritocracy. Inequality was not fair, but if people worked hard enough, they could *rise up from the trenches.* It was not until reading Jean Anyon's (2005) book *radical possibilities* and understanding how deeply complex systemic inequalities were, that I finally begin to reject the notion of meritocracy and wanted to work with other teachers so they could have this same enlightening experience.

Up to this point, my combined coursework led me to think about a teacher's education and how I wished mine had been even more *critical* so that I actively sought to empower students when I was teaching. Once again, the impact these cultural studies

courses had in my own development led me to begin pondering about how I could connect the potential of the theories I had read to a dissertation topic that was meaningful and impactful with pre-service teachers.

A frequent criticism of cultural studies work is the disconnect between working in academy and the community. Wright (2003) argues cultural studies as praxis is "endangered by theoreticism" (p. 806) and thus created a model of *cultural studies as social justice praxis* work. Within this model, there is an inextricable link between theory and practice, exploration of issues of power, a "blurring" of the boundaries between academia and the community, and a commitment to work for equity and social justice. Wright believes cultural studies works best as praxis work when it is juxtaposed between service learning and ethnography (Wright, 2003). It seemed suiting that in order to follow Wright's model, I created a space for pre-service teachers to read and reflect upon social justice issues as they began entering the classroom. Thus, as I reflected upon the readings and discussions that most influenced me, and thought about the ways such readings could in turn influence other teachers through theory and practice, I created my first critical social justice focus groups. Not only did we explore issues of power, but we also discussed ways to navigate through schools despite predetermined power structures. It is through my own education and development that this dissertation was possible.

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List of Abbreviations

AALI	African American Learners Initiative
ABCTE	American Board for the Certification of Teaching
AACTE	American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
CTS	California Standards Test
CCS	Common Core Standards
CLSE	Council of Learned Societies in Education
CSFE	Council for Social Foundations of Education
CSJFG	Critical Social Justice Focus Group
CLAS	Cultural and Language Academy
CRE	Culturally Relevant Education
CRCM	Culturally Responsive Classroom Management
CRMT	Culturally Responsive Mathematics Teaching
ELDA	English Language Development Assessment
ELL	English Language Learner
EP401	Applied Educational Psychology 401
GEAR UP	Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Program
GREAT	Growing Excellence Achievement Training Academics for Teachers and Principals
HUS	Historically Underserved Students
INTASC	Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium
IRCS	Integrated Reading Comprehension Strategy
IYCV	Early Years Gender Policy
LGBTQ	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transfer Queer/Questioning
NCATE	National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education
NET*S	National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers
NCTQ	National Council on Teacher Quality
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
PARCC	Partnership for Assessment for the Readiness of College and Careers
PWI	Predominantly White Institution
QCS	Qualitative Case Study
RTT	Race to the Top
RTI	Response to Intervention
SFE	Social Foundations in Education
SJEP	Social Justice Education Project
SJTE	Social Justice Teacher Education
TFA	Teach for America
TSRQ	Teacher-Student Relationship Questionnaire
TALE	Teaching and Learning for Equity
TVAAS	Tennessee Value Added Assessment System

TPD	Transformative Professional Development
UMTE	Urban-Multicultural Teacher Education Program
UNITE	Urban Network to Improve Teacher Education

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Social Justice Teacher Education

Teaching for social justice is an attempt by classroom teachers to promote equity within their classrooms in light of high-stakes testing and the current accountability movement (Dover, 2013).[2] Multiple researchers have analyzed the impact of pre-service teachers' *readiness* to address social justice issues in their classrooms upon exiting their teacher preparation programs (Cochran-Smith et al. 2009; Cross, 2003; López, 2003; Poplin & Rivera, 2005; Sleeter, 2001; Swartz, 2003). However, despite reports of already practicing K-12 teachers' attempts to teach for social justice in their classrooms (Copenhaver, 2001; Epstein, Mayorga & Nelson, 2011; Esposito & Swain, 2009; Gutstein, 2003; Hill, 2009; Nykiel-Herbert, 2010), there is little connection to teacher education programs and/or the impact of teacher practice on student achievement. Drawing on teacher education literature from the past three decades, Grant and Agosto (2008) report that:

[2] Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) extend the concept of social justice beyond a notion of fairness and equality for all people. I align myself with their term critical social justice to use as a lens in this study. A critical social justice, "recognize[s] that society is stratified (i.e. divided and unequal) in significant and far reaching ways along social group lines that include race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability. Critical social justice recognizes inequality as deeply embedded in the fabric of society (i.e., as structural), and actively seeks to change this" (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. xviii).

> There is a limited amount of empirical research that examines the classroom practices of teachers who claim to work toward social justice and/or practices of those who were prepared in teacher education programs or professional development programs where social justice is the conceptual orientation. (p. 194)

Furthermore, Grant and Agosto go on to note that because social justice teacher education lacks, "attention to definition, context, and assessment" (p. 194) it contributes to the gap in the literature regarding the impact of teacher education, specifically as it relates to social justice. In addition, an overabundance of small-scale, narrowly focused, qualitative studies does not necessarily produce outcomes that can be generalized supporting the need for social justice teacher education (Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Sleeter, 2012).

Throughout this dissertation I will use the term social justice teacher education (SJTE), with the understanding that various important fields impact this approach to teacher education. In agreement with Wiedeman (2002):

> In order to chart a future for teacher education in terms of social justice and equity, we must learn from what has been documented and reported across fields of teacher preparation and social justice and equity education for the purpose of establishing, maintaining, and strengthening the role of social justice and equity in the preparation of teachers. (p. 200)

There is much history that describes how the approach to SJTE evolved over time and it is worth mentioning some of the larger influences to better understand the challenges that still exist for this approach today (McDonald & Zeichner, 2009). Scholars have discussed several theoretical perspectives, such as critical pedagogy, critical race theory, care theory, and others that have informed work within SJTE[3] (Dover, 2012; Neito, 2004; Wiedeman, 2002). Additionally, McDonald and Zeichner (2009) assert, "Social justice efforts, as articulated in teacher education, generally draw from the conceptual work of multicultural education, and link to the larger goal of preparing teachers to work with students from diverse backgrounds" (p. 599). To better understand the evolution of social justice coursework as a part of teacher preparation and where it stands today, it is helpful to trace the history of approaches used and standards regulated in teacher education.

This first chapter serves to set the need for this study and outline its contents. I begin by giving a brief historical overview of how SJTE came to be a part of teacher education and the role accreditation has played in this process. I then briefly outline background information regarding teacher-student demographic divides and how teachers' lack of culturally relevant education can contribute to persisting gaps in achievement (Banks & Banks, 2007; Gay, 2002; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 2004). Following this, I discuss what I ultimately deem as a major problem in teacher education: the marginalization of social justice types of courses yielding spaces

[3] These particular theoretical perspectives are highlighted to discuss their relevance in SJTE but are not meant to be an exhaustive list of other movements that may have influenced the field.

for critical reflection. It is important to note that the very basis of this dissertation rests on my belief that *effective teacher education will produce effective teachers* and my beliefs as to what makes a teacher effective are value-laden with my own personal experiences and moral commitments to social justice.[4] Nevertheless, I will use this logic to explain why I believe this study is important and how it can contribute to the larger field of educational research. The following section seeks to describe early courses administered in social foundations of education, and later the role multicultural education played throughout teacher preparation adding to the development of SJTE seen today.

Historical Context of "Social Foundations" in Teacher Preparation

Courses in history, philosophy, sociology, and psychology of education discussing educational dilemmas in public schools throughout teacher preparation were seen as early as the 1930s. In 1929, William Kirkpatrick, a philosopher of education at Teachers College, recruited a group of interdisciplinary scholars to build upon the ideas of John Dewey and discuss how the commonalities amongst their disciplines could aid future teachers to be more effective with students (Butts, 1993). As with many issues in education, much of the debate and discussion surrounding teacher education was (and continues to be) heavily influenced by other political and social movements occurring around the world. At the time Kirkpatrtick formed this group, America was feeling the

[4] For the purposes of this study, I am not measuring teachers' effectiveness in terms of empirical outcomes of student achievement. When I use the term "effective teacher" I draw on the scholarship of Ladson-Billings (1994) and Gay (2010), who support the idea that rather than expecting students to assimilate to the mainstream culture (Eurocentric), effective teachers expect students to excel while still supporting the students' cultures throughout their learning process.

impact of the Great Depression and it left many skeptical of the *American Dream* and the ability of *everyone* to reach such an ideal. Tozer and Miretzky (2005) explain that this group led to a new approach in teacher education with a purpose to:

> provide a critical, cross-disciplinary study of education, including schooling, as a cultural process grounded in the social institutions, processes, and ideals that characterize particular cultures. It was critical in its explicit effort to test social and educational institutions and processes against democratic ideals. This critical, cross-disciplinary view of social foundations of education, not the "introduction to teaching" approach, marked the development of the field from the 1940s onward. (p. 7)

Furthermore, Tozer (1993) explains that the interdisciplinary field called "Social Foundations of Education" (SFE) emerged with a commitment to prepare future public school teachers for the political and social welfare of diverse groups of students. Topics including the history and purposes of schooling as well as "moral, civic, and social dimensions of education" (Beadie, 1996, p. 77) drew from multiple disciplines to be included in what was commonly became known as SFE[5].

[5] There is no one agreed upon definition of SFE given it is a multidisciplinary approach from many different perspectives. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to discuss the broad history of social foundations however it is important to mention because SFE provided the first types of courses seen in teacher education that built a foundation for

Led by John Dewey's ideas, the progressive era of education fostered SFE in teachers' education up until the 1950s when anxieties from threats of a cold war and the rise of cultural conservatism repudiated ideals behind progressivism (Beadie, 1996; Butts, 1993). Butts (1993) describes this time period (between the 1950s-mid-1970s) as one of "dispersion," when many competing interests held conflicting opinions regarding what teacher education should look like (p. 28). Additionally, Davis (2008) explains:

> Coupled with the challenge of Soviet technological innovations to American supremacy in math and science inventions, interdisciplinary coursework was blamed as one reason for the lack of academic integrity in teacher education programs. And, failures in the effectiveness of public school teachers were linked to deficiencies in teacher preparation programs (McCarthy, 2006). (p. 38)

Soon enough, discussions as to whether more content-driven teacher preparation should supersede teacher education programs (which were considered inferior) emerged in response to these social and political pressures around the world.

In response to demands for teacher education to be more regulated, in 1954 the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) was formed with a

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SJTE today. For a more thorough discussion on the history of SFE see Butin, 2005; Butts, 1993; Tozer & Miretzy, 2000; 2005; Warren 1998.

purpose to govern teacher education programs[6]. Adjustments were made to align goals, objectives, content, and standards across the board to make teacher education programs more uniform (Dottin, Jones, Simpson, Watras, 2005). National standards set for accreditation were the major impetus for incorporating multicultural education in teacher preparation, however this did not occur until the late 1970s and was short-lived (Gollnick, 1992).

The role of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in Social Justice Teacher Education

The 1960s brought about contradictory social movements that presented more challenges for the validity of teacher education and the necessity of foundations courses, which promoted critical thinking and questioning of the status quo (i.e. fear of the rise of communism, the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War). Some advocated for the advancement of social activism through education while others supported a more conservative political agenda that would restore American family values and the stability in a post-war economy (Davis, 2008).[7] The next section will explain the evolution of multicultural education in teacher education and the role NCATE played throughout its formation.

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[6] NCATE is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization and is the only official accreditating agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. At the time of this writing, NCATE was still the main accredidating agency for teacher education, however in 2013 NCATE merged with the second largest accredidating agency (not endorsed by the U.S. Dept. of Education), the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) to form the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP).

[7] For a more in depth discussion, see Ginsberg (1987) or Spring (1984).

Multicultural teacher education.

The multicultural movement in education began after demands for school reform were articulated during the Civil Rights Movement. The political and economic disparities highlighted in the 1960s gave rise to an approach often referred to as "multicultural education" (Sleeter & McLaren, 1995). Today, while educators might align themselves to a particular theoretical perspective such as multicultural education, critical pedagogy, feminist theory, or queer theory, both Gay (1995) and Rivera and Poplin (1995) argue they, "are mutually informing frameworks or constructs that differ not so much in their overall political project of self and social transformation as in the emphases they place on theoretical approaches to class, gender, race, and sexual relations" (Sleeter & McLaren, 1995, p. 11). Gay (1983) explains that multicultural education:

> originated in a socio-political milieu and is to some extent a product of its times. Concerns about the treatment of ethnic groups in school curricula and instructional materials directly reflected concerns about their social, political, and economic plight in the society at large. (p. 560)

African American scholars collaborating with leaders in the Civil Rights Movement represented the main group fighting for reform during the 1960s, however the prefix "multi" was added as a means to bring together other racial and ethnic groups who

suffered from similar oppressions. In addition to the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, there were other movements such as the women's rights movement and ethnic studies and women's studies departments began emerging in universities. The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) challenged more traditional views of teacher education through its first Commission on Multicultural Education in 1972. This commission argued that teacher education should incorporate multiculturalism as a valuable resource to be extended rather than something to be tolerated (Cochran-Smith, 2003). As a result of increasingly diverse populations in USA public schools, in 1978 NCATE began requiring teacher education programs to include multicultural education as part of the preparation process. At this time the majority of preparation efforts highlighted preparing teachers to improve learning for students of color, those living in poverty, and those whose first language was not English (McDonald & Zeichner, 2009). In 1979, NCATE added multicultural education to its standards and all institutions seeking accreditation were required to demonstrate evidence that they were including multicultural education in teacher education curricula (Standard 2.1.1. as cited in Gollnick, 1992).

At the same time multicultural education was becoming a part of NCATE standards, in 1968 graduate students and faculty at Teachers College founded the American Educational Studies Association (AESA) to improve social foundations within teacher education programs (Butts, 1993). By 1978, The Council of Learned Societies in Education (CLSE), an umbrella organization of AESA, and other social foundations

organizations, published a document called, "Standards for Academic and Professional Instruction in Foundations of Education, Educational Studies, and Educational Policy Studies." These standards emphasized, "the development of interpretive, normative, and critical perspectives of education, including non-schooling enterprises (AESA, 1978, p. 331). In the early 1980s NCATE was in the process of revising its accreditation standards and requested the assistance from a variety of specialized organizations. The CLSE influenced NCATE to promote ideas expressed by their standards as well as to ensure coursework be taught by qualified professors with doctorates in the subjects being taught (Dottin et al., 2005). Additionally, in the late 1980s the CLSE became a member of NCATE and thus was granted "a continuing voice in the decision-making processes of national accreditation" (Dottin, et al., 2005).

Throughout the 1980s, international affairs again impacted educational reform efforts, most notably the presidentially commissioned report, *A Nation at Risk* (1983), which warned the nation's children (predominantly students of color, those living in poverty, and whose first language was not English) were at risk of failure and was a national concern if we were to compete economically at an international level. "These" children were often viewed as culturally deficient and in need of attention. In 1985, reports claimed that the demographics of our country would change in the 21st century and multicultural education was in the spotlight once again. Conversely, instead of directly addressing issues of diversity, *A Nation at Risk* marked a neoliberal shift and the Regan Administration shied away from overt discussions of diversity and directed

attention away from cultural diversity concerns by efforts such as the passing of the Bilingual Education Act of 1984, "which watered down federal attention to bilingual education- and instead toward accountability and deregulation" (Grant & Gibson, 2011, p. 39). All of the changes in the mid-1980s to early 1990s brought out fierce debates regarding curriculum efforts and the role that multicultural education should play in schools.

A revision of the NCATE standards and an overall revision of NCATE in the mid-1990s led to the removal of the separate standard "multicultural education," and instead multicultural concepts were to be adopted throughout other standards rather than be a stand-alone objective. By 2000, the nineteen standards NCATE previously adopted were reduced to only six with diversity as its own separate standard:

> Standard 4: Diversity
>
> The unit designs, implements, and evaluates curriculum and experiences for candidates to acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to help all students learn. These experiences include working with diverse higher education and school faculty, diverse candidates, and diverse students in P-12 schools. (NCATE, 2008, p. 12)

While this standard suggests institutions make it possible for teacher candidates to be exposed to diversity (which is not always a realistic requirement depending on the

location of the institution), it does little to ensure that future teachers understand the political and societal problems that impact schools. Johnson, Johnson, Farenga, and Ness (2005) warn:

> NCATE's view of diversity leaves out the real and serious problems that affect youth and their education- poverty, unequal funding, and all the ills associated with them. Rather than grappling with the issues facing the poor and the unequal distribution of wealth in certain communities and their schools, NCATE seems to use "diversity" as a catchword for establishing that NCATE helps foster the education of minority students. (p. 87)

As standardization and accountability have continued to dominate educational rhetoric, it seems less and less importance has been placed on diversity in teacher preparation programs. Additionally, in 2004, the CLSE (now called the Council for Social Foundations of Education [CSFE]) was dropped from NCATE's membership, unable to pay its full annual dues (Dottin et al., 2005). In 1978 over 80 percent of institutions were including multicultural education explicitly in teacher education, however by the early 1990s, NCATE found only 56 percent of institutions were adequately addressing culturally diversity and/or exceptionalities in their curricula (Gollnick, 1992). By 2010, Neumann found that of 302 universities examined, in the elementary programs 69% required at least one social foundations type of course, and 45% required at least one course in multicultural education. In the secondary programs, 68% required a social

foundations type of course and 45% required a course in multicultural education. In agreement with Neumann (2010), whether or not these results are problematic might depend on the priorities of K-12 schooling, however it certainly indicates social foundations and multicultural education is not strongly at the forefront of most teacher education programs' curricula. In the next section, I seek to describe what is commonly known as the "demographic divide" to begin to set the stage for what I deem as a very serious problem facing teacher education.

The Demographic Divide

Few educators would argue with the claim that *historically underserved students* (HUS)[8] (Artiles, A., Kozleski, E., Trent. S., Osher, D., & Oriz, A., 2010) are the ones most negatively affected by inequalities in the educational system. White and Asian American students, as well as those from middle and upper class backgrounds consistently outperform HUS from other racial and socioeconomic backgrounds on national standardized tests (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Additionally, in 2011, the total status dropout rate for White students was 5% while it was 7.3% for

[8] Artilies et al. (2010) coined this phrase to describe "students from diverse racial, cultural, linguistic, and economically disadvantaged backgrounds who have experienced sustained school failure over time" (pp. 279-278). They write from a special education perspective and assert historically underserved students are disproportionality placed in special education. I will use this term throughout the dissertation in place of terms such as minority and marginalized when discussing broad inequalities for any group that may have historically or continues to experience oppression. When I use this term it will include students often referred to as "minoritized," which Shields, Bishop, and Mazawi (2005) explain are those who not necessarily are the numerical minority, but have been ascribed characteristics of a minority and treated as having less worth compared to historically dominant White, heterosexual, Christian, or androcentric norms.

African American students and 13.6% for Hispanic students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012).

Ladson-Billings (2006a) refers to what is commonly known as the *achievement gap* as nothing more than an "opportunity gap." She explains this opportunity gap stems from historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral policies that continue to infiltrate our schools today. Historically, inferior perceptions of Black, Latina/o and Native peoples permeated school curriculum at its origins, and continue~~s~~ in current curriculum reforms today. Economically, disparities continue to exist in funding between schools serving middle-class White children and those serving poorer students and children of color (Kozol, 2006). Socioeconomic status directly correlates with race in a racist society, and we know poverty and school failure are related (Barton, 2004). Finally, Ladson-Billings asserts we have a moral obligation to act upon what we know is *right*- narrowing these inequalities. She charges that in democratic nations "personal responsibility must be coupled with social responsibility" (p. 8). Regardless of the reasons for educational disparities, we are charged with the task of providing equitable education for all students. It is due to this *moral obligation* that I became interested in understanding how to make schools more equitable for HUS. While I believe educational inequalities are the consequences of larger societal factors (Anyon, 2005; Kozol, 2006), and I do not believe teachers are the sole cause of discrepancies in student achievement, I do believe teachers can have an impact on the students they teach within their classrooms, which inevitably could affect macro-issues facing our society. To better understand this study, I will first

contextualize the current conditions of our schools that many scholars (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Howard, 2003; Sleeter, 2001; Villegas & Lucas, 2002), have deemed as problematic to the success of HUS.

Today many educational researchers agree that teachers are one of the most important factors for the success of a child. Research suggests that teacher effectiveness has significant impact on traditional student achievement (Heck, 2009; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005; Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Sanders & Horn, 1998; Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997).[9] Acknowledging this, it is important to note that the teaching force continues to be comprised of predominantly White, middle-class, female teachers who enter diverse schools with little understanding of the historical, philosophical, sociological, and political foundations that shape our schools (National Education Association, 2004).[10] The mismatch between the predominantly White teaching force

[9] Williams Sanders' et al. studies are based upon the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVASS), which measures teacher effectiveness solely on student test scores (although they argue they control for SES). I do not believe is the sole determinant of student achievement; nevertheless it is certainly an important skill to obtain in our society and one that many policymakers feels is most relevant. I argue a teacher employing a culturally relevant education teaches students the "culture of power" including taking and passing standardized tests (Delpit, 2006).

[10] As the teaching force continues to become more homogeneous the student population is becoming more diverse (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). In 2011, the demographic breakdown of public schools teachers was: 84% White, 16% Black, 23.1% Hispanic, 4.6% Asian, 0.3% Pacific Islander, 1.1% American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 2.4% multi-racial (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012, Table 94). The demographic breakdown of public school students was: 63% White, 12% Black, 17% Hispanic, 5% Asian, < 1% Pacific Islander, <1 % American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 2 % multi-racial (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012, Table 101.3). Given current trends, students of color will soon equal or surpass the number of White students in schools. Language and religious diversity is also on the rise. The Democratic Leadership Council

and teachers' abilities to effectively teach children different from themselves warrants attention. For Sleeter (2001, 2008a, 2011), it is problematic to expect White teachers to work with students who differ from themselves if they have no cross-cultural background knowledge and/or experience. Sleeter (2008a) explains, "This gap matters because it means that students of color- especially Black and Latino students- are much more likely than White students to be taught by teachers who question their academic ability, are uncomfortable around them, or do not know how to teach them well" (p. 559). In turn, Sleeter (2011) explains, "The situation of increasingly diverse student populations being taught by persistently non-diverse teaching forces exacerbates the problem of disparities in achievement" (p. 3). Likewise, Howard (2006) posits:

> The inner work of personal transformation has been missing the piece in the preparation of White teachers . . . too often we place White teachers in multicultural settings and expect them to behave in ways that are not consistent with their own life experiences, socialization patterns, worldviews, and levels of racial identity development. Too often we expect White teachers to be what we have not learned to be, namely, culturally competent professionals. (p. 6)

In agreement with Howard (2006), there is a need to address White teachers' preparation to better understand how they impact the underperformance of HUS in schools. Sleeter

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estimated 50 million Americans spoke another language at home and Eck (2001) called the U.S. the "most religiously diverse nation on earth" (p. 4).

(2008a) found in a study that White pre-service teachers were often unaware of racism, held lower expectations for students of color and were ignorant about students' families and communities, and they often lacked awareness of their own cultural identity. Because many White pre-service teachers often lack the general knowledge and experiences regarding students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, "one commonly finds teachers using pedagogical practices and models of education more appropriate to the dominant populations than to the diverse populations in their classrooms, drawing on deficit discourses when these do not work (Bishop, 2005)" (Sleeter, 2011, p. 3). The next section serves to highlight the research on teachers' views toward diversity to better understand the impact of White teachers in diverse schools.

White Teachers' Views toward Diversity

Teachers' attitudes and beliefs build the framework for how they develop their practice, the strategies they elect to use in the classroom, and the decisions they make. It has been argued there are differences between teachers coming from a White, middle-class, English speaking background as compared to those who have perspectives such as being a student of color, living in poverty, or an English language learner (Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Sleeter, 2001; Villegas & Davis, 2008). King (1991) found that most pre-service teachers had a surface understanding of cultural diversity and tended to accept the mainstream norms. She believed people failed to use their consciousness critically, terming this "dysconsciousness," or an uncritical "habit of mind" that validates existing inequalities by accepting injustices without questioning. A decade later, Sleeter (2001)

still found that White pre-service teachers often were not cognizant regarding issues of race, held stereotypes about people of color and had little understanding of their role in perpetuating racism.[11]

Dating back to the 1980s, researchers began to examine the relationships between pre-service teachers and their previous diversity encounters, ultimately finding that teachers were often ill-equipped to instruct students of diverse backgrounds (Hadaway & Florez, 1987-1988). In the early 1990s, research shifted to the attitudes and beliefs that pre-service teachers held in regards to increasingly diverse schools. Studies showed that teacher candidates were willing to make accommodations for diversity, and realized they probably would need to, given the changing demographics in schools, but that prospective educators felt inadequately prepared to teach diverse students (Barry & Lechner, 1995; Martin & Williams-Dixon, 1994). On the other hand, some studies revealed an "overconfidence" of teacher candidates' ability to teach diverse populations, despite having never interacted with diverse populations. Easter, Schultz, Neyhart, and Rack (1999) conducted a survey study to investigate the beliefs of 80 pre-service teachers. Although many of the pre-service teachers had little exposure to other cultures, 96% believed in their ability to handle diversity successfully. More recently, Dedeoglu and Lamme (2011) conducted a study of pre-service teachers designed to examine how demographic variables such as race, previous experiences in inner-city schools, religion

[11] This is not to suggest that students of color immediately embody a culturally relevant education or are critical about such issues either, however, the purpose of this section is to focus on the predominantly White teaching forces' view of diversity.

affiliations, and cross-cultural friendships might influence their beliefs. They found that cross-cultural friendships as a demographic variable significantly predicted respondents' scores on surveys. For example, students who reported having more cross-cultural involvement also had more exposure to working in inner-city schools. Additionally, students of color described the University as less diverse than their White counterparts and were more likely to be bilingual. This discrepancy indicated that White teachers were less aware of their surroundings, more prone to stay within their "comfort zone," and overly confident in their abilities to work with others not like them.

Deficit views.

Valencia (1997) describes deficit-based thinking as a, "person-centered explanation of school failure among individuals as linked to group membership," and that "it holds that poor student performance is rooted in students' alleged cognitive and motivational deficits" (p. 9). Earlier examination of students of color and students from low-income backgrounds attributed school failure in part to a culture of poverty, that they lacked motivation or did not value education, did not grasp Standard English, or were intellectually deficient (Howard, 2010). In agreement with Howard (2010), "there are some disturbing implications of a deficit-based construction of educational underachievement, most notably the belief that mainstream or European culture and ways of being, thinking, and communicating are considered 'normal' " (p. 29). Valencia (1997) found many educators attribute the failure of students to their racial or cultural "inferiority," their native language, their SES, lack of motivation, or parents' lack of

education. Whether such a perspective is intentional or not does not matter. Practicing a *blaming the victim* mentality for students' perceived failure only perpetuates inequalities in schools (Ford & Grantham, 2003; Miller, 2010; Valencia & Black, 2002). However, if we do not allow pre-service teachers spaces to acknowledge and grapple with such issues, how can we expect them to be aware of these and make changes in their attitudes and expectations?

Hollins and Guzman (2005) assert that "coupled with general mismatch between teachers' and students' cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds", unless prospective teachers have an opportunity to rethink and challenge their own preconceptions, the students with the greatest academic need are the ones who are less likely to have access to academic success (p. 482). Additionally, when teachers believe diversity is an obstacle to overcome, they typically hold low expectations for their students (Madom, Jussim, & Eccles, 1997) or they have difficultly teaching in ways that are both culturally competent and academically challenging (Bower & Klecka, 2009; Ferguson, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Taylor and Wasicsko (2000) contend "it is important for teacher educators to know and understand the dispositions of effective teachers, so as to design experiences that will help to develop these characteristics in students and to help students discover if they have the 'dispositions to teach' " (p. 2). The following section will define teacher dispositions as well as discuss the major factors involved in changing pre-service teachers' beliefs toward diversity.

Changing Pre-service Teachers' Attitudes and Beliefs

Teachers bring their own experiences and varying perspectives into the classroom. Much of their teaching has been shaped by their own learning experiences. Teachers often teach the way they were taught (Frank, 1990; Fulton, 1989; Goodlad, 1990; Handler, 1993; Lortie, 1975). Researchers have examined teacher "dispositions" for decades using terms such as attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs, and have found relationships between such "dispositions" and effective teachers (Taylor & Wasicsko, 2000). However, within the last decade the focus on "highly-qualified" teachers has brought the subject of teacher dispositions into the spotlight again. Taylor and Wasicsko (2000) explain, "Dispositions are often defined as the personal qualities or characteristics that are possessed by individuals, including attitudes, beliefs, interests, appreciations, values, and modes of adjustment" (p. 2). At the time of this study, the main accrediting agency for Colleges of Education, NCATE (2012) defined professional dispositions as:

> Professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities. These positive behaviors support student learning and development. NCATE expects institutions to assess professional dispositions based on observable behaviors in educational settings. The two professional dispositions that NCATE expects institutions to assess are *fairness* and the belief that all students can learn. Based on their mission and conceptual framework,

professional education units can identify, define, and operationalize additional professional dispositions.

It is important to note that NCATE removed the term "social justice" from its definition of dispositions in 2008; however, many teacher educators and researchers still regard a disposition toward social justice as an important component in the teacher preparation process (Hill-Jackson & Lewis, 2010; Murray, 2007; Villegas, 2007). In agreement with these scholars, I believe teachers who aim to make a difference and wish to teach all learners equitably *should* have a proclivity toward social justice. Building from Garmon's (2004, 2005) research, in the next section I will discuss key factors involved in changing pre-service teachers' beliefs toward diversity.

Changing dispositions.

To address educational disparities, most teacher preparation programs have implemented some form of diversity courses or integrated topics within other courses. However, research regarding pre-service teachers' attitudes and beliefs has yielded inconsistent findings (Sleeter, 2001). To address this, Garmon (2005) argues that how individuals respond to diversity courses often depends on a number of personal variables and experiences, which could help to explain the inconsistent findings. He believes there are two broad categories associated with effectively changing pre-service teachers' attitudes and beliefs, including dispositions and experiences.

Dispositions.

Garmon (2005) asserts that part of changing dispositions toward diversity includes *openness*, *self-reflexivity*, and *a commitment to social justice*. He defines *openness* as, "being receptive to new information, to others' ideas or arguments, and to different types of diversity (e.g. racial, cultural, religious)" (Garmon, 2005, p. 276). For example, Garmon (1998) discovered students from similar backgrounds who demonstrated a quality of openness were more prone to changing their beliefs and thus positively influenced by a multicultural education course than those who were not. Pohan (1996) found students coming into a teacher education program with strong biases and negative stereotypes about diverse groups were less likely to be open to new ideas addressed in multicultural education. More recently, Amos (2011) examined 54 White teacher candidates' reflection papers from his multicultural education course at a rural Pacific Northwest university. He found students held overall negative views of racial relations. However, they did not think these negative views would affect them in the classroom and did not acknowledge the overall benefits of being a part of a White racial group. They also saw themselves as victims of reverse racism. Amos concluded that students were, "stalled at the cognitive level and (the multicultural education course) did not influence their affective domain" (p. 489). What this research suggests is that to change dispositions toward diversity, pre-service teachers must already have an ability to be open to new concepts and others' perspectives. This may not be something teacher

educators have control over, but perhaps is something teacher preparation programs should seek out in perspective candidates.

Another important factor influencing changing dispositions is *self-reflexivity*. Garmon (2005) defines self-reflectiveness as, "having the ability and willingness to think critically about oneself" (p. 277). Furthermore, Howard (2003) believes, "to be culturally relevant, teachers need to engage in honest, critical reflection that challenges them to see how their positionality influences their students in either positive or negative ways" (p. 197). Additionally, Gay and Kirkland (2003) explain, ". . . teachers knowing who they are as people, understanding the contexts in which they teach, and questioning their knowledge and assumptions are as important as the mastery of techniques for instructional effectiveness" (p. 181). Gay and Kirkland (2003) found that some pre-service teachers were resistant to being self-reflective, especially in terms of race and cultural issues and were unwilling to examine their own biases and stereotypes. Sleeter (2001) explains many pre-service teachers embrace "colorblind" approaches in order to distract from differences and bring the idea that *we are all equal* to the classroom. In similar thought, Ullucci (2012) shared her critical concern in the preparation of teachers is helping them to make sense of race. In her own study over the course of four years, Ullucci conducted a document analysis of 110 pre-service teachers' autobiographies with a focus on race and culture. The assignment allowed a space for White teachers to understand their identities and how Whiteness focused in society. In a course entitled, "Identity and Teaching," Howard (2003) engaged his pre-service teachers in readings

pertaining to racial, ethnic, gender, and social class identities. He found that many of the students came to value critical reflection and how it aided them for teaching in culturally responsive ways. Problematically, what is missing from these studies is the application of what was learned in these courses and how it influenced pre-service teachers once they went into the classroom.

The final factor Garmon (2005) discusses involving changing teachers' dispositions is *a commitment to social justice*. Garmon defines social justice as, "a deep concern for achieving equity and equality for all people" (p. 278). He asserts teachers who bring awareness of social justice issues with them to their teacher preparation programs may be more receptive to discussing issues of race and inequality (which in turn yields change as indicated above regarding openness). Critics argue that attempting to assess teacher dispositions in a teacher education program imposes a professor's ideological views on students. However, Villegas (2007) contends that whether we like it or not, schools and teachers DO play a significant role in the stratification of our society. While teaching for social justice cannot be reduced to a disposition, teachers need a broad range of knowledge and skills, deep understanding of pedagogical concepts, and varied instructional strategies to build on strengths of HUS (Villegas, 2007).

Experiences.

Garmon (2005) also contends pre-service teachers' prior life experiences can greatly influence how they respond to diversity courses. He believes this is comprised of three main types of experiences: intercultural, educational, and support-based. Within

intercultural experiences, pre-service teachers are exposed to groups different from themselves. It is important to note that such exposure does not necessarily yield positive results, thus must be conducted in meaningful ways. Research has shown that field experiences exposing pre-service teachers to urban school settings can impact students' attitudes and beliefs (Groulx, 2001; Mason, 1999; Ukpokodu, 2004). However, Gallego (2001) and Haberman and Post (1992) have also warned that it can serve to reinforce students' stereotypes if left without supervision and mentoring.

Secondly, educational experiences can be meaningful, however, to be truly effective, such experiences "must be comprehensive and long term, providing appropriate information, experiences, and support for teacher candidates throughout their preparation program and even into the early stages of their in-service teaching, if possible" (Garmon, 2005, p. 281). Teacher educators must provide safe environments for pre-service teachers to challenge their existing beliefs and to learn how to engage in self-reflection (one of the desired dispositions).

Barnes (2006) conducted a study on 24 pre-service teachers in a required "Methods for Teaching Beginning Reading" course. The pre-service teachers had previously taken courses in multicultural education and children's literature. However, their only former school experiences were in rural, private, or religious schools. The course required pre-service teachers to do their field experience in a public, urban elementary school implementing the knowledge and skills acquired during the semester. The study reported that pre-service teachers' perceptions of minority students shifted to a

more positive view due to the course and the exposure to students in the urban school. Unfortunately, as seen in this study, many teacher education programs are isolated from possibilities that might enable students to develop critical pedagogies in their practice, but this does not mean students should not be exposed to issues of diversity that could enhance critical reflection in the future. Walker-Dalhouse and Dalhouse (2006) conducted a pretest and posttest study on 92 White pre-service teachers enrolled in a diversity seminar. They found the pre-service teachers to be more culturally aware and less likely to refer HUS students for special education services after the seminar. Mueller (2006) examined eight, White pre-service elementary school teachers. Using life histories, interviews, and classroom observations, she assessed how the diversity course the pre-service teachers were enrolled in affected their practice. The majority of the group shifted their belief systems and began to grapple with relationships between the individual and society. The pre-service teachers grew to believe that knowing where students came from would inevitability affect how you teach them. Gaining a deeper understanding of students' backgrounds could aid pre-service teachers to make learning experiences more relevant and effective.

The final experience Garmon (2005) explains is a support system that is set up to encourage prospective and novice teachers' personal growth. Barnett, Hopkins-Thompson, and Hoke (2002) reported that up to 50% of new teachers leave high-poverty, diverse schools within three years. Studies have confirmed that novice teachers lack the requisite knowledge to understand the complexities among classroom management,

behaviors, and academic tasks within the classroom (Melnick & Meister, 2008). The Southeast Center for Teaching Quality found that effective induction programs should provide novice teachers with continual support and ongoing guidance and assessment by experts in the field (Barnes et al., 2002). With this is mind, it is important to note that teacher education should not *end* with a degree. Rather it should be an ongoing process that allows both for critical reflection and dialogue between professionals.

All of these components outlined aid in the better understanding of how pre-service teachers' attitudes towards diversity can change. The ability of teacher preparation programs to have impact on pre-service teachers' pedagogy is greatly influenced by factors that are not always in teacher educators' control. However, teacher preparation programs do have choices over the types of candidates that they attract and whom they admit to their programs. While this discussion is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is useful to acknowledge how teachers respond to social justice courses and experiences is largely dependent upon their dispositions and experiences. The next section will discuss how we can prepare teachers for diversity to meet the needs of HUS and highlight research from studies demonstrating changes in pre-service teachers' beliefs.

Preparing Teachers for Diversity

As discussed, the current teaching force is unrepresentative of the students in which they aim to serve and problematically unprepared to deal with the changing demographics (Sleeter 2001; 2008a). Many researchers have suggested a potential reason

for continued disparities between students with low socioeconomic (SES) status and students of color compared to their White, middle-class counterparts is a disconnect between home and school cultures (Anton, 1999; Cho & Reich, 2008; Howard, 2003), especially in the expectations held for students (Bower & Klecka, 2009; Ferguson, 2003).

There have been studies addressing teacher educators' reflections and ideological shifts in teacher candidates regarding diversity. Noting that addressing multicultural issues is important to pre-service teachers, McFalls and Cobb-Roberts (2001) used the method of cognitive dissonance to reduce students' potential resistance to diversity issues. The research focused on investigating the use of cognitive dissonance as a means of reducing resistance to diversity on 124 White undergraduate students. One group read about White privilege and then were asked about what was learned; a second group received a lecture on cognitive dissonance then wrote about the connection between White privilege and lecture content. They concluded that cognitive dissonance created awareness and had the potential for reducing resistance to diversity issues in the classroom. Additionally, in a multicultural education course, Correa, Hudson, and Hayes (2004) collected pre and post-course concept maps and statements on multicultural education from 45 pre-service teachers. They found, upon completion of the course, students' awareness of diversity was heightened and they shifted from focusing on differences between people to describing how instructional strategies can be differed in a diverse classroom.

These studies demonstrate how pre-service teachers, specifically White teachers, often held deficit views and lower expectations toward diverse students, but there is possibility for change. As noted in the previous section, we know the dispositions and experiences pre-service teachers come in with can greatly affect how they respond to diversity courses. What these studies suggest is that there are possibilities for changes in beliefs through teacher education and professional development in efforts to effectively teach diverse populations.

Arguably, to meet the needs of the ethnically, linguistically, religiously and other diverse student populations, the nation's teaching force will need to be equipped with training to prepare for these unique characteristics. Substantial research exists demonstrating the benefits of tying curriculum to an individual student's culture (Banks, 2007; Cochran-Smith, 2004a; Delpit, 2006; Gay; 2010; Kopkowski, 2006; Kraft, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Lalas, 2007; Meece, 2003; Sleeter, 2011; Walker-Dalhouse, 2008). A promising alternative to traditional methods of closing the achievement gap (i.e. increased standardization and accountability) and providing more equitable education for ALL students is for teachers to explore other pedagogical practices that cater to the needs of such HUS. Given the call for teacher education programs to equip teachers with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to meet the needs of all student learners (NCATE, 2012), it is imperative that teacher preparation programs include coursework and experiences for pre-service teachers that embrace culturally relevant education with an emphasis toward social justice (to be explained in chapter 2).

The next section will explain the problem statement that sparked my initial interest in my dissertation topic.

Problem Statement: The Marginalization of Social Justice Courses

Social justices types of courses in teacher preparation such as social foundations in Education (SFE), multicultural education, trends and issues in education, and other foundational courses such as history, philosophy, and/or sociology of education are critical spaces teacher preparation programs need to help pre-service teachers meet the educational demands of diverse students.[12] The graphic below visually displays the influencing perspectives influencing SJTE as presented in this study (See Figure 1).

Many teacher education programs today are lacking courses addressing issues such as racism, equity, and access (Butin, 2005; deMarrais, 2005; Neumann, 2010). Butin (2005) argues that SFE is crucial for pre-service teachers to be able to think critically about their practice and advocate for changes in our educational system. Zagumny (2000) asserts that the kinds of knowledge, skills, and dispositions a teacher needs to possess in order to positively work in diverse environments are developed in SFE courses (as cited in Tozer & Miretzky, 2005).

Alarmingly, Tozer and Miretzky (2005) report that the future of SFE is at stake for two reasons. First, the protection of SFE type of courses was lost in the 1990s when state curriculum requirements reduced them in favor of outcomes-based assessment.

[12] The purpose of this dissertation is not to argue for what specific courses to include within teacher preparation. Rather, I argue that elements from such courses should be infused throughout teacher preparation as a means to develop pre-service teachers' culturally relevant pedagogies and reject deficit-based thinking.

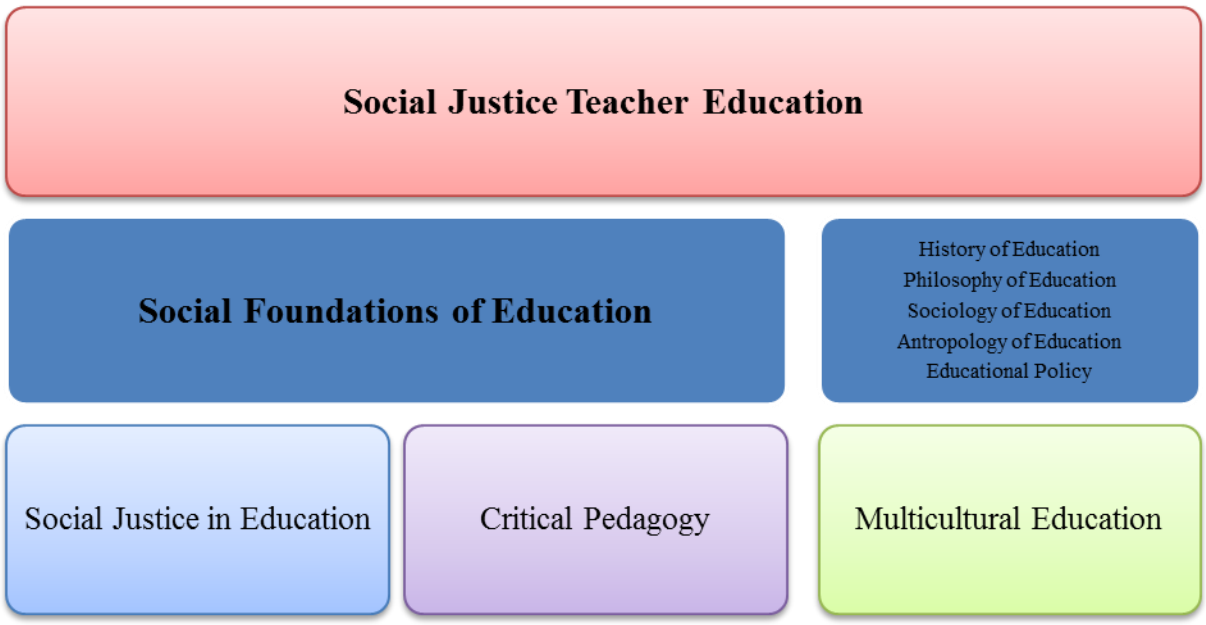

Figure 1: Framework of SJTE as portrayed in this study

Secondly, no such data documents how SFE preparation actually contributes to these outcomes-based assessments, making it impossible to defend their continued existence. Likewise, Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy (2001) assert, "there is no research that directly assesses what teachers learn in their pedagogical preparation and then evaluates the relationship of that pedagogical knowledge to student learning or teacher behavior" (p. 22). Additionally, Wasley and McDiarmid (2003) point out that while it is not difficult to track coursework taken by teachers, what does become challenging is understanding what teachers learned**.** Sleeter and Owuor (2011) contend that what happens when pre-service teachers leave their teacher preparation programs is not clear, and further research needs to be conducted. They state, "we need research that follows

teachers through their teacher preparation programs and into their first years of teaching so we can determine the extent and ways multicultural teacher preparation helps them to become better teachers" (p. 534). This dissertation seeks to address these gaps in the literature by understanding how a critical social justice focus group (CSJFG) (to be explained in further detail below) throughout teacher preparation impacted one group of intern teachers' and a beginning teacher's understandings and practice in the classroom.[13]

Thus far I have explained the demographic divide in schools, the understandings many pre-service teachers hold, as well as several variables influencing changes in attitudes and beliefs. I have also indicated the problem of diminishing social justice oriented courses, which could aid in developing teachers' understandings of diversity, however there is a gap in the literature suggesting these courses matter and make a difference in actual teacher practice. The purpose behind this explanation is to set the stage for what ultimately worries me in regard to the future of teacher education: a marginalization of the types of courses and experiences that I believe better aid future teachers in understanding the children and the context in which they will be teaching. Teacher education programs are responsible for developing critically conscious teachers who are prepared to effectively teach in diverse schools. This study explores the experiences of four intern teachers participating in a CSJFG. Within the CSJFG,

[13] Throughout this dissertation, when I refer to teacher education or teacher preparation, I do not mean to suggest a programmatic view of teacher education or to assess the teacher preparation program the participants are enrolled in. I use the terms "teacher preparation" or "teacher education" to refer to my specific participants' experiences throughout their own preparation.

participants read and discussed articles related to social justice issues. My goal is to explore their understandings of the material as they navigated their roles as intern teachers in public school settings. In particular, this study examines one novice teacher's experience as she progressed throughout her teacher education program and into her first and second years of teaching. This study will contribute to the literature I have discussed by narrating the understandings of intern/beginning teachers' understandings, experiences, and education in connection to their actual classroom practice. The next section sketches my plans for the study. First I explain how I designed the literature review to better aid in connecting the need of the study to the research design of this study. Next I layout the overarching methodology of this study and highlight who the participants are and what methods I employ to collect data. Lastly, I discuss how I will analyze my data using thematic analysis and narrative case study.

Overview of Literature Review

When initially searching for research to support the need for this study, I learned the direct connection from teacher preparation programs embracing social justice courses to producing effective teachers in practice was limited in my search. Additionally, although many frameworks such as SFE, multicultural education, culturally relevant pedagogy, social justice education, etc. all share similar goals, because many studies name themselves by different conceptual frameworks, research is often fragmented. Researchers are not talking to each other and connecting the dots to make a powerful argument for social justice in teacher education. Therefore, I found it necessary to sort

through two research bases for the literature review: a) educational theory related to conceptual and pedagogical foundations of teaching; specifically, culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010), culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994), and teaching for social justice (Cochran-Smith, 2004a; Gutstein, 2003)- all of which are placed under the umbrella "culturally relevant education" (Dover, 2013); and b) educational research related to how teaching with a culturally relevant education impacts student outcomes. In considering the conceptual and pedagogical foundations of teaching, I chose culturally responsive teaching, culturally relevant pedagogy and teaching for social justice, because collectively they represent the most frequently referenced and implemented approaches regarding closing achievement gaps for HUS.

In addition to explaining the conceptual foundation of this dissertation, my literature review highlights and synthesizes student outcomes associated with teaching with a culturally relevant education. Some outcomes are more traditionally measured through test scores, but culturally relevant education does not only rely on tests, thus other outcomes such as motivation and engagement are also documented. Given the current climate of accountability and reform (see chapter six for more on the climate of teacher education), this research is particularly important because research without a documented impact on student outcomes is unlikely to be considered valuable by policymakers (Desimone, Smith, & Phillips, 2007). This portion of the research synthesis is intended to highlight the elements of culturally relevant education that meet current accountability standards.

Overview of Research Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the experiences of four intern teachers participating in a CSJFG. Overall, 17 participants were included in the CSJFG, however, because I only followed one teacher into the classroom, I choose to focus on my analysis on the one focus group in which she participated. That focus group had four memebers. In particular, this study examines one of the teacher's experiences as she progressed throughout her teacher education program and into her first and second years of teaching. The specific research questions that I ask are:

(1) What are four intern teachers' understandings and experiences while participating in a critical social justice focus group?

(2) After participating in a critical social justice focus group during teacher education, what are one teacher's understandings of social justice, and in particular culturally relevant education?

(3) How do social justice understandings play out in practice? That is, what does one first-year teacher actually do in the classroom context? What obstacles might she face?

(4) What are the implications of these findings for teacher education programs in the U.S.?

These questions guided the exploration of both intern and first-year teachers' experiences while participating in this study.

Overview of Methodology

The methodology employed in the study integrates aspects of a constructionist research paradigm using ethnographic methods throughout data collection (Crotty, 1998). Additionally, a narrative case study is used to present the individual teacher's experiences as she progressed throughout her teacher education program and into her first and second years of teaching. These research methods have been selected for their exploratory nature that allows for multiple avenues to develop as I collected and analyzed the data (Butin, 2010). I will explain these processes in further detail in chapter three.

Given the nature of my study, ethnography was a suiting methodology, especially for a researcher wishing to conduct a study involving intern/novice teachers in practice. Specifically, I take a postcritical ethnographic approach (Noblit, Murillo, & Flores, 2004). To claim a postcritical ethnographic stance, I must be willing, not only to reveal oppression and power structures, but also critique them and myself throughout the research process, reflecting about the assumptions and frames brought to the research (Hytten, 2004). One goal of any ethnographic research is providing *thick descriptions.* Geertz (1973) explains that culture, "is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligently- that is, *thickly*- described" (p. 14). With this in mind, throughout the research process, I used multiple measures to collect data such as observations, interviews, document analysis, and reflective notes. Again, I will describe my methodological choices in more detail in chapter three.

Participants and methods.

Participants in this study were recruited from a required Educational Psychology class (EP401) that pre-service teachers took before their internship placements. As their former instructor, I only recruited students once their course grades were completed and I was no longer their teacher. Students from the Fall 2010 and Spring 2011 sections of EP401 were invited to participate in a CSJFG. I continued to recruit students and ended up with a total of 17 participants spread out between four focus groups. We met once a month for about an hour in a privately reserved library room to discuss the selected article for the month. Initially, I had planned to look for themes across all four focus groups including all my 17 participants in this study. Upon beginning my analysis, I realized my research questions involved what understandings intern teachers had related to the literature during their internship years and what this looked like in practice as they transitioned into the classroom. Given that time permitted me to follow only one teacher into the classroom, I decided I should just focus on the themes regarding understandings emerging from the one focus group where the practicing teacher was a participant.

One individual teacher, Sarah White[14], was observed in the classroom from September 2011 to January 2014 on average of one time per week. Sarah was also informally interviewed using a constructionist approach aiming for the Sarah to share her own challenges, frustrations, and successes as well as knowledge constructed through our social interactions (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Gergen, 1985; Shotter, 1993). I will

[14] Sarah White is a pseudonym that the participant chose for herself.

explain my research paradigm in more detail in chapter three. In addition to my observations and interviews, I also gathered other documentary evidence: lesson plans, teacher evaluations, student artifacts, and personal reflections shared by Sarah. As the data was collected, I attempted to become as familiar with the data as possible and kept my own reflection journal and created analytic memos during early analysis.

Analysis.

In order to analyze my data, I employ a thematic analysis of the focus group transcripts, observation/reflection notes, and the semi-structured interviews. A thematic analysis is "a process that involves coding and then segregating the data by codes into data clumps for further analysis and description" (Glesne, 2006, p. 147) to code and analyze the data collected. This process began by reading through all the transcripts, interviews, and field notes to determine initial codes. I decided to code in larger chunks so that I could capture the sense making of the participants and not lose meaning from their words. After reading through the data and creating initial and focused codes (Saldaña, 2009), I was able to sort and synthesis larger amounts of data by consolidating initial codes and fitting them into what might be considered "the big picture." I present the findings from the CSJFG in chapter four as the main themes.

The findings from my observations of Sarah will be presented as a narrative case study in chapter 5 and will be co-constructed with Sarah to truly represent the nature of this constructionist approach. Grbich (2007) explains narrative analysis focuses on stories shared by participants and reveals understandings that can be extremely helpful to a

researcher hoping to better understand an experience. The researcher's role here is to take the elements of such events and create a story, which highlights the overall message being shared as it, is beneficial to the research study. I used a similar method of thematically coded, but also used the literature on culturally relevant education (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Gay, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2002) as a framework for analysis. Coding and analyzing techniques are discussed more thoroughly in chapter three.

Outline of Forthcoming Chapters

This dissertation presents the results of the study summarized above and will consist of six chapters. This first chapter serves as an introduction and to provide a context for SJTE and what I deem as a troubling problem in teacher education: the marginalization of social justice types of courses in teacher preparation. I seek to build a strong and logical argument from the existing literature as well as my own beliefs and experiences to demonstrate the need for social justice courses as part of teacher education. This dissertation seeks to address the gaps in the literature by understanding how a CSJFG throughout teacher preparation impacts four intern teachers' and a first year teacher's understandings and practice.

The second chapter serves as a literature review and explains the conceptual framework of this study specifically in relation to work regarding culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994), culturally responsive teaching, (Gay, 2010) and what it means to teach for social justice (Cochran-Smith, 2009, Gutstein, 2003). This work is all integrated in a framework titled, culturally relevant education (Dover, 2013) which I

will use for cohesiveness throughout the study. This chapter aims to provide evidence for why employing culturally relevant practices in schools are beneficial for teachers and students.

In chapter three I provide a further developed explanation of the research design and methods used, specifically as they differ between the focus groups and the individual teacher. I provide an in-depth description of qualitative research and the postcritical ethnographic approach employed. I specifically reveal how participants were recruited and describe my data collection strategies: observations, focus group transcripts, interviews, documents, evaluations, and reflective journals. In the last part, I explain how I analyze the data using initial and focused coding (Saldaña, 2009). In the final part of chapter three I discuss establishing trustworthiness, my positionalitiy and the limitations of this study.

In Chapter four, I analyze the findings from the CSJFG presenting the main themes that emerged from the focus group transcripts. In chapter five I reveal the data collected from the one practicing teacher in the study. This data is presented in narrative form as a "shared story" between the participant and me. I provide both "rich and thick" descriptions from the observations I made in the classroom as well as the stories Sarah White shared throughout the research process. I attempt to weave the words of Sarah throughout this chapter to create a cohesive picture of Sarah's classroom that allows the reader to understand her experiences in her early years of teaching.

In the final chapter, I share a summary of the findings of this study. To contextualize my discussion, I then provide an overview of the landscape of SJTE today. Understanding this context, I conclude chapter six with a discussion of the educational implications of this study for teacher education, teacher educators, and educational leaders.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In chapter one, I explained how social justice teacher education (SJTE) came to be a part of teacher education through influential perspectives such as social foundations and multicultural education. I also explained the demographic conditions of schools today, what is known about White pre-service teachers' views toward diversity, and how teacher educators can change teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward diversity. This explanation served to set the stage for the problem highlighted in this study: the marginalization of social justice types of courses yielding spaces for critical reflection in teacher education programs in the U.S. It is complicated to defend the need for SJTE when there is limited research documenting its effectiveness in classroom practice (Grant & Agosto, 2008). While there is little research connecting what teachers' have learned regarding social justice while in teacher preparation in connection to classroom practice, there is research documenting teachers' attempts to teach for social justice in their classrooms (Copenhaver, 2001; Epstein, Mayorga & Nelson, 2011; Esposito & Swain, 2009; Gutstein, 2003; Hill, 2009; Nykiel-Herbert, 2010).

In this next chapter, I will explain the conceptual framework that will be used as an analytical basis for the research reported in this study, and synthesize such relevant research demonstrating its effectiveness. The purpose of this literature review is to: a) explain the pedagogical/conceptual framework culturally relevant education ; b) identify educational research related to how employing culturally relevant education impacts

student outcomes;[15] and c) provide a foundation for future empirical research on culturally relevant teaching in schools that moves beyond traditional applications of race and ethnicity.

Culturally Relevant Education

School desegregation efforts of the 1960s and 1970s elicited a new movement in education to more effectively teach diverse populations. [16] While the term *culturally relevant pedagogy* had not yet been coined, concepts like *culturally appropriate* (Au & Jordan, 1981), *culturally congruent* (Mohatt & Erikson, 1981), *culturally responsive* (Cazden & Legget, 1981), and *culturally compatible* (Jordan, 1985) began to materialize in the academic literature (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Sleeter, 2012). From this foundation, two primary frameworks emerged: *culturally responsive teaching* from the work of Geneva Gay (1975, 1980, 2000, 2002, 2010, 2013) and *culturally relevant pedagogy* from the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995a, 1995b, 2001, 2006b).

Additionally, Dover (2009) synthesized a framework for teaching for social justice adopted around several prominent scholars' work (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007; Banks, 1995; Cochran-Smith, 2004a; Gay 2010; Grant & Sleeter, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002) that, "share a commitment to promoting social and educational equity and justice" (p. 510). The integration of these frameworks

[15] It is important to note that student outcomes are not limited to standardized test scores. In this study, outcomes include increased student engagement and motivation.
[16] Portions of this section have been submitted for publication: Aronson, B., & Laughter, J. C. (under review). The theory and practice of culturally relevant education: A synthesis across content areas. *Review of Educational Research*.

is known as culturally relevant education (CRE, Dover, 2013) and is the guiding conceptual framework for the research supporting this study. I will begin by defining and then synthesizing Gay's and Ladson-Billings's definitions of culturally responsive teaching and culturally relevant pedagogy. I will then explain what it means to teach for social justice and how such concepts are related to CRE.

Geneva Gay: Culturally Responsive Teaching

Gay (2010) defines culturally responsive teaching as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p. 31). Culturally responsive teaching rests on six dimensions:

- Culturally responsive teaching is *socially and academically empowering* by setting high expectations for students with a commitment to every student's success. It promotes self-efficacy, student initiative, and academic competence;
- Culturally responsive teaching is *multidimensional* because it requires teachers to acknowledge cultural knowledge, experiences, contributions, and perspectives. It takes into account classroom climate and student-teaching relationships;
- Culturally responsive teaching *validates every student's culture*, bridging gaps between school and home through diversified instructional strategies and multicultural curricula;
- Culturally responsive teaching is socially, emotionally, and politically *comprehensive* as it seeks to educate the whole child;

- Culturally responsive teaching is *transformative of schools and societies* by using students' existing strengths to drive instruction, assessment, and curriculum design and to help students become critical;
- Culturally responsive teaching is *emancipatory and liberating from oppressive educational practices and ideologies* as it "lifts the veil of presumed absolute authority from conceptions of scholarly truth typically taught in schools." (Gay, 2010, p. 38)

While Gay's earlier work (1975, 1980) focused more on curriculum, her concept of culturally responsive teaching has evolved to focus on instruction with an onus of responsibility on the teacher (Gay, 2013).

Gay (2013) believes there are four actions essential to implementing culturally responsive teaching. The first requires replacing deficit perspectives of students and communities. Teachers must also understand the resistance to culturally responsive teaching from critics so they are more confident and competent in implementation. Gay (2013) suggests methods, like having teachers conducting their own analysis of textbooks to investigate how different knowledge forms affect teaching and learning. Additionally, teachers need to understand how and why culture and difference are essential ideologies for culturally responsive teaching given they are essential to humanity. Finally, teachers must make pedagogical connections within the context in which they are teaching.

Gloria Ladson-Billings: Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Ladson-Billings (1994) defines culturally relevant pedagogy as one "that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (pp. 16-17). Ladson-Billings (1995a) explains that culturally relevant pedagogy is a "pedagogy of opposition not unlike critical pedagogy but specifically committed to collective, not merely individual, empowerment" (p. 160). Ladson-Billings (1995b) describes a framework for culturally relevant pedagogy encompassing three components:

- Culturally relevant pedagogy thinks in terms of long-term *academic achievement* and not merely end-of-year tests. After later adopters of culturally relevant pedagogy began to equate student achievement with standardized test scores or scripted curricula, Ladson-Billings (2006b) clarified what more accurately described her intent: "'student learning' – what it is that students actually know and are able to do as a result of pedagogical interactions with skilled teachers" (p. 34).
- Culturally relevant pedagogy claims a focus on *cultural competence*, which "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" (Ladson-Billings, 2006b, p. 36). Culturally relevant pedagogues understand that students must learn to navigate between

home and school and must find ways to equip them with the knowledge needed to succeed in a school system that oppresses them (Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2006b; Urietta, 2005).

- Culturally relevant pedagogy seeks to develop *sociopolitical consciousness* and includes a teacher's obligation to find ways for "students to recognize, understand, and critique current and social inequalities" (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 476). This begins by teachers recognizing sociopolitical issues of race, class, and gender themselves and understanding the causes before then incorporating these issues within their own teaching.

Throughout Ladson-Billings's (1994, 1995a, 1995b, 2001, 2006b) development of culturally relevant pedagogy, she has demonstrated how the posture described by these three tenets might be employed in various social contexts, with diverse students, with established curricula, through classroom instruction, during teacher education, and as a framework for educational research. In her most recent work, Ladson-Billings (2014) "remixed" her original theory building from Paris's (2012) theory *culturally sustaining pedagogy.* Ladson-Billings asserts pedagogy should be ever evolving to meet the needs of students and "any scholar who believes that she has arrived and the work is finished does not understand the nature and meaning of scholarship" (p. 82). In her adoption of culturally sustaining pedagogy, Ladson-Billings explains rather than focusing on only racial or ethnic groups, this framework pushes researchers to consider global identities including what has developed in arts, literature, music, athletics, and film.

Synthesizing Gay and Ladson-Billings

Both Gay and Ladson-Billings provide useful frameworks to better understand how teachers can meet the needs of historically underserved students (HUS). Gay's focus is primarily on how teachers impact competency and methods through instruction, and describing what a teacher should be doing in the classroom in order to be culturally responsive, for example culturally responsive caring. Ladson-Billings's focus is primarily on teachers' attitudes and dispositions, describing the posture a teacher might adopt and how this, would influence planning, instruction, and assessment.

Both Gay and Ladson-Billings frameworks' unified under an umbrella of CRE, require teachers to be cognizant of their actions and the contexts in which they teach. They both discuss methods of teaching, or *pedagogy*, and adopt a critical stance in the definition of pedagogy:

> Pedagogy refers to a deliberate attempt to influence how and what knowledge and identities are produced within and among particular sets of social relations. It can be understood as a practice through which people are incited to acquire a particular 'moral character.' As both a political and practical activity, it attempts to influence the occurrence and qualities of experiences. When one practices pedagogy, one acts with the intent of creating experiences that will organize and disorganize a variety of understandings of our natural and social world in particular ways . . . pedagogy is a concept which draws attention to the process

through which knowledge is produced (Giroux and Simon, 1989, pp. 236-252 as cited in Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 14).

Teachers embracing CRE would adopt a pedagogy that is deliberate teachers would be able to acknowledge the *ways in which they teach.* In the next section I will expand the CRE framework by including social justice pedagogy as another supporting framework aligned with Gay and Ladson-Billing's work.

Teaching for Social Justice

The relationship between operationalizing CRE and a social justice education becomes clear in the consistency of their end goals. [17] In agreement with Esposito and Swain (2009), "The link between culturally relevant pedagogy and social justice pedagogy rests in the notion that both pedagogies aim to expose and eradicate the hegemony that permeates almost every aspect of society, including schools" (p. 39). Carlisle, Jackson, and George (2006) define social justice education as, "the conscious and reflexive blend of content and process intended to enhance equity across multiple identity groups (e.g. race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability), foster critical perspectives, and promote social action" (p. 57). Thus, teachers who share the goal to teach equitably and are critically reflective about their actions could be considered as employers of CRE.

[17] I will use the terms teaching for social justice (Cochran-Smith, 2004a; Dover, 2013, social justice education (Carlise et al., 20006), and social justice pedagogy (Gutstein, 2003) interchangeably as reflected in the literature.

Central to promoting social action and encouraging teachers to become change agents is the need to question inequality and the status quo. Gutstein (2007) posits a *pedagogy of questioning* as a classroom environment with characteristics co-created by the teachers and students. Students should be comfortable in their space to pose meaningful questions. Students are given the power in which to name their own realities. This can be done collaboratively with teachers, but the students themselves are the ultimate source of their identities. Once students begin to question, one line of questioning leads to another. One might say a goal of this kind of pedagogy is to have more questions following a conversation than when it began.

Gutstein (2007) explains, "Answers and truth" are provisional and relational, and students and teachers keep this in mind as they strive to unravel complex social phenomena- such as racism- and understand their interconnections and root causes" (p. 56). Such complexities should be out and open for students to analyze and engage in multiple perspectives. Questions should be tied to actions and social movements and not just posed by the teacher. Students should feel *they can* ask their teachers questions at any time they feel it is necessary when employing a *pedagogy of questioning.* In Table 1, I graphically present these scholars' work that demonstrate a commitment to social justice as defined above and will be the conceptual framework used to discuss the review of literature under the umbrella of culturally relevant education.

Table 1 Synthesizing Conceptual Framework of Culturally Relevant Education

Culturally Responsive Teaching	Culturally Relevant Pedagogy	Teaching for Social Justice
Social and Academic Empowerment	Academic Achievement	Teachers are aware of how inequalities in society are reproduced through normalizing schooling practices and seek change in society
Multidimensionality	Cultural Competence	*Pedagogy of Questioning* • Teachers pose questions to help students address sociopolitical dynamics • Students are a part of the solution
Cultural Validation	Sociopolitical Consciousness	
Social, emotional, and political comprehensiveness		
School and societal transformation		
Emancipatory actions from oppressive educational practices		

While the units of focus may differ, each of these conceptual frameworks present visions undergirded by a firm commitment to social justice and seeing the classroom as a site for social change. The ultimate goal of teaching for social justice is to combat oppression by enabling all groups to have an equitable portion of society's resources (Bell, 2007; Dover, 2013).[18] The label Culturally Relevant Education (CRE) is intended to include each of these foci.

[18] There have been ongoing debates regarding the multiple meanings of "social justice," and a focus on distribution (Young, 2006) versus an emphasis on redistribution (North, 2006). It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to resolve such tensions, thus it is important to note my definition of social justice education is in alignment with Carlise et al. (2006) "as the conscious and reflexive blend of content and process intended to enhance equity across multiple social identity groups (e.g., race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability), foster critical perspectives, and promote social action" (p. 57). I believe the key word here is "intended" and thus teachers should always have social justice at the forefront and continually be in self-reflexive mode to promote becoming

The foundation of this dissertation rests on the notion that teaching for social justice directly relates to Ladson-Billings (2006a) call for educators' moral obligation to close achievement gaps as discussed in the first chapter. The scholars described above have helped to provide a foundation for researchers interested in examining how employing CRE in the classroom impacts student outcomes (Dover, 2009).

As argued in chapter one, I believe social justice should be a part of teacher education and that courses and critical conversations pertaining to social justice issues aid in the development of CRE. Thus, demonstrating how culturally relevant education enhances student outcomes aids in making the case that social justice courses should be a part of teacher education. In the next section, I searched for literature relating to how employing CRE within K-12 classrooms impacted students. I will provide an in-depth synthesis of CRE across varying content areas and then proceed to how CRE might be used in future research across other social groups including gender, sexuality, and religion.

CRE in the Content Areas

While Sleeter (2012) asserts that research on the impact of CRE is limited in scope, there exists a sufficient body of research to provide insight on effectiveness. For example, some research connects teachers' use of CRE and increased engagement and interest in school, *suggesting* student learning (Copenhaver, 2001; Hill, 2009; Nykiel-Herbert, 2010). However, the studies that do exist, while helpful, are small-scale

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change agents for a more equitable world and promote social action toward that change.

studies.[19] Research on the preparation for culturally responsive teachers is also limited in scope and consists of small-scale studies (Sleeter, 2012).

Furthermore, the idea of CRE is not always consistent across studies and often contains only one or two of the tenets laid out by Gay or Ladson-Billings. For example, Morrison, Robbins, and Rose (2008) examined 45 classroom-based research studies between 1995-2008 highlighting how CRE was enacted in classrooms. Following Ladson-Billings's s framework, they classified twelve kinds of actions related to culturally relevant pedagogy. None of the 45 studies depicted all twelve aspects as outlined in their framework.

Many studies are structured around Gay or Ladson-Billings's s frameworks, but some studies have developed their own frameworks with varying definitions of CRE (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Young, 2010), including an explicit use of social justice pedagogy (Gutstein, 2003) or teaching for social justice (Cochran-Smith, 2004a; Dover, 2013). Some of the studies discussed below specifically follow Gay's or Ladson-Billings's s framework while others demonstrate extensions of these frameworks while maintaining a focus on social justice pedagogy. Appendix A includes a summary table of all the literature reviewed in Tables 7 through 14. I also include a section on approaches to CRE impacting multiple content areas before moving to research broadening the definition of culture to other demographic communities. To that end, in the next section I

[19] While this dissertation will add to the literature on SJTE, it is a small-scale study. I discuss this limitation in further detail in chapter three.

synthesize research building on CRE across content areas and communities to illustrate effectiveness as well as discuss challenges in implementation.

CRE in Mathematics

CRE has been critiqued for its lack of applicability to mathematics curriculum; however, over the past decades several studies have emerged making these connections (Howard, 2010). In a qualitative study at an African American middle school, Tate (1995) researched the type of mathematics pedagogy "African American students must negotiate to be successful in school" (p. 166). He found teachers who used community issues as a framework improved students' math proficiency. The students were able to incorporate the problems facing many African American communities to make mathematical learning more relevant to them. Despite the fact that Tate's study did occur in a gifted classroom not required to follow state-mandated curricula, the study did provide a useful foundation for other scholars to build upon.

Ensign (2003) analyzed second, third, and fifth grade mathematics classrooms in two urban Northeastern schools. Teachers and students created math problems connected to students' personal lives. Pre and Post-tests indicated a trend toward higher student scores as well as an increased interest in math as reported by the students. Ensign (2003) concluded, "Interest in mathematics (as reported by the students in individual interviews and also as noted in classroom observations of time on task and involvement in mathematics lessons) also increased noticeably when students' out-of-school problems were included in classroom lessons" (p. 419). In another classroom, university

researchers collaborated with a classroom teacher to bring together students' and families' knowledge and experiences. Civil and Khan (2001) participated in a gardening project focused on measurement standards for five months in an elementary classroom. Interviews and observations were conducted with the students to probe their understandings. They found students were able to engaged in "math talk" and make important connections that became "personal and meaningful" (Civil & Khan, 2001, p. 401). Despite the differing grade levels, Tate, Ensign, and Civil and Khan's studies demonstrated through the legitimization of the students' culture and everyday lives, an interest in mathematics could occur and in turn improve academic achievement and engagement.

To further illustrate this point, Gutstein (2003) conducted a two-year study regarding the role of social justice in an urban, Latina/o classroom. He was both the teacher and researcher in 7th and 8th grade classrooms where he collected data through participant observation, surveys, and textual analysis. To establish his goals for instruction, Gutstein explained,

> An important principle of a social justice pedagogy is that students themselves are ultimately part of the solution to injustice, both as youth and as they grow into adulthood. To play this role, they need to understand more deeply the conditions of their lives and the sociopolitical dynamics of their world. Thus, teachers could pose questions to students to help them address and understand these issues. (p. 39)

Throughout his research, Gutstein created lessons centered on controversial issues affecting students. The class began to examine inequalities and discrimination not only in the mathematics world, but also in other areas of life. For example, upon using traffic-stop data, students acknowledged the realization of racial profiling. Gutstein's study moved a step beyond cultural competence to sociopolitical consciousness when the "students overwhelmingly showed evidence of connecting mathematical analysis to deeper critiques of previous assumptions" (p. 53).

Despite such encouraging examples, there still is ongoing critique as to how teachers can foster pedagogical content knowledge while enacting CRE and the usefulness of learning such in teacher preparation programs. To address these concerns, Aguirre and Zavala (2013) developed a *culturally responsive mathematics teaching (CRMT)* tool "designed to provide guideposts for teachers to plan and analyse their mathematical lessons among multiple dimensions that include children's mathematical thinking, language, culture, and social justice" (p. 171, emphasis in original,). As part of a large professional development study, the researchers focused on a case of six beginning teachers who had recently graduated from a mathematical methods course. The participants of the study agreed to be a part of several professional development workshops emphasizing CRMT as well as participate in semi-structured interviews. The researchers successfully provided evidence that through critical teacher reflection and meaningful lesson planning, teachers can effectively analyze and critique mathematics lessons and foster *purposeful pedagogical dialogue* while adhering to standards set by the

Common Core Initiative and the National Council for Teachers of Mathematics. Unfortunately, no additional information was given regarding students' academic achievement.

In the previous example, teachers reported their students' experiences engaging in CRE. In contrast, Hubert (2013) conducted a case study examining *students'* perspectives of the effects of culturally relevant mathematics instruction on their attitudes and interests toward math. This study was conducted at an alternative high school in the South in which 37 students placed "at-risk" participated in a culturally relevant math class. Five of the students who consistently attended class were interviewed and completed a pre and post-assessment on the assigned topic quadratic and exponential functions. The researcher taught math lessons relating to themes in the students' lives such as teen pregnancy, perinatal HIV, teen smoking, football and soccer, and saving money. On average, Hubert found students who participated in the culturally relevant math lesson increased by at least one letter grade and the students felt more confident to take their state-wide assessment.

A few dissertation studies have also looked at the impact of CRE on traditional student achievement. Langlie (2009) sought to understand if Black and Hispanic students taught by mathematics teachers who practiced a teaching pedagogy in line with CRE would achieve higher on standardized tests. Standard multiple regression analysis was used to understand the level of CRE for students' math teachers. Data was compiled from the National Educational Longitudinal Study using questionnaires obtained from students

and comparing it with performance on state standardized tests. Langlie reported that Black and Hispanic students whose mathematics teachers' emphasized awareness about the importance of math in their everyday lives and encouraged students achieved higher academically.

Fulton (2009) also sought to understand the relevance of culturally responsive math instruction. In a case study of three middle-school math teachers at a diverse Colorado school, Fulton observed math lessons and interviewed teachers. Additionally, Fulton conducted student focus groups to better understand student perspectives. She found teachers organized strong learning communities, encouraged students, adjusted instruction based on student needs, and created challenging learning goals. She concluded, "The results of culturally responsive teaching include not only deeper learning of content, but also, an opportunity for students' to learn to value their own and each other's differing perspectives that supports the development of stronger democratic citizenship" (p. iii).

CRE in Science

CRE has also proven effective in science classrooms. CRE complements the *National Science Education Standards* given scientific inquiry allows students to construct their own knowledge and that science is a natural medium for collaboration (Johnson, 2011). Milner (2011) sought to understand the kinds of experiences necessary to help teachers build cultural competence in the classroom. For 19 months he conducted research with one middle school White teacher nominated by his principal. He found the

teacher was able to build cultural congruence with his highly diverse students by creating a community of learners, being an active listener, and recognizing all the identities in his classroom.

Additionally, in efforts to demonstrate a more equitable science practice, Johnson (2011) developed a Transformative Professional Development (TPD) framework designed to guide practicing science teachers in translating CRE into practice. For three years, she observed two middle school teachers of a growing population of Hispanic students. Through the use of interviews, focus groups, journals, and field notes Johnson concluded that the TPD model successfully created a more effective instructional environment for Hispanic students.

Similarly, Laughter and Adams (2012) sought to engage middle school science students in thinking about how larger societal structures influenced their everyday lives during a lesson on inquiry. Laughter, a teacher educator, worked collaboratively with Adams, an intern science teacher, to integrate Derrick Bell's (1992) story, *Space Traders,* into an urban characteristic middle school science classroom. Through the use of online discussions and semi-structured interviews, the researchers analyzed their data using Ladson-Billings's three dimensions of culturally relevant pedagogy, one of the few reports of research to address all three tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy. Understanding that academic success is more than what a standardized test reports, Laughter and Adams concluded students demonstrated an appropriate understanding of how bias can affect science practice. Within the classroom, they witnessed active

participation of students during the lesson and found evidence of "students connecting scientific bias to societal bias and a questioning of the positivist mythology of science as an unbiased knowledge" (p. 1122). Furthermore, Laughter and Adams stated, "We believe the students' willingness to openly wrestle with this issue demonstrated a novel application of Bell's short story to the students' own realities and thus academic success in the application of the science content" (p. 1124). Interestingly, Laughter and Adams pointed out that while the students grew up in a decade of war, they did not voice an awareness of issues of violence. This conclusion indicated a need for further extension of lessons on inquiry (not just one stand-alone lesson) and the potential for "culturally relevant science teaching" in the classroom (Johnson, 2011).

Dimick (2012) sought to understand how student empowerment aligned with teaching and learning for social justice in an environmental science classroom. Through a qualitative case study consisting of one White male teacher, Mr. Carson, and 24 students (nine of whom participated in the study), Dimick acted as a participant observer examining curriculum and texts, conducted pre and post interviews, as well as held five focus group sessions with students to understand their experiences throughout a social justice science lesson. Mr. Carson hoped to raise consciousness of environmental problems of a nearby river and connected these issues to larger societal injustices contributing to the rivers' pollution. The students travelled to Green River to better understand the problems and followed-up with a "river action project" in which they chose ways they could be politically active in their communities. In alliance with a CRE

framework, this project created real-life experiences that legitimized students' understandings and realities. Mr. Carson began the project taking the students to Green River and allowed the students to create an action plan evolving from their own perceptions of the issue at hand rather than simply lecturing about the river and assessing them on pollution. Additionally students were able to create non-traditional projects, such as informative rap songs and an organized cleanup as an expression of their learning. In turn, students who were not previously interested in science took part in these projects and actively engaged in the lesson.

CRE in History/Social Studies

Epstein, Mayorga, and Nelson (2011) contend research demonstrates how culturally responsive social studies can teach students to think critically about issues such as race and power in U.S. history. However, missing from the literature are the effects of such practices on students' historical and contemporary understandings. Thus, Epstein et al. (2011) wanted to discover how culturally responsive teaching practices affected African American and Latina/o students' view on racial groups in the U.S. This study was conducted in a small urban public high school in an eleventh grade humanities class. Students were asked to write about the eight most important historical events in U.S. history at both the beginning and end of the year. Research has shown teachers have concerns regarding how racism is addressed in the curriculum, especially history textbooks, and teachers are often uncomfortable discussing such issues with students (Epstein et al., 2011). In this study, the teachers presented issues on institutional racism

and oppression effectively broadening the students' recognition toward people of color and their contributions to society. Part of engaging in CRE requires a teacher to develop a knowledge base about cultural and ethnic diversity and be able to incorporate this knowledge into the classroom (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995b). In this study, the positive impacts of CRE practices with students are illustrated, however it should be noted the particular school in this study received a great deal of freedom in developing instructional practices, which could be looked at as a limitation in applying these results to other public school settings. It is difficult to advocate for CRE in similar environments that have more constraints, especially if increasing test scores rather than empowering students is the main objective.

Due to such accountability restrictions, Esposito and Swain (2009) wanted to understand how teachers forced to use scripted curricula successfully taught for social justice. Through in-depth interviews and focus groups with seven urban teachers they found teaching for social justice involved risk, time, and self-reflection. For example, one of the teachers held strong views about how curriculum perpetuated social injustices in students' lives and used teachable moments with the Pledge of Allegiance and Thanksgiving to discuss varying perspectives. When employing CRE in the classroom, teachers should possess a sociopolitical awareness that translates into their instruction and thus engages students in critical reflection as the teachers in this study demonstrated.

Choi (2013) reported a case study of an 8th grade social studies teacher, Mr. Moon, at an alternative public high school designed for newcomer English language

learner (ELL) students. The school's approach grouped students in interdisciplinary clusters centered on particular themes rather than age level or achievement and also employed project-based assessment approaches instead of state-mandated tests. Mr. Moon was a Korean-American teacher who was noted for his exemplary practice and ability to work with ELLs. Holding a strong belief that the state social studies curriculum was too Eurocentric, Mr. Moon, "streamlined the official curriculum and shifted its approach to global, multicultural citizenship in order to better address the needs of his newcomer students" (p. 14). Through observation, teacher interviews, and student artifacts, Choi (2013) found Mr. Moon's curriculum had emotional appeal to student, enhanced their academic achievement, and provided a safe place for students to openly critique official knowledge.

In a participant research study, Martell (2013) chose to analyze his own classroom and teaching practices. At an economically, racially, and diverse urban high school outside of Boston, Martell studied his U.S. history classes for one year, including 49 students of color. He re-created a history curriculum that included multiple interpretations of the past that catered directly to his students' cultural and ethnic backgrounds. For example, he included many missing elements from the history curriculum that related to the students of color in his classroom (i.e. slave revolts, Black Panthers, and L.A. Riots). Martell (2013) used *inquiry as stance* to question issues of power, equity, and social justice in the curriculum. He used multiple methods of data collection including surveys, student interviews, teacher journals, and student artifacts.

Through the use of descriptive statistics to analyze the survey results, and code the data from the open-ended questions, interviews, and reflections, Martell (2013) identified three main themes: students' learning, student identity, and teacher identity. Throughout the study, Martell focused on facilitating students' cultural competence and creating student-teacher relationships that were "equitable and reciprocal" (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 480). When survey results revealed that the high proportion of Brazilian students' history still felt unheard, he went to the students to seek answers. Overall, Martell (2013) found 87.5% of the students of color felt that the activities in class helped them to see history through another lens and 71.4% of the students said they now liked learning about history. He also ran *t*-tests to compare White students answers to students of color and found no statistical difference. He suggested, "by using culturally relevant pedagogy, I helped increase my students of color's connection to history, while consequently not alienating the White students in the class" (p. 73). In this study, Martell (2013) also adhered to tenets of CRE by conducting research within his own classroom to provide more equitable and effective learning opportunities for students (Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2006b).

Similarly, in a Chicago public high school, Stovall (2006), facilitated six workshops during a thematic unit with 19 African American and Latina/o students. The sessions stemmed from issues originating from hip-hop lyrics (selected by the facilitator) and students kept reflective journals throughout the process. Students critically engaged in discussions surrounding the rappers' intentions when writing and questioned truths

previously taught in history classes. The facilitators also complimented the hip-hop lyrics with Howard Zinn's (1995) book *A People's History of the United States* to further reinforce the notion of multiple vantage points in the telling of history.

Coughran (2012) investigated CRE concepts through her own action research for her Master thesis. Using a convenience sample from a kindergarten classroom, Coughran taught two twenty minute CRE lessons a week for two months during social studies. She used video-taped lessons, reflections, and interviews with 8 of the students as sources of data. She found that by connecting students' lived experiences to the curriculum, they were better able to understand racism and the lessons strengthened the relationship between herself and the students.

CRE in English Language Arts

A significant part of CRE is a connection to students' lives and an obligation to aid in the empowerment of students. Several studies reveal how using culturally relevant materials engage students in the English Language Arts (ELA) classroom (Conrad, Gong, & Sipp, 2004; Feger, 2006; Hefflin, 2002; Morrison, 2002). For example, Hip-hop pedagogy is one way of teaching and engaging students about societal issues plaguing their communities through lyrics and content-related connections to poetry. Hip-hop can give youth a voice to speak about the tensions and struggles in their communities while increasing sociopolitical awareness. The work of listening to these lyrics can help students increase their cultural fluency as well as "move fluidly across genres and cultural boundaries" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. *ix*). Prier (2012) asserted:

> Hip-hop is one of the most potent and relevant urban youth subcultures by which we can analyze the cultural dimensions and interactions between race, class, and gender as it relates to the African American male experience in education and the larger society . . . Many of these youth have been disengaged alienated, and displaced from the urban school system a long time ago. They do not see themselves in the official school curriculum. (p. xxxi)

Prier (2012) believed that through critical knowledge of hip-hop, students, especially African American males, can "define and construct the work on their terms" (p. xxxiv).

In one example, Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2002) sought to utilize hip-hop music and culture as a means to forge a critical discourse among students' lives while promoting academic literacy and critical consciousness. Within a traditional senior English poetry class that covered poetry from the Elizabethan to the Romantics period, the researchers situated hip-hop as a genre of poetry to make the assignment relatable to the students. Following the basic tenets of critical pedagogy, students were able to engage in a critical dialogue and well as make connections to larger social and political issues. For example, students were able to make connections between *canonical poems* and rap music such as Shakespeare's *Sonnet 29* and *Affirmative Action* by Nas. In this study, hip-hop pedagogy is one example of how we might close cultural gaps and to see the power and potential of pedagogy.

In another study, Duncan-Andrade (2007) formulated a framework for successful teaching after observing four highly effective urban teachers in South Los Angeles. He

discovered teachers must have a critically conscious purpose, they must have a sense of responsibility, they must commit time for preparation, they must have a socratic sensibility, and there must be trust in student-teacher relationships. Duncan-Andrade reported these highly effective teachers regarded students' real-life experiences as legitimate and made them a part of the official curriculum. Additionally teachers and students engaged in a "collective struggle against the status quo" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, pp.117-18). It is not merely *what* you teach, but also *how* you teach with the students.

Robbins (2001) shared a descriptive record of his attempts to incorporate culturally relevant texts in his 7th and 8th grade writing classrooms. His classroom was unique in that it represented students from both White and Mexican backgrounds in which he aimed to connect lessons to issues faced by the students (i.e. if whether Mexicans should learn English). Students were expected to hold critical conversations and listen to each other's viewpoints. Robbins shared, "they connected experiences with diverse peers to negative images which were/are present in media and in their parents' work places (p. 25). Both the White students and the Mexican students reported feelings of empowerment and were open to the idea of perspective taking.

There are a few qualitative dissertations seeking to understand how CRE can improve student engagement and motivation. Ortega (2003) investigated narratives that emerged from students and their teacher who implemented CRE in her American Literature class composed largely of Hispanic students. Data for this qualitative study was gathered over two years and was collected primarily from interviews and classroom

observations. This participating teacher acknowledged her students' backgrounds and built her curriculum around their interests. For example, the participating teacher chose novels such as *House on Mango Street* (Cisneros, 1984) and *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fist Fight in Heaven* (Alexie, 1993) which centered around student related themes. Students also reported the teacher's commitment to caring as part of their success in this classroom.

Similarly, Hill (2012) conducted a mixed method dissertation study examining 52 effective culturally responsive strategies in a predominantly African American high school during a literacy block. Hill compared the effective practices of two highly effective teachers nominated by the principal, other teachers, and students using a quantitative survey instrument and other qualitative methods. After conducting over 20 observations and teacher interviews, Hill found the teachers' were successfully able to increase students' engagement and motivation. For example, when reading *The Outsiders* (Hinton, 1967), students had to select a character from the book that they could identify with and compare the character's internal and external conflicts as written during the 1950s to their own internal and external conflicts they might be facing today. This aided in the connection of the literature to the students' own personal lives. Hill (2012) shared:

> The students were motivated to complete the assigned tasks, not only because it was assigned, but because they enjoyed working together, the task was meaningful to them that they could relate to or identify with and it appeared that

> they enjoyed pleasing their teacher based on the genuine respect each showed towards one another. As the students became more engaged in the subject matter and learning process that was relevant to their lives, they became more confident in their ability to learn (Toney, 2009). The students were able to use their own cultural backgrounds and personal experiences as referents to many of the lessons prescribed to the students. (p. 150)

In alignment with CRE, students were able to feel like they had a voice and were empowered to dissect many of the struggles they faced in their lives to better understand the material.

In Johns' (2008) dissertation, he thought to understand how a professional development group committed to developing CRE supported teachers in effectively transforming their practice with emergent bilingual students. This qualitative case study took place in predominantly Mexican American school district, including 14 middle and high school teachers who participated in *Abriendo Caminos*, a professional development program for emergent bilingual students. In addition to interviewing teachers, 39 middle school students were also interviewed. Teachers' participation in *Abriendo Caminos* enhanced students' overall literacy gains

There have also been quantitative studies that have attempted to connect CRE traditional student outcomes. Bui and Fagan (2013) evaluated the effects of an Integrated Reading Comprehension Strategy (IRCS) through a culturally responsive teaching

framework. In this quasi-experimental study, 49 fifth-grade students from diverse backgrounds were given a reading inventory. One group of students participated in the IRCS which included story grammar instruction, story maps, accessing prior knowledge, prediction methods, and word maps, while the other group participated in the same IRCS plus the added elements of multicultural literature and cooperative learning (IRCS Plus). While both groups mean scores for word recognition, reading comprehension, and story retell increased significantly, there were no statistically significant differences between the groups. However, the IRCS Plus group was able to move students from a frustrational level to above instructional level in overall reading and, "adding multicultural literature and cooperative learning did not hinder the students' reading performance" (Bui & Fagen, 2013, p. 66). This suggests that the students may have been more engaged in the lesson because of its relatability. While the results may not have indicated an overwhelming difference between the two groups using the reading inventory instrument, other factors such as motivation and self-efficacy were not reported which is also a factor of student success in CRE.

In his quantitative dissertation study, Caballero (2010) sought to determine whether or not teacher-student relationships, teacher expectations, and culturally relevant pedagogy had a direct impact on student achievement as measured by the California Standards Test (CTS). A sixty-item survey called the Teacher-Student Relationship Questionnaire (TSRQ) was given to 7^{th} and 8^{th} grade Language Arts students. While descriptive statistics found a significant relationship between the students' perceptions of

their teacher-student relationships and academic growth, additional statistical analysis did not. Again, these results are in correlation to results of the CTS and do not include students' perceptions of motivation and engagement.

CRE across Multiple Content Areas

In addition to content-specific studies engaging CRE, I also found examples in non-traditional content areas and programmatic approaches impacting multiple content areas. Hastie, Martin, and Buchanan (2006) conducted a study with two White teachers seeking to create a culturally relevant physical education lesson for a class of sixth grade African American students. Using a teacher as researcher framework they kept a log of their daily reflections and had field notes taken by independent observers. The White teachers learned about "stepping," which is typically seen in the African American community and developed out of Black fraternities and sororities. Stepping involves using one's body as an instrument to create sound and dance. While there were some concerns regarding the legitimacy of their instruction, the researchers concluded that the "children seemed to enjoy the lessons and gave the impression that they accepted [them] as teachers" (Hastie et al., 2006, pp. 301-02). Overall, after implementing the step lesson, participation increased, behavior improved, and students were actively engaged in the content.

Howard (2010) worked for over two years with the African American Learners Initiative (AALI) in the Los Angeles Unified School District. The aim of his work investigated "how teachers may use students' cultural knowledge in ways that increase

student engagement, improve learning, and enhance students' levels of comprehension of academic content" (Howard, 2010, p. 78). Specifically, he observed how the Culture and Language Academy (CLAS) used African American culture to aid student success. He gave the example of Mrs. Johnston, a fifth grade teacher, who while never directly stating she employed CRE, demonstrated elements of it such as a belief that all students can learn and the importance of knowing who her students were. She used a rigorous writing program that allowed for students to choose their own topics relevant to them, such as reasons for why kids join gangs or why teachers should not give homework. Howard (2010) did not give explicit details as to how successful the students were in completing the assignment; rather he focused on demonstrating how Mrs. Johnston utilized culturally relevant education in light of a highly standardized accountability environment to keep students engaged and motivated.

Howard (2010) also described his work with the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Program (GEAR UP) at a high school in Southern California. GEAR UP was intended as a support program for students interested in further support for college entry. The program was, "embedded in an authentic and genuine care and concern for the students, coupled with an ongoing commitment to rigorous, high quality, individualized and small-group tutoring and academic support for students" (p.84). Upon implementing tenets from CRE, students who were consistent participants in the GEAR UP program performed significantly better on standardized tests. While testing is not the only measure of academic success the GEAR UP program

did help students gain confidence in their abilities to perform, which in turn raised their overall academic performance (Howard, 2010).

Cammarota and Romero (2009) aimed to develop a program for Chicana/o youth given the high rates of attrition occurring in the Tucson Unified School District. Their Social Justice Education Project (SJEP) embraced a three-pronged educational philosophy emphasizing "cooperative learning, compassionate student-educator relationships, and social justice content (p. 465). They referred to their approach as *critically compassionate intellectualism* with an aim to raise "critical awareness and their academic improvement" (p. 465). Over four semesters, students participated in curriculum structured around Chicana/o studies, critical race theory, and a participatory action research project. Teachers used "problem-posing" questions to prompt discussion around the social and economic problems affecting students' families, but it was the students who investigated and drew their own conclusions around the issues (Cammarota & Romero, 2009).

One student brought up issues of his deteriorating neighborhood and how its image affected people's attitudes about where he lived. Sociopolitical awareness emerged when students determined the local government kept the White neighborhoods in shape while neglecting their own. Students were encouraged to become activists within their community. One student said, "We know that we need to stand up. We are conscious, and we need to use our conscience for justice, and to fight racism" (Cammarota & Romero, 2009, p. 471). Students' testimonials, along with surveys and

tests scores, allowed Cammarota and Romero (2009) to "conclude there is a strong correlation between students' participation in the SJEP and the development of an academic identity, increase[s] in academic proficiency, and improvement on the AIMS test" (p. 473).

After receiving much critique from conservative politicians asserting SJEP (a part of a larger project called Mexican American Studies) promoted overthrow of the U.S. Government and resentment toward White people (Romero, 2011), Cabrera, Milem, and Marx (2012) sought to understand the relationship between students in the project and their overall achievement. The researchers observed cohorts between the years 2008-2011 (N=1,587). In this study, they defined academic success as passing the state standardized test after initial failure and graduating from high school. They found students who failed at least one standardized test initially were significantly more likely to ultimately pass all three. They also found that participation in the program was a significant, positive predictor of graduation for three of the four cohorts ranging from students being 46%- 150% more likely to graduate. Ultimately, they found no empirical evidence that adversely affected student achievement.

Lastly, employing CRE has also proved to be effective in maintaining productive learning environments. In a qualitative study with thirteen different urban teachers varying from 1st grade to 12th, Brown (2003) discovered that the use of culturally responsive management styles elicited positive results for students. He concluded, "Effective urban teaching involves implementing culturally responsive communication

processes and instructional strategies, developing respectful student/teacher relationships, and recognizing, honoring, and responding to the many cultural and language differences that exist among students" (p. 278).

CRE across Communities

The literature reviewed in the previous section specifically dealt with CRE in terms of race and ethnicity, reflecting the demographic communities from which these frameworks emerged. Teachers, however, employing CRE promote equity within their classroom across race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and religion. In this next section, while I artificially separate these communities, I believe that the intersectionality of communities and identities (Crenshaw, 1995) will only benefit from including CRE applications across demographic labels.

Culture is not limited to race or ethnicity. Although Gay (2013) asserted these were her priorities, she acknowledged other scholars might focus on issues such as gender, sexual orientation, social class, or linguistic diversity. Culture is a dynamic system consisting of "social values, cognitive codes, worldviews, and beliefs used to give order and meaning to our own lives as well as the lives of others" (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991, as cited by Gay, 2010, pp. 8-9). As Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) have discussed, individuals define themselves through ethnicity and race, as well as gender, class, language, region, religion, exceptionality, and other demographic labels.

Most research explores CRE in connection to race and ethnicity; however practitioners and scholars alike often acknowledge the need to address gender, sexual

orientation, religion, and other diversities present in classrooms. To expand my synthesis, I reviewed research connecting CRE frameworks to broader communities. In my initial search for peer-reviewed journal articles, I found no articles using the terms "gender," "sexual orientation," or "religion" in connection to CRE in any database. As such, I searched for examples of studies and anecdotal accounts that best matched the purpose of this literature review. The research reported above was much more systematic and therefore employed distinct methodology and research questions. Because research regarding CRE in connection to other social justice issues beyond race/ethnicity is virtually nonexistent, this section is reported in a different format than the previous sections on race and ethnicity. Nevertheless, I believe the examples shared still report useful conclusions that are relevant to CRE but also acknowledge a critical need for further research connecting CRE to communities outside of race/ethnicity. Given there is no precedence connecting CRE to communities outside of race and ethnicity, I begin each section setting the stage for gender, sexual orientation, and religion issues in schools and society to better understand how CRE can be used and also highlight the gaps for further research.

CRE in Gender

Gender equity in education is a complex issue influenced by both historical and sociological factors. In agreement with Skelton (2006), "gender is a system of relations where masculinity is privileged, but both masculinity and femininity are intersected by other variables such as 'race', ethnicity, religion, social class and sexuality" (p. 140).

Recent trends have focused on the issue of boys underperforming girls in literacy during elementary years and some scholars have identified *feminization* as a root cause (Francis & Skelton, 2005). However, such claims do not address the convoluted and nuanced factors contributing to these learned identities in schools (Skelton, 2006). Heteronormative, masculine, and hegemonic language, knowledge, and structures still permeate our schools. Girls are expected to be feminine, displaying characteristics focused on appearance, passive behavior, and preparing for roles as caregivers. Boys are expected to be masculine, displaying characteristics of independence, unemotional, and preparing for roles as the primary source of income (Smiler, 2009). Thus, there is a continual need to work toward gender equity in classrooms and adopting CRE is one avenue to promote such.

Ennis (1999) was the only study found connected directly to CRE. Ennis sought to implement culturally relevant teaching practices that were more meaningful and applicable to girls in physical education. In this study, seven teachers and fifteen girls participated in a "Sports for Peace" curriculum focused on "conflict negotiation, self and social responsibility, and care and concern for others" (p. 35). The researchers conducted observations and in-depth interviews with the teachers and students throughout the implementation process. The findings suggested the "Sport for Peace" curriculum improved the engagement for girls in the physical education program as well as the boys' attitudes towards girls' ability and motivation to participate in sport. Ladson-Billings (1994) argues when using a CRE approach, individuals should feel safe in their

environment, thus enhancing perceptions of success. Ennis (1999) believed the use of "Sport for Peace" curriculum aided teachers with curricular structures that promoted positive images of girls increasing their self-confidence.

Ladson-Billings (1994) also asserts that CRE establishes a community of learners where teachers and students work together. Both the boys and girls in the "Sport for Peace" program participated in discussions of conflict resolution, caring, and responsibility. They were encouraged to capitalize on their strengths and work together as a team. Finally, the traditional physical education curricula constructed sport as "monolithic, unchanging, and male dominated" (Ennis, 1999, p. 46). Students' knowledge produced from the "Sport for Peace" curriculum was continuously recreated and mutually shared by teachers and students.

Research on female interest in science has revealed girls' achievement and attitudes toward science begin to differentiate from boys during the middle school years and girls typically perform lower on standardized tests (Mattern & Schau, 2002; Sullins, Hernandez, Fuller, & Tashiro, 1995). Despite research demonstrating females' relatively lower interest and participation in science, there is evidence to suggest that when teachers implement a curriculum that is balanced toward female interest and learning preferences, girls' attitudes towards science can be rendered more positive.

Gilman (1996) conducted an eight-week in-service staff development for 22 teachers in a rural elementary school. During the workshops, teachers were introduced to findings on gender bias in classrooms and engaged in dialogue with colleagues regarding

gender issues. Teachers were introduced to new strategies to use with students, such as information on women scientists and cooperative teaching approaches. Descriptive statistics of questionnaires given to teachers revealed a significant correlation between the in-service training and the teachers' ability to impact female student engagement. Additionally, Bell and Gilbert (1996) found that 5th, 6th, and 7th grade girls tended to have stronger interest in learning science in schools where teachers attempted to be gender-fair and incorporate information on women in their lessons. This research suggests training teachers on subjects such as gender equity could raise awareness and change teachers' perceptions toward male and female students which in turn could enhance student engagement.

Challenges to Gender Equity

In alignment with CRE, to combat oppressive forces, gender equity should be promoted in classrooms. MacNaughton (2006) highlighted the challenges and possibilities of "gender-fair pedagogies" in a study comparing two programs. The Teaching and Learning for Equity (TALE) research project documented 39 early childhood teachers from Australia regarding their beliefs, pedagogies, and challenges in early childhood classrooms. The second program, Including Young Children's Voices: Early Years Gender Policy (IYCV), was a mixed methods study of 12 early childhood educators and 99 preschool children regarding gender policy. MacNaughton (2006) found in both programs that using gender-neutral language and non-sexist resources was not enough to change children's attitude toward gender-roles. She argued, "educators

wishing to create gender equity must reteach (or resocialize) children to be non-sexist, by modeling non-sexist behaviour and by offering children a non-sexist curriculum" (p. 129).

Similarly, Kawai and Taylor (2011) sought to understand how one teacher used her weekly community meetings as a space to dialogue about gender dynamics and oppressive structures. The researchers observed the teacher's 4th grade class consisting of sixteen girls and seven boys, predominantly from Dominican and Puerto Rican backgrounds. After an encounter between four of the boys in the class and one of the girls, the teacher addressed the use of sexist language, appropriateness, and the safety within the classroom. Adhering to Ladson-Billings's (1994) notion of a community of learners and Gay's (2010) ideas to be supportive and facilitative, the teacher used culturally relevant strategies within her community meetings. For example, the teacher held high expectations for her students expecting them all to own up for the things they said and to discuss the implications of their actions. However, Kawai and Taylor (2011) found that while the teacher modeled resistance to gender oppression, she still inscribed to practices of gender norms (i.e. the boys as aggressive instigators of trouble and the girls as the victims). Instead of addressing the masculine idea learned by the boys and internalized in practice, she focused on the individual actions and not the larger questions of why the boys felt they had that power. This teacher positively created an environment of trust and safety in her classroom, but could have adhered to Ladson-Billings's (2006b) call to be socio-politically aware herself had she connected the boys individual behaviors

to larger societal forces.

Other research has highlighted more problematic sociological factors making achieving gender equity difficult. Spencer, Porsche, and Tolman (2003) sought to understand school-wide gender equity efforts and the educational outcomes of 7th grade boys and girls. The participating school prided itself on a gender-equitable environment. The authors conducted classroom observations, focus-group sessions, and interviews measuring students' perceptions of gender equity in terms of their own achievement, self-esteem, and role in society. Surprisingly, although teachers and students perceived their school as gender fair, the results indicated that boys and girls perceived variations in classroom behaviors as a naturally resulting process. This study highlighted the sociological and psychological factors at hand and how they become naturalized in schooling processes, even when a school might *think* they are working toward gender equity.

These examples reinforce Sleeter's (2012) call to "educate parents, teachers, and education leaders about what culturally responsive pedagogy means and looks like in the classroom" (p. 578), specifically in regard to gender issues. We need support from families and the community to combat socially accepted gender norms and additional research understanding how to promote gender equity in schools. The above studies indicated that the more informed schools or teachers were, the more likely they were to produce a gender-equitable environment that carried out the goals of a social justice approach to combat oppressive structures perpetuating gender inequity. The need for

gender equity training (specifically regarding CRE) in teacher preparation programs and the research on its effects on students is evident by the limited amount of studies found for this literature review. Additionally, Meyer (2009) conducted eight interviews with teachers in both U.S. and Canadian schools, finding that many teachers felt ill-prepared to handle issues of gendered harassment or bullying. Meyer's finding supports this need for more research related to gender perceptions in society and how teachers can adequately address these issues in the classroom thus promoting student success.

CRE in Sexual Orientation

There are no studies actually connecting sexual orientation to CRE; however, I found some anecdotal examples in the literature applicable to a CRE approach. In agreement with Cosier (2009), "While all school community members have a right to express their views, particularly where religious beliefs are concerned, they cannot do so in a way that makes LGBT students feel unsafe or feel as if their education is being imperiled" (p. 290). A discrepancy exists between what teachers report about handling the responsibility and safety of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer and/or Questioning (LGBTQ) youth and what students perceive regarding teachers' willingness to support them (Crosier, 2009).

We know there is a direct link between academic performance and the experiences of students who are harassed and feel unsafe in their learning environments (Harris Interactive & GLSEN, 2005). Negative educational environments hinder students' grades and graduation rates (Kosciw, 2003). LGBTQ students are at risk for a

number of social difficulties, including poor academic performance and homelessness, and they have a significantly higher rate of suicide than heterosexual youth (D'Augelli, Hershberger, & Pilkington, 2001). Additionally, Bower and Klecka (2009) found that teachers who held heteronormative views on students identifying as LGBTQ negatively affected these students' academic performance. Much like with gender, there is a need to adopt a CRE that caters to students identifying as LGBTQ, as well as other students who may hold negative or stereotypical views of sexuality.

Crosier (2009) shared a narrative vignette from experiences in two pubic alternative schools created for students who did not "fit the rigid social structures of traditional schools" (p. 292). These alternative schools provided caring and supportive environments, with teachers and school employees who allowed for students to have a voice to speak their minds in meetings. LGBTQ students who had previously held thoughts of dropping out of school or worse, thoughts of suicide, reported they now felt a part of the community and felt a sense of belonging. Crosier (2009) believed this change was a result from teachers who took the time to listen to students:

> Teachers who take time to listen to their students can make a difference. Listening means more than offering a shoulder to cry on: It means designing a curriculum that reflects diversity, and attends to the needs and interests of the students. It means being willing to talk frankly about social issues, using

> students' experiences as a jumping off point. It means acknowledging students' alternative romantic and sexual desires and honoring gender diversity. (p. 295)

While not grounded specifically in a CRE framework, such reports highlight the importance of a teacher who embodies a sociopolitical consciousness and a need to empower students.

In another study, Blackburn, Clark, Kenney, and Smith (2010) were interested in working with teachers to combat homophobia in their classrooms. The researchers drafted a letter that invited interested participants to become a part of a teacher inquiry and community activism group that met once a week for six months to address how educators can "combat heterosexism and homophobia in our classrooms and schools through the use of literature and film" (p. 12). One of the teacher participants, Clark (2010), incorporated queer-inclusive texts into her 9th grade curriculum to understand how such literature might affect students' attitudes about LGBTQ people and the issues that affect them. An openly gay teacher,[20] Clark confirmed her goal was to "read and write texts with students to challenge the status quo that works to oppress and erase

[20] It should be noted that not every state is accepting of LGBTQ teachers. Mayo (2014) explains that because teachers are supposed to be role models for young children they are expected to "model correct gender to their students" (p. 32). Anti-gap teacher activism in the 1970s reinforced the pressures for teachers to be heterosexual forcing education to be a field excluding gender and sexual minorities. Because sexual orientation is not protected under any federal level non-discrimination policies, teachers identifying as LGBTQ could be at risk of losing their jobs. Currently, 19 states offer no protection for LGBTQ teachers and only 16 states specifically name gender and sexual orientation as protected classes (Mayo, 2014).

people who deviate from the norm" (p. 59). At the beginning of the study, Clark delivered a questionnaire determining attitudes about homosexuality to students. The class read the story *A Letter to Harvey*, about the first openly gay U.S. official, followed by an open-ended discussion and a written response to the story.

Clark (2010) concluded from the questions and comments made during the discussion that the classroom was a legitimate space to read and discuss LGBTQ issues. Reading about and discussing LGBTQ issues alleviated some of the ambivalence expressed in the first questionnaire. Additionally, Clark shared that 98% of students passed the reading portion of state exam and 87% passed the writing portion. She did not attribute including queer-inclusive texts as the reason for this but rather concluded:

> Reading texts that get students to engage with LGBTQ issues does not negatively affect their ability to perform above average on the state standardized test. And getting students to grapple with difficult issues– reading about them, writing about them, talking about them– helps them to learn to question their assumptions and to challenge the status quo. (p. 71)

This approach speaks to Gay's (2013) call to move away from a focus on "safe" topics in schools and instead focus on "troubling issues like inequalities, injustices, oppressions" (p. 57). LGBTQ students face these sorts of struggles every day. Creating a safe

community that allows the space for collaboration as well as dialogue about injustices can aid in LGBTQ students' academic success.

Other studies have also highlighted how positive environments of respect and tolerance formed through teachers' incorporation of LGBTQ topics in their curriculum. Athanases (1996) found 10th grade students deepened their understanding of LGBTQ issues when their teacher had them read Brian McNaught's essay, "Dear Anita: Late Night Thoughts of an Irish Catholic Homosexual." Through field notes, audio and video recordings, and group discussions over a two-year span, Athanases reported this gay-themed lesson was successfully integrated into the curriculum and helped students to break down stereotypes related to gay youth. Similarly, Schall and Kauffmann (2003) observed Gloria, a 4th/5th grade teacher, who agreed to work with the researchers to understand how children would respond when incorporating LGBTQ children's literature. Students chose texts and worked in literature circles to discuss issues and hear other perspectives. The small group discussions were transcribed revealing three major themes that emerged from the transcripts:

- perceiving and responding to gays and lesbians,
- the need for truth (students wondered why they did not have access to books that explained life, relationships, and family), and
- the need to belong.

Overall, instead of students finding it was wrong to be homosexual, many just concluded it was different.

CRE in Religion

Consistent with data connecting CRE to gender and sexual orientation, there were no studies specifically citing religion (although intersections between ethnicity and religion were apparent). However, teachers often lack knowledge about other religious practices and may hold stereotypical views of other religions such as Islam, Hinduism, or Native American spiritualties (Subedi, 2011). Alarmingly, according to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports (2011), 19.8% of hate crimes in the U.S. were religiously motivated (mostly anti-Semitic followed by anti-Islamic). Schools are not immune from this sort of violence, whether explicit or implicit through curricula and other structural forces. Furthermore, the post-9/11 atmosphere has increased awareness of religious issues in the United States, especially increasing bias towards people of color. Teaching about religious diversity in the classroom can help to reduce bias and help students (and teachers) learn to accept each other despite these differences (Pang, 2005).

Nasir (2004) wanted to understand how a school community intervened to "help" a student with resistant behavior that under normal schooling structures would have removed him from the school. Her ethnographic study centered upon one boy, Karim, at a predominantly working class, African American Muslim school. Teachers adopted the term *Halal* (in the Muslim context referring to something following religious standards) to encourage the best from their students. Nasir (2004) also explained, "teachers also stated that they did not approach discipline from a one-size-fits all perspective, but that discipline was negotiated on an individual basis" (p. 167). Central to the school's

philosophy was students' realization of "spiritual potential and spiritual mission in life" (p. 165). Despite challenges associated with Karim's disruptive behaviors, the teachers did not give up on Karim and frequently included his parents in conversations to find the best solutions for him. Nasir (2004) believed that Karim's academic improvement resulted from the conception that that school was a family and the view that children are spiritual beings in need of nurturing. Gay (2010) asserted a central element of culturally responsive caring involved providing spaces for students to feel valued, foster warmth and security, and taking the responsibility to understand your students, often after school hours. These elements were all present in how Karim's teachers interacted with him and his family.

Aown (2011) sought to understand how a non-Muslim teacher worked to teach about Islam in her high school world religion class. This case study focused on Ms. Adams, a non-traditional teacher in a suburban Michigan high school. Having advocated for the addition of a world religions class at her high school, Ms. Adams:

> regarded the need to educate young students– **"**the citizens of the world,**"** as she called them– about others**'** religions as essentially necessary to interact and understand all people, especially at times when widespread immigration has dramatically changed the religious and ethnic makeup of the United States. (p. 1259)

Ms. Adams had no formal training in teacher education but had to create the curriculum she used in her course. Through her own reading, attending lectures at the local university, and talking to Muslims at local mosques, Ms. Adams did her best to educate herself to most accurately teach about Islam. Unfortunately the study did not report students' responses to these lessons, but this study did highlight the ways in which teachers can take Ladson-Billings's (2006a) call for socio-politically awareness seriously.

CRE is a useful framework that should be extended beyond race and ethnicity across communities such as gender, sexual orientation, and religion. Research supports employing CRE in classrooms can successfully enhance academic achievement, motivation, and engagement. The remaining question is how did these teachers who employ CRE develop this approach to teaching? As discussed earlier, there are few studies actually connecting social justice in teacher education to positive outcomes for students in the classroom. In the last section of this literature review, I will discuss the limited research that does exist related to this topic.

Social Justice Teacher Education Connected to Teacher Practice

Cochran-Smith, Shakman, Jong, Terrell, Barnatt, and McQuillan (2009) sought to understand how a group of teacher candidates in a social justice teacher preparation program understood the concept related to social justice and how this played out in practice. This study was the result of a larger qualitative case study (QCS) research project created by the Boston College Teachers for a New Era initiative. Boston College has a specific commitment to social justice in its mission statement and five underlying

themes guide the teacher education program: 1) promoting social justice, 2) constructing knowledge, 3) inquiring into practice, 4) affirming diversity, and 5) collaborating with others. In addition to methods courses, teacher candidates take courses related to the, "social contexts and purposes of education, teaching students with diverse needs (including courses in bilingualism and diverse learners), and human learning/development" (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009, p. 352). Teacher candidates also have at least one teaching placement in a diverse population and complete a fieldwork project with bilingual students.

The QCS project reported data from the pre-service period into the first few months of teaching. Twelve students volunteered to be participants in the study and reflected the demographic characteristics of the larger population (Nine of the 12 teachers were White). Data sources during the pre-service period included six structured interviews, five structured classroom observations, interviews with course instructors and supervisors, and a collection of candidates' work. Data sources during the first year of teaching included three structured interviews, four structured classroom observations, and interviews with principals and mentors. Using a process of continually rereading interview data, the research team developed 27 codes representing ideas about social justice within four categories. They found participants in the study expressed clear ideas about what it meant to teach for social justice. The four emerging themes were:

- *Pupil learning*- ideas about making sure pupils learn, preparing pupils, accommodating and differentiating instruction, promoting critical thinking, and

holding pupils to high expectations;

- *Relationships and respect*- ideas about building relationships with pupils and their families, developing a culture of respect, and caring for pupils;
- *Teacher as activist*- ideas about advocating for pupils, engaging in community work, building coalitions, and participating in activism;
- *Recognizing inequalities*- ideas about racial and economic inequalities, connecting curriculum to issues of oppression, breaking down racial or class barriers, and seeing the job of the teacher as a change agent (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009, p. 56).

The research team not only wanted to understand what the candidates *said* about social justice, but also wanted to understand how these understandings played out in practice. Three teachers were selected to explore in depth the complexity of learning to teach for social justice. The researchers found that teaching for social justice was not just about the ideas and beliefs, but rather how these teachers enacted these beliefs into practice. For example, one of the teachers Mara used the text *All Quiet on the Western Front* (Remarque, 1929) in her twelfth-grade American History class. As a part of the curricular unit, she asked students to express opinions for and against war. Cochran-Smith et al., explain, "it was clear that Mara wanted pupils to learn not just what to think but how to think, which was consistent with the basic tenets of teaching for social justice in the literature and in her own teacher education program" (p. 365). Overall, they found that beginning teachers enacted a commitment to equity and social justice at an individual

level rather than a broader level, however they also found few examples of teachers who were activists or advocates for their students. They assert given these teachers were pre-service teachers in other people's classrooms (the data reported in this article), it may be unrealistic to expect the pre-service teachers to be activists. "It requires a major shift in thinking for many teacher candidates to understand the structural and historical aspects of schooling and develop analysis and critiques at the macrolevel" (Cochran-Smith et al, 2009, p. 372). Additionally they concluded:

> Although it may be unrealistic to expect teacher candidates and very new teachers to engage in structural critique and work as activists, it may be quite appropriate for preparation programs with a social justice agenda to expect teachers to enact social justice within the everyday world of their own lived experience as beginning teachers who are working within a larger educational system that structures inequality. (p. 373)

This study was the only research found that explicitly linked the type of teacher preparation pre-service teachers received in connection to classroom practice. It still does not address the impact on student outcomes, but it does create the connection between the types of courses offered while in teacher preparation and the understandings gained from this participation. In connection to the literature presented earlier on how employing CRE can enhance student outcomes, motivation, and engagement, I believe that teacher

candidates participating in a SJTE can develop a CRE orientation which in turn enhances student achievement and promotes equitable learning conditions for all.

This chapter presented the conceptual framework that will be used in this study and also presented the synthesized relevant research. Culturally relevant education is a conceptual framework used by teachers wishing to promote equity and attempt meaningful change in the classroom. Despite the evidence suggesting that employing CRE in the classroom enhances student outcomes, motivation, and engagement, the types of courses pre-service teachers need to develop CRE in practice are dwindling (Butin, 2005, Neumann, 2010). Additionally, the lack of research connecting the development of this conceptual framework while in teacher education to the impact it has on student achievement makes it difficult to plead its' importance to policymakers. Similar to the Cochran-Smith et al. (2009) research, this study aims to contribute to the literature on SJTE to explore intern teachers' understandings of social justice. Furthermore, this study seeks to narrate what these understandings look like in practice for one practicing teacher. While not specifically reporting data on students' achievement due to confidentiality issues and IRB approval, I will share the participating teacher, Sarah's, reports on students' progress and observations I have made regarding student success in chapter five.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the understandings and experiences of four intern teachers participating in a critical social justice focus group (CSJFG). Additionally, I sought to see how such understandings played out in practice for one participating teacher in her first and second years of teaching. Hatch (2002) challenges researchers to "unpack their ontological and epistemological beliefs [and to be] introspective about their world views" (p. 2). My own beliefs about education and research align most closely with qualitative methodologies. Qualitative research is used to examine people's everyday lived experiences. Researchers can develop descriptive interpretations and produce representations of *voice*[21] to those we may not have acknowledged through quantitative data. Qualitative research can reframe the way we look at the world, enriching discourse and challenge established belief systems. Anytime one conducts qualitative research, the researcher must always remember that what he or she is researching is not necessarily pertinent to the participants. People speak their own telling, in their own ways, in their own time long before the researcher ever shows up (A. Anders, personal communication, August, 17, 2011).

[21] I wish to complicate the idea of "giving voice" by acknowledging there are benefits and limitations when speaking for a participant. I plan to illustrate the voice(s) of teachers who are forced to teach in a highly standardized environment, however, my goal is not to speak for them.

Specifically, Merriam (2009) states, "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 5). Key characteristics of qualitative research include understanding how people make sense of their lives, the researcher serving as the primary instrument in the data collection and analysis, utilizing an inductive process, and creating a rich description in his or her final product (Merriam, 2009). Importantly, the researcher must address her *emic* perspective versus the *etic* perspective inherent in reproducing others' stories. The *emic* perspective includes my positionality and how it influences my research. Taking up Lather's (1995) position, the aim of the researcher is to upset the "traditionally privileged perspective as the knower in the research setting" (as cited in Manning, 1997, p. 106). There will be a goal to create "co-constructed findings" to reaffirm my commitment not to speak *on behalf* of my participants, but rather speak *with* them (my participants).

This study is informed by postcritical ethnography. In this chapter, I will provide an overview of the postcritical ethnographic approach I used including its purpose, goals, and situatedness in a larger methodological landscape. This will set the stage for how I used both thematic analysis and narrative case study as qualitative tools for data analysis. The overall purpose of this postcritical ethnographic study is to examine the understandings from a critical social justice focus group (CSJFG) that intern teachers' participated in during their enrollment in a teacher education program. More specifically, I asked:

1) What are four intern teachers' understandings and experiences while participating in a critical social justice focus group?

(2) After participating in a critical social justice focus group during teacher education, what are one teacher's understandings of social justice, particularly related to culturally relevant education?

(3) How do social justice understandings play out in practice? That is, what does one first-year teacher actually do in the classroom context? What obstacles might she face?

(4) What are the implications of these findings for teacher education programs in the U.S.?

The following is an overall description of ethnography, examples of educational ethnographies and the major commitments of postcritical ethnography and narrative case study. This is followed by a description of participants, the process used for data collection and analysis, as well as how I established trustworthiness in this study.

Ethnography as Methodology

Ethnography is one type of qualitative research familiar to educators. Its origins trace back to nineteenth century anthropologists who conducted participant research in the field (Merriam, 2009). Given the nature of my study to work with intern teachers and one practicing teacher over time, ethnography was a suitable methodology. One goal of any ethnographic research is providing *thick descriptions.* Geertz (1973) explains that

culture, "is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligently- that is, *thickly*- described" (p. 14). With this in mind, throughout the research process, I used multiple measures to collect data as well as focus on not only my own reflections, but my participants' as well. In the next section, I provide examples of educational ethnographies to help contextualize the usefulness of ethnography in educational research.

Educational Ethnographies

The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham advocated for a critical ethnography as the methodology of choice for critical studies. Ethnographies such as Willis's (1977) *Learning to Labor* or McRobbie's (1978) *Working Class Girls and the Culture of Femininity* paved the way to demonstrate examples of resistance, agency, and hegemonic forces at play in society (Giroux, 1983). Educational researchers choose to use ethnographic methods because it allowed them to demonstrate contradictions in schooling and more richly illustrate answers to their questions, specifically using critical ethnography (see more on critical ethnography in the next section). A few of the most famous educational ethnographies commonly cited include Michelle Fine's (1991) *Framing Dropouts*, Angela Valenzuela's (1999) *Subtractive Schooling*, and Annette Lareau's (2003) *Unequal Childhoods.*

Michelle Fine's (1991) interest in knowing more about high school dropouts led her to conduct a critical/feminist ethnography of a public urban high school with high

dropout rates. Concerned about previous scholars' highlighting of "dropouts" as hopeless losers, Fine concluded, "there were no critics among them, little to counter the stereotypes . . . we began to ask, who is served by this seamless rhetoric of dropouts as losers?" (pp. 4-5). Her purpose aimed to find a "typical" high school to study dropouts, gain a better understanding of the phenomena, and "understand the need to interrupt the prevailing discourse about 'dropouts' and to construct a way of talking that could unpack, inform, critique, but still imagine what could be" (Fine, 1991, p. xiii). Fine observed this urban high school for one year collecting data through observational notes, interview transcripts of teachers, students, parents and administrators, and numerous school records and statistics. Fine described a chilling portrait of her findings in her book *Framing Dropouts Notes on the Politics of an Urban Public High School*. A school organized around silencing and control, students were "disempowered," "discharged," and ignored by teachers and administration. Through this comprehensive work, Fine was able to illustrate the dropouts oppressed voices and produce a powerful piece of work charging policymakers, activists, researchers, and educators, to question the structural forces imposed on urban schools that we may not have understood through a more simplistic approach such as a survey study.

In 1999, Angela Valenzuela published her seminal three-year ethnographic study *Subtractive Schooling: U.S.-Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring.* The aim of the study proposed "the alleged 'deficiencies' of regular-track, U.S. born youth from low-income community are themselves symptomatic of the ways that schooling is organized

to subtract resources from them" (p. 5). Previous literature sought to explain underachievement of U.S.-born Mexican students by comparing test, scores, drop-out rates, grades, etc. Little was known about the schooling experiences of immigrant and U.S. born Mexican youth. Valenzuela's framework drew on three sources: Care theory (Noddings, 2005), multiculturalists' critique of assimilation (Bartolome, 1994; Gibson, 1993), and social capital (defined by its function in group or network structures; Bourdieu, 1996). The study took place in a Mexican High School in Texas from 1992-1995. She used both quantitative and qualitative measures, including participant observation, open-ended interviews with individuals and groups, and various documents (schools memos, handouts, archival info, etc.). Through this extensive study, Valenzuela (1999) discovered:

> The widespread disaffection with schooling among U.S.- born youth should thus be attributed to their experience of schooling as subtractive or as an implicit threat to ethnic identity and accompanies the demand that youth are about school. Rather than building on students' cultural and linguistic knowledge and heritage to create bilingually competent youth, schools subtract these identifications form them to their social and academic detriment. (p. 25)

Educators, administrators, and scholars have used these very important findings equip all school personnel with the knowledge needed to produce caring, nurturing environments

for students from various backgrounds.

In 2003, Anne Lareau's book *unequal childhoods: Class, Race, and Family life* attempted to demonstrate how unequal childhoods lead to unequal adulthoods. Her primary question sought to understand the influence of social class on daily life. She began by observing 88 families, narrowing her participants down to 12 families- six white families, five black, and one interracial. She further categorized them as middle, upper, or working class. Initially, Lareau planned on interviewing both the children and parents, but in the end only interviewed the parents. The children's voices of whom she was so concerned were left silenced. This was a weakness within her study as she later acknowledged. Additionally, many critics have been skeptical of her overemphasis on Bourdieu's (1986) notion of "cultural capital" and the monolithic way she used it throughout her study. Nevertheless, in Lareau's conclusion, she illustrates how a commonly accepted *American Dream* in not the case for many lower-class Americans and hard work does not equate to equal life chances.

Noblit, Flores, and Murillo (2004) remind us that qualitative research was initially constructed to represent the interests of those historically oppressed. They state, "The focus on multiple perspectives did in fact allow qualitative research to represent the interests of those who were not being heard in the wider educational discourse" (p. 10). In Fine (1991), Valenzuela (1999), and Lareau's (2003) ethnographic studies, voices from those typically marginalized were given credence and important implications paved the path for future research. Representation and the consequences it may have for how

people are portrayed is an important factor to consider when telling peoples' stories (Hall, 1997). When doing critical work, it must not be reduced to simply "reporting" historically marginalized voices, rather critical ethnography must further its goals to discuss the politics of positionality (Madison, 2005). This is where postcritical ethnography becomes useful by helping researchers to think about their positionalities and how this impacts the work that they are doing. In the next section I will discuss the main components of postcritical ethnography.

Commitments of Postcritical Ethnography

Postcritical ethnography combines the components of critical ethnography with interpretive ethnography. Critical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address injustice and a moral obligation to change unjust conditions. Madison (2005) explains the critical ethnographer:

> takes us beneath surface appearances, disrupts the *status quo,* and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of power and control . . . the critical ethnographer contributes to emancipatory knowledge and discourses of social justice. (p. 5, emphasis in original)

However, this "contribution" to knowledge can often become messy, especially if research only actually benefits the researcher (i.e. research written in dense academic

language that is only dispensed to others in the academy, with the assumption that they know how power operates in the world best, etc.) problematically reproducing the status quo. Kincheloe (2004) warns, "When critical scholars establish an exclusive "critical elite," they have fallen prey to the same power inequalities that motivated the founding of critical pedagogy in the first place" (p. 127). Interpretive ethnographers trouble the act of representing lived experiences and claims of objectivity. Central to interpretive ethnography is the creation of meaning by the researcher (Anders, 2012).

Hytten (2004) posits an alliance between critical theory and qualitative research [critical ethnography] is not without its problems- for example, the values brought by the researcher and the values of the researched, as well as the usefulness of *this* "emancipatory knowledge" (p. 95). Despite this, Hytten (2004) asserts there are valuable aspects of critical ethnography that warrant saving. She explains:

> Such a critical approach to research has helped to illuminate how theory informs lived experience as well as how larger social structures can inhibit the development of transformative social practice. In order to keep alive the valuable elements of this approach, yet at the same time seriously attend to criticism and challenges, the time is ripe for the development of a postcritical ethnography. (pp. 95-96)

A postcritical ethnographic approach was the framework for this study, fusing together

the work of critical ethnography with "positionality, reflexivity, objectivity, and representation" (Noblit et al., 2004, p. 21). Positionality involves explicitness of the researcher's interest as well as revealing her own biography. Reflexivity refers to "the process of personally and academically reflecting on lived experiences in ways that reveal the deep connections between the writer and her or his subject" (Goodall, 2000, p. 137). Objectivity is never fully escaped in postcritical ethnographies and the researcher always *worries* about this dilemma. Representation refers to the how the researcher characterizes findings within a postcritical ethnography and "involves acknowledging the "uncertainty about adequate means of describing social reality" (Marcus & Fisher, 1986, p. 8)" (Noblit et. al, 2004, p. 22).[22]

Fine (1994) outlines three positions the researcher might take in qualitative research: the *ventriloquist,* the positionality of *voices,* and the *activism* stance. I believe the goals of a postcritical ethnography are most aligned with the *activism* stance in which "the ethnographer takes a clear position in intervening on hegemonic practices and serves as an advocate in exposing the material effects of marginalized locations while offering alternatives" (Fine, 1994, p. 17). These "alternatives" should be something co-constructed with participants along with continuous reflection from the researcher throughout the process.

[22] These concepts will be discussed in further detail in the section on Establishing Trustworthiness at the end of chapter three.

To claim a postcritical ethnographic stance, I must be willing, not only to reveal oppression and power structures, but also critique them and myself throughout the research process, reflecting about the assumptions and frames brought to the research (Hytten, 2004). This will also be a pedagogical process because both the researcher and the participants will be learning throughout the process, as well as "developing the tools for making positive social changes that are emergent from local communities, not thrust upon them" (Hytten, 2004, p. 101).

The first part of analysis in this dissertation will share the themes that emerged from participation in a critical social justice focus group (chapter four). I will then move into a more detailed account of one teacher's story as she progressed from an intern teacher into her first and second years of teaching (chapter five). For this portion of the dissertation, I have decided to compose a *narrative case study* as I share the participant's experiences enacting culturally relevant education (CRE) in her classroom. In the next section, I will explain the central components of narrative that were useful to me throughout the data analysis process to share her story.

Narrative Case Study

In this section, I situate narrative as one part of this study. I chose to focus on the participant's individual experiences as she progressed from being an intern teacher in a teacher education program to a practicing classroom teacher. In agreement with Bold (2012), Czarniawaskia (2004), and Andrews, Squire, and Tamboukou (2008), there are no overall rules about narrative approaches to research and narrative may be used in

various ways throughout the stages of the research process. Bold (2012) states, "The challenge for anyone new to using narrative in research is one of finding, justifying and using a method, possibly adapting a method, or even devising one's own" (p. 9). As a novice researcher who has worked through the process of planning a research study and articulating a methodology, I realized there were many pieces to many different puzzles that seemed to fit my research agenda, but no one preexisting methodology was a *perfect fit* for what I intended to do in this study. Therefore, I will identify some of the key proponents of narrative research that guided this study and informed the overarching postcritical ethnographic methodology.

Components of Narrative Research

Narrative contributes to the research on teaching and learning through its ability to investigate the ways humans experience the world depicted through story (Webster & Mertova, 2007). It is my goal to justify my own conceptual understanding of narrative in relation to the specific research I am doing (Bold, 2012).

Researchers interested in social contexts and meaning of narratives should acknowledge the different features impacting the story. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) identify five features from their own research into teachers' lives that I acknowledge in my own research. *Temporality* recognizes that all events have a past, present, and future. It is inevitable that changes will occur and in narrative research this change is embraced, recorded and analyzed over time. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state:

> As inquirers, we meet ourselves in the past, the present, and the future... As narrative inquirers, we work within a space not only with our participants, but also with ourselves. Working in this space means that we become visible with our own lived and told stories. (pp. 61-62)

This aids in the understanding that *context* is also an important feature of doing research in teachers' lives. Understanding the context of the location that research is conducted in is necessary for making sense of a narrative. It includes notions such as a temporal context, spatial context, and the context of other people (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Narrative within an educational setting must also acknowledge the *people* involved in the creation of things such as the curriculum, objectives, and assessments. Additionally, *actions,* such as students' achievement on a test are also a narrative sign of something. These factors, such as the landscape of teacher education, in relation to this study will be addressed in chapter six. Finally there is an understanding that *certainty* will never be achieved in narrative because different interpretations of data are possible and the data analyzed will not always produce a causal relationship (Bold, 2012).

Narrative in Postcritical Ethnography

Researchers rarely construct ethnographies entirely in narrative form. In most ethnographic accounts, events are often categorized as themes so the account is not necessarily a chronology of events, but rather a set of relationships decided by the researcher (Bold, 2012). In the second part of the data analysis (Chapter 5) I will use a

narrative case study as a means to interpret (using CRE as an analytical tool) and present the data collected. In line with postcritical ethnography, "narrative inquiry is concerned with the production, interpretation and representation of storied accounts of lived experience" (Shacklock & Thorp, 2005, p. 156). In agreement with Bignold and Su (2013), "This provides an effective means of understanding the lives of others through the construction or co-construction and narrative of their stories. In narrative inquiry, the narrator of the story may be either the researcher or the research participant" (p. 400). While I am the main person crafting the words to tell my participant's story, she has been involved throughout the entire process and asked to share her thoughts and criticisms on my writing. Hytten (2004) asserts that to advance the application of postcritical ethnography, research should be collaborative and the research subjects need a role in the research that is respectful and meaningful. Hytten also states research should be dialogic and, "findings need to be shared and negotiated" (p. 104). It is my intention to keep the participant involved throughout the research process to represent her story as accurately as possible. It is through this commitment to postcritical ethnography that constuctionism best fit as my research paradigm.

Research paradigm.

Denzin and Lincoln suggest (1994), "all research is interpretive, guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied" (p.13). In the early stages of my dissertation work, I chose *constructivistism* as my guiding research paradigm. However, I was troubled by the underlying concept in

constructivism where research participants would come to their own understandings with little influence or critique from me. I realized the very nature of this dissertation began from my own critique and I was the person selecting the readings and leading the conversations in the focus groups. After further exploration, I came across another paradigm that more accurately fit the stance I took while conducting this study. Constructionism holds that "truth" is not discovered, but rather constructed as people engage in social interactions (Crotty, 1998). It is a dynamic and active process in which both the researcher and the participants *mutually* engage in knowledge construction. Additionally, a constructionist approach suggests that when understanding the world, taking a critical stance is a necessary step. In this paradigm, the understandings that are constructed are through a general shared knowledge through community participation and human relationships. Throughout the research process, not only am I influencing my participants, but they are influencing each other, as well as me. Additionally, I acknowledge I have influenced and was influenced by the practicing teacher in this study. Because no single interpretation exists, meaning can never be described as "objective" nor is that my aim. I believe that this interaction will have a profound impact on how participants begin to process their own understandings as well as how I attempted to interpret data (i.e. through member checking and discussion with participants). A constructionist paradigm also recognizes cultural and historical contexts of knowledge (Gergen, 1985), which is also an important component of narrative research (Bold, 2012). How the intern and practicing teacher(s) thought about their students, how they planned

instruction, the outcomes produced from instruction (i.e. test scores) were all products of social interactions they had in their own schooling experiences, their own teacher training, and possibly from the dialogues we had in the focus groups.

Overview of Methodology

A postcritical ethnographic approach guided me throughout the research process. Postcritical ethnography has provided me a way to critique discourses, practices, and structures that perpetuate inequalities in schools while also rejecting claims of objectivity (Anders, 2012). The chart below (Figure 2) visually represents the connection of the overarching framework in this study as it relates to the research paradigm, methods of data collection, and method of analysis. In the next section, I will explain in further detail the variety of data collection methods used as well as the process of analysis.

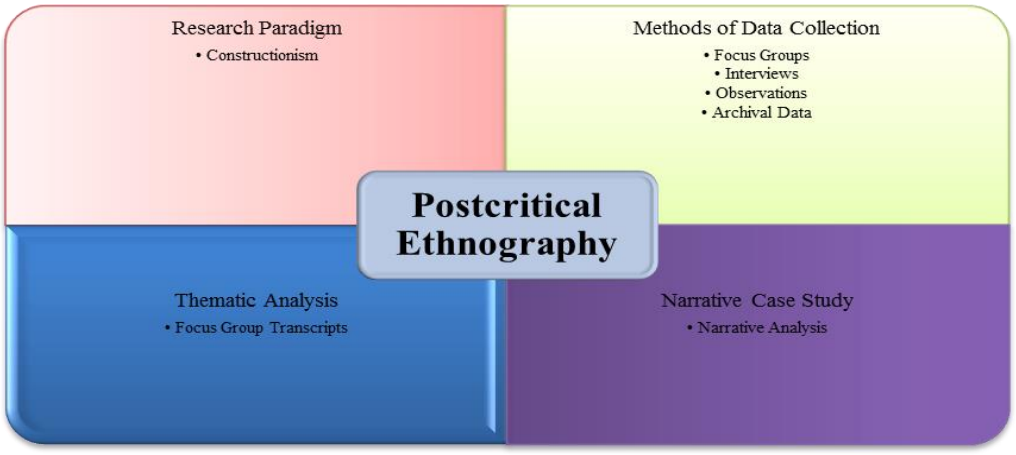

Figure 2 Methodological Framework

Participant Selection

As part of required undergraduate teacher coursework, education students take Educational Psychology 401 (EP401) prior to their internship placements. I instructed this course 12 times since 2010 (one section in the Fall and two sections in the Spring as well as one summer class each year). As an instructional team, we share a common syllabus with the same course requirements and standards; however as the instructor I have some flexibility in the outside readings I assign as well as how I conduct each class session. In our shared syllabus, the goal of the course states:

> Educational psychology provides teachers with important research-based information, which along with teaching experience will help make you a more effective teacher. As an educator, I am aware of the need to link educational research with the art of teaching. This class aims to meaningfully facilitate this connection, while making your experience with educational psychology an enriching adjunct to your career.

Additionally EP401 course standards are based on the Tennessee Teacher Licensure Standards, including Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), Tennessee Teacher Framework for Evaluation and professional Growth, the Urban Network to Improve Teacher Education (UNITE), National Council for

Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), and National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers (NET*S). Specifically relating to this study, INSTAC Standard 2 emphasizes the *teachers' understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards.* To me, this standard emphasizes a need to promote an equitable education for all and a goal to help teachers figure out how to navigate their way through the schooling process with many students who are more than likely not going to be like them.

Like many teacher education programs, our university has no separate social justice type of courses *required*[23] for pre-service teachers to take. Up until 2004, pre-service teachers were required to take CSE 400, a foundations in education course, focusing on the philosophical, historical, and sociological aspects of schooling. However, new certification requirements and a push to focus on assessment dropped this mandatory course from the degree. These concepts were supposed to be embedded within the other mandatory program curricula once CSE 400 was dropped from the teacher education program. How well of a job a teacher educator does at exposing pre-service teachers to learner diversity and social justice issues can vary depending on the teacher educator's own commitments to social justice, the requirements and aims of the course, and the

[23] Students can elect to take these courses as their cognate. I have asked many students about taking these courses however and many of them tell me they prefer to take more "practical" courses that will teach them specific skills and strategies they need to be successful in the classroom.

many other responsibilities and pressures that teacher education programs are under in this standardized, accountability driven-climate (read more about this in chapter six).

Given the vast amount of material I was charged with covering in class, I decided to create focus groups outside of class on a monthly basis. The first year, I recruited students from my Fall 2010 and Spring 2011 sections of EP401 that averaged about 20 students per section. Four students were interested in participating and invited to our first meeting in September 2011 (see Appendix B). These four participants represent the CSJFG data reported in chapter four. Over the next several semesters, I continued to recruit students and ended up with a total of four focus groups, meeting monthly with 17 participants in all. I separated the groups based on when the participants initially agreed and met with, at most, three groups simultaneously (my first focus group ended as the next round of focus groups began), and totaling four focus groups (See Table 2).

We met once a month for about an hour in a privately reserved library room where we discussed an article selected by me for the month regarding a social justice issue. While I was the person who ultimately selected the reading, I did ask the interns for input regarding issues they would be interested in discussing (see Appendix C).

Table 2 Focus Group Meeting Dates

Group #1	Group #2	Group #3	Group #4
September 2011	February 2012	September 2012	September 2012
October 2011	March 2012	October 2012	October 2012
November 2011	April 2012	November 2012	November 2012
January 2012	September 2012	February 2013	February 2013
February 2012	October 2012	March 2013	March 2013
March 2012	November 2012	April 2013	April 2013
April 2012	February 2013		
	March 2013		
	April 2013		

In Fall 2012, Ms. Sarah White (pseudonym), one of the participants in the first focus group began her first year teaching. Sarah received her undergraduate and graduate degrees at a large public university in the Southeast where she was a student in the Urban-Multicultural Cohort in the College of Education. Through this program, she was exposed to literature on and had regular dialogue regarding critical pedagogy, critical race theory, and other issues relevant to urban and multicultural education. She worked as a 5th grade intern in a reading classroom at an urban elementary school during her participation in the CSJFG. She attributes her beliefs in the powerful impact that cultural influences have on student learning to the experiences she had in her teacher education program (personal communication).

Research Setting

As discussed, the focus group meetings analyzed in this study met in a privately reserved library room on the students' university campus from September 2011 to April 2012. Sarah White's first teaching assignment began in August 2012 at Magnolia Elementary[24] School in a 2nd grade classroom at Magnolia Elementary, a Title I, semi-urban school in the Southeast with a population of about 450 students. The school-wide, population is 48% white, 42% African-American, and 7% Hispanic. Seven percent of students in the school have an identified disability. In 2012, Magnolia Elementary School's state standardized test scores (data from grades 3-5) were below average in reading, science, and social studies. In math, the scores were average. Value-added scores[25] were average or below average in reading, science, and social studies, and were above average in math. Magnolia Elementary was not meeting accountability measures and therefore was under increased supervision from the State and county to increase standardized test scores.

In 2012-2013, Sarah White's 2nd grade class consisted of 16 students, 11 girls and five boys. Nine of these students identify as white, six African-American, and one Iraqi. Fifteen students received need-based free or reduced lunch. One student was an English

[24] All school names and programs have been changed to protect the identities of the participants.
[25] The TVAAS system "measures the impact schools and teachers have on their students' academic progress" focusing on growth. The TVAAS system is supposed to help teachers identify the best practices and learn how to make informed decisions about growth. (http://www.tn.gov/education/TVAAS.shtml)

Language Learner who was in the preproduction phase of learning English; the rest of the students' primary language was English. No students had diagnosed disabilities, but one student was being monitored to identify a learning disability in math and two students took medication for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). One student was Islamic, and other students had either identified themselves as Christian or had not stated any religious affiliation. At the time of the study, five students were performing below grade level in math, six students were achieving at grade level, and five students were achieving above grade level. In reading, only three students were below grade-level and in writing, five students were performing below grade-level (personal communication, Sarah White, April 24, 2013).

The second year of observation Sarah looped with her students into third grade. "Looping" is a term used in education to refer to when a teacher moves grade levels with students. Sarah conducted research on looping to support this decision and sent home a letter parents explaining the academic benefits for students who loop with teachers[26] (see Appendix D). While there was some attrition, she continued to teach the majority of the same students she had in second grade. In 2013-2014, Sarah's 3rd grade class still consisted of 16 students. Two of her students moved to another school and she gained two additional students. She then had nine girls and seven boys. Eight students identified

[26] Research suggests looping with students is most effective before fifth grade and when done one time (total of two years with one class). "Two-year classrooms are time-effective and instructionally efficient, allowing for continuous learning and less repetition when teachers have adequate training, support, and staff development" (Forsten, Grant, & Richardson, 1999, p. 15).

as White, six African-American, one Hispanic, and one Iraqi. All of her students received free or reduced lunch. One of her new students was a Spanish-speaking English language learner (ELL).

Methods of Data Collection

A variety of data collection methods were used to investigate the participants' understandings of social justice in theory for the four participants in the focus group and in practice for Sarah White. To ensure the credibility of the study, multiple data collection methods were used (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data collection methods were comprised of focus groups, observations, interviews, field notes, and archival data. Given the nature of this study consists of two parts, I will distinguish between data collected that will be presented in chapter four versus chapter five as I explain in more detail below.

Focus Groups

The first part of the study, reported in chapter four, consisted of four intern teachers recruited from a large Southeastern university's education program[27]. Specifically, former students of mine from EP401 were asked to join this study. These students were only approached upon completion of the course and all grades were finalized (see IRB approval letter and protocol in Appendices E and F). This group of

[27] Participant profiles will be shared in chapter four.

interns took part in focus groups discussing social justice issues in schools.[28] In order to collect the necessary data for this group, a monthly article was selected addressing one tenet of social justice (i.e. race, immigration, gender, disability, etc.). While I already had a set list of topics in mind, I also asked the participants to choose issues that might be relevant to their classrooms. Interns read the articles over the course of the month and were asked to write journal reflections from both the article and any experiences they may have in either their pre-service field experiences or internships (see Appendix C).

Facilitating a conversation on a particular topic among a selected group of people is often known as a *focus group* (Glesne, 2006, p. 103) and I specifically labeled these focus groups "critical social justice focus groups" (CSJFG) for the purpose of this study. Focus group interviews rely on the interactions that take place around particular topics, and in the case of this study, the topic was social justice in schools. Focus groups can generate much data in a short period of time and give the participants an advantage as to the direction the interview goes (Hatch, 2002). Given my goal was to research intern teachers' understandings and experiences participating in this CSJFG, allowing the participants to have flexibility in the direction of the sessions was suiting. Vaughn, Schumm, and Sinagub (1996) recommend focus groups for studies that are "exploratory or explanatory in nature" (p. 34). I had no predetermined questions to ask during the focus groups, so I made inferences throughout the discussions by listening to the participants and attempting to make sense of their experiences. My role relied heavily on

[28] I will use the term interns over participants to help delineate when I am referring to data collected from the focus groups vs. the participating teacher Sarah White.

facilitation and moderation skills while balancing the group members' interactions. (Glesne, 2006).

As the study progressed, I transcribed the focus group transcripts and read through and reflected on them. I thought of other questions that came to mind, and asked for clarification when needed. I also sent the transcripts to the interns each month to ask if they had any clarification or addendums to add to the transcripts and their feedback was communicated back through email. Throughout the process of questioning and offering commentary, I became a part of the participants' dialogue. As the research participants in this study shared their opinions and experiences, I looked for connections among these stories and searched for themes and patterns that aligned with my research questions.

Observations

The second part of this study focuses on one participating focus group member, Sarah White, who transitioned into her first year of teaching in Fall 2012 (see IRB approval letter, IRB protocol, and district approval letter in Appendices G, H, and I). Ethnographic methods were the main source of data, including observations presented in chapter five as a narrative case study. Hatch (2002) explains the goal of observation is to "understand the culture, setting, or social phenomenon being studied from the perspectives of the participants" (p. 72). For the purposes of this study, I intended to observe Sarah in her practice and make a careful record of what she says and does so we could discuss her practice in relation to social justice. This was accomplished through

direct and frequent observations in the classroom, which allowed me to find patterns in Sarah's behavior and prompted me to ask specific questions about her practice in the interviews. To better understand Sarah's experiences in school, I also conducted context observations by attending school-related functions outside of the classroom (Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000). For example, I followed Sarah to the library, faculty lounge, cafeteria and other places her schedule sent her to better understand not only what her day looked like in terms of classroom instruction, but also her day- to-day transitions. I also attended some out of school events such as the Fall Festival and the school book fair to better understand the culture of the school and the community. Although there has been critique that teachers will "perform" for observers (Davis, London & Beyerbach, 2009), the repeated visits for several hours at a time, sometimes unannounced, minimized this as a concern for me which I was in the school. Throughout the beginning of my visits, I was able to sit quietly in the back of the class while students continued their work. See Appendix J for the complete observation schedule.

My level of involvement was also an important part of data collection. I moved from the role of observer to the role of participant observer. As the first year progressed, I worked with Sarah on giving feedback for lessons that focused on social justice and led a reading group for 30 minutes, once a week in February 2013. Becoming an active participant in the classroom for 30 minutes each week gave me a sense of the students in the classroom and their relationship with Sarah. The week of April 8th 2013, I spent the entire week in Sarah's math class co-teaching an interdisciplinary unit we created

together (see Appendix O). While I did not collect data on the students themselves, understanding more about their performance levels, personalities, and backgrounds informed my perceptions of Sarah's relationships with her students. Hatch (2002) explains "researchers who take on the role of teacher, teacher assistant, or student in school-based studies will influence the way that life plays out in those settings more than the observer who acts like a fly on the wall" (p. 73). In alignment with the constructionist research paradigm, when I decided to take on a more active role during my observation time, I influenced not only Sarah, but also the students and the classroom dynamics (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Gergen, 1985; Shotter, 1993).

When first entering the classroom, my initial observations were "grand tour observations" (Spradley, 1980, p. 77) in which I paid attention to the overall landscape of the classroom rather than just the specifics. I first came to Sarah's classroom on a teacher-planning day. While she was in a meeting, I spent time walking around the room, looked closely at bulletin boards and classroom posters to gain a better understanding of the classroom environment, physical arrangement, student work, and mood set by the physical appearance of the classroom. During my next visit when the students were in the classroom, I scanned the classroom again to search for dimensions of how the classroom culture, routines, expectations, and classroom dialogue shaped the community within Sarah's classroom. These dimensions helped to develop initial impressions regarding how Sarah promoted social justice in her classroom.

From October 2012 to January 2014 I routinely visited Sarah's classroom on average once a week for about three hours at a time. The first few visits at the beginning of each school year, I stayed the entire day (7:30am-2:30pm), but after I felt I had a thorough understanding of her daily routines (by the fourth week of observations) I observed Sarah either in a morning (her literacy block) or afternoon session (math/science/social studies) to make sure I was observing the students in different contexts. My prolonged engagement in Sarah's classroom over two years enabled me to fully capture how Sarah worked toward social justice in her classroom. As the study progressed, my observations led me to ask interview questions or to send emails clarifying decisions specific to Sarah's practice. These practices included questions regarding curricular decisions (or lack of decisions), student interactions, classroom management issues and parental involvement. In addition, I frequently referred back to my research questions to ensure my observations did not stray from the focus on this study.

Field Notes.

The principal data generated from my observations in chapter five were produced from my field notes. Observers need to make a record of what they are observing in settings and usually do this in the form of raw field notes (Hatch, 2002). Field notes were taken with a laptop during each observation to record descriptions of events, actions, and initial impressions made in the fast-paced environment of a classroom. Since my goal was to accurately portray the occurrences in the classroom, I jotted down bullet points

including key words, phrases, and actions I observed. Over time, I learned each of the students' names, so I was able to write names in my field notes (which only myself and Sarah would read) so that I could go back and ask Sarah about a particular situation later. After each observation, I was able to go back through my field notes and add additional notes to create more complete descriptions of classroom interactions. Field notes were one tool I used to guide conversations during my information interviews with Sarah.

Research Journal.

In addition to the field notes I took during observations, I also kept a research journal to keep track of my own reactions and the affective experiences I had during this study (Hatch, 2002). In my journal I was able to reflect on the process of collecting data as well as question the biases I knew I held. Goodall (2000) explains what a professional notebook is: "a professional notebook of what you observe, hear, overhear, think about, wonder about, and worry about that connects your personal life to your professional one" (p. 88). As I went through the observation process, I worried about how critical I had become and that I had forgotten what it was like in the everyday lives of teachers. Because I documented these thoughts and feelings in my research journal, I shared with Sarah my own dilemma being a teacher educator promoting social justice and what it actually looks like in practice. Using my research journal, I owned my biases and kept Sarah informed of my own struggles as a teacher educator. It was my hope that sharing my fears and concerns make her feel more comfortable sharing her struggles with me as

well. The field notes and research journal are additional tools that will inform the analysis of Sarah's case study in chapter five.

Interviews

The qualitative research interview has been defined as, "a conversation with a purpose" (Mason, 2002) and my purpose was to determine how Sarah's participation in the CSJFG and her own teacher preparation influenced her practice in regard to teaching for social justice (CRE). Using interviews in conjunction with observations provide an in-depth exploration of the participants' perspective on what was observed by the researcher and can also provide more insight into other events that may have been missed during observations (Hatch, 2002). To understand Sarah's view of social justice in the classroom, I conducted an initial interview at the beginning of her first year teaching. This was the only interview where I had already prepared interview questions to ask Sarah about how she employed culturally relevant pedagogy in her classroom (See Appendix K).[29]The remaining five interviews were spread out throughout the observations and were initiated by questions I asked regarding notes I had made in my field notes and research journal. See Table 3 for complete list of interview dates and lengths.

[29] When setting up the need for this study in chapters one and two and connecting the conceptual frameworks, I used the term culturally relevant education (CRE, Dover, 2013) as an inclusive term for culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, and teaching for social justice. At the time of these observations and interviews, when I talked to Sarah about promoting social justice in her classroom, I often used the term culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP, Ladson-Billings, 1994), which is also reflected in the interview questions.

Table 3 Sarah White Interview Schedule

Date of Interview	Length of Interview
September 10th 2012	43:25
January 29th 2013	55:05
February 23rd 2013	1:52:32
June 10th 2013	46: 35
September 9th 2013	1:08:51
October 29th 2013	1:05:33
January 20th 2014	41:21

These interviews were semi-structured in that I had some initial questions to ask, but as Sarah answered, more questions were sparked. This type of setting required me to use intensive interviewing in which I was required to actively listen, observe with sensitivity, and encourage Sarah to elaborate on her experiences (Glesne, 2006). The interviews began with questions related to specific classroom observations and Sarah's comments. For example, one day when I arrived in the classroom, I noticed one student was sitting on the floor in the back by herself working. She was clearly isolated from the rest of the students and my initial impression was that this was a form of punishment. After asking Sarah about the situation, she shared with me that the girl was hungry and her parents had not received their food stamps this month. She was embarrassed by the situation and wanted to sit alone. Sarah allowed for her to work independently and provided her with food while she was working. Having the opportunity to talk about this with Sarah in a follow-up interview prevented me from having a misconception as to what was going on in the situation.

Archival Data

Hatch (2002) describes "unobtrusive" data as the type of data that can provide insight into the social phenomenon without interfering with the actual setting. For this study, background and context data were sought to aid in understanding of the research setting. I obtained archival data related to the participants' backgrounds such as an initial questionnaire to assess previous experiences (see Appendix L), former class papers and assignments, as well as samples of work they shared with me during our focus group meetings. Sarah White also shared lesson plans, teaching observations, classroom newsletters, and other documents with me that helped me to understand the context of her classroom better. This "unobtrusive" data was not a primary source for data analysis, but rather contributed to a fuller description of the setting and helped me to contextualize the research study.

Data Analysis

The first step of data analysis in this study was to code the focus group and interview transcripts to generate codes and themes I produced from these documents. My method of data analysis for both chapters four and five of this dissertation was thematic analysis, although chapter five was more structured as it was guided by a CRE framework (to be explained more below). A thematic analysis is "a process that involves coding and then segregating the data by codes into data clumps for further analysis and description" (Glesne, 2006, p. 147). Grbich (2007) explains throughout thematic analysis the researcher has the ability to narrow the data into meaningful bits of information that

may be easier to work with as opposed to one piece of narrative. After I transcribed the focus group transcripts, I underwent a preliminary data analysis. Grbich describes the preliminary data analysis as:

> …an ongoing process which is undertaken every time data are collected. It involves a simple process of checking and tracking the data to see what is coming out of them, identifying areas which require follow-up and actively questioning where the information collected is leading or should lead the researcher. It is a process of engagement with the text, not so much to critique it- although this is one possibility, especially where existing documentation is concerned- but more to gain a deeper understanding of the values and meaning which lie therein. (p. 25)

During this stage, I read through the transcripts to reflect on my initial interpretations and take notes gauging my thoughts. I thought about what circumstances or contextual issues might have impacted the data, what emerging issues might exist, and what might require follow-up (Grbich, 2007). In the next section, I will explain the more general process of coding and then follow up with more details on how this differed between the CSJFG and Sarah's White's analysis.

Initial Coding

The next stage of analysis began with first cycle coding by manually looking through the transcripts with a pen and paper. Coding is not a "precise science" but rather an "interpretative act" (Saldaña, 2009, p. 4), so I did this several times, on several copies of the transcripts to see if I was reaching the same initial impressions. There are many different views of coding, but in agreement with Saldaña (2009), I believed it was important to keep myself open during my initial data collection to determine the method that was most appropriate. Saldaña explains a code is, "…word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or an evocative attribute for a portion of language based of visual data." (p. 3). Several different forms of coding were used as I went through the transcripts.

During my first round of coding, I began to look for emotion coding, versus coding or In vivo coding before moving to pattern and focused coding. Emotion coding labels emotions experienced by the participants. For example, feelings of frustration often came up in the CSJFG. Versus coding indentifies conflicts that emerge. An example of this coding was seen when I would note teachers feeling defeated against systemic inequalities as *teachers vs. system.* Lastly, I used In Vivo coding as much as possible to "honor the participant's voice" and "ground the analysis in their perspectives" (Saldaña, 2009, p. 74). Once I went through all the transcripts, I compiled a list of the initial codes by searching for words/phrases I repeatedly used. An example of code representation can be seen in Appendix M.

Focused Coding

Grbich (2007) provides two approaches that aid in the organization of this data: block and conceptual mapping. Both methods of organizing data can be meaningful and using a combination of the two was suiting for this study. The *block and file* approach was used when I sought to keep large chunks of data in place (In Vivo data) and the *conceptual mapping* approach was used when I wished to display a visual of the emerging data (Grbich, 2007, see Appendix L). With thematic analysis, less focus is put on how the story is told, but rather the focus is put on the language used. Reissman (2005) explains, "thematic analysis looks to focus on the '…common thematic elements across research participants, the events they report…' (p. 74). Once I visually organized my initial codes, I was able to move into second cycle coding. I grouped similar ideas together to create more focused codes. The primary goal during second cycle coding is to develop a more "categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization from your array of First Cycle codes" (Saldaña, 2009, p. 149). After I determined the most frequently used codes during my initial coding, I was able to develop major themes from the data. Saldaña (2009) explains, "A theme is an *outcome* of coding, categorization, and analytic reflection, not something that is, in itself, coded" (p. 13).

Finalized themes may all come from existing literature on the topic, as well as the views of the participants based on the researcher's analysis (Grbich, 2007). For this study, I looked for common themes across the participants in terms of their understandings of social justice. I was able to compare my findings in support of existing

literature. In the case of the CSJFC, thematic analysis of the focus groups will be presented sharing the commonalities the interns shared throughout these meetings (the common themes).

Focused coding in narrative.

The process of coding the data for Sarah White began the same way as did for the focus groups. I sat with my field notes and interview transcripts writing down my initial impressions and thoughts regarding Sarah's practice in relation to CRE. I began this process early and continued as the study progressed. Here I used *a priori* codes to help identify culturally responsive teaching practices based primarily on existing literature (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The attributes of CRE provided a starting point for my initial codes and as time went on, I added additional codes based on classroom practices, lesson plans, artifacts, and interviews. During my second level of analysis, I made notes of the barriers and obstacles that prevented Sarah from enacting CRE as well.

I moved into a narrative presentation of the data in chapter five with the intention of providing a *rich and thick* description of Sarah's practice (Geertz, 1971). Grbich (2007) explains narrative analysis focuses on stories shared by participants and reveals understandings that can be extremely helpful to a researcher hoping to better understand an experience. The researcher's role here is to take the elements of such events and create a story, which highlights the overall message being shared as it is beneficial to the research study. For this study, I sought to describe how Sarah understood and enacted

CRE in her own practice. While I already had my own understandings of CRE and what I believed it should look like in practice, this did not mean Sarah shared the same opinions as me. Rather, Ladson-Billings (2006b) asserts there is no set "checklist" to measure a teacher's culturally relevant pedagogy (for it should be an individualized process based on the needs of the students in the classroom), thus I sought to see which themes emerged in the study and analyze them in regards to the literature on CRE as well as Sarah's beliefs regarding the needs of her students. Given I am ascribing to a constructionist model of inquiry (Crotty, 1998), I acknowledge that through my questions and conversations with Sarah, I more than likely influenced her practice. For example, I suggested Sarah read Ladson-Billings (1994), *The Dreamkeepers*, as we progressed through the study so when reflecting upon her practice, she could connect ideas between theory and practice. I also acknowledged that Sarah's explanations for why she chose to do things a certain way might also change how I view CRE as it relates to the particular context of her classroom.

As such, it is important to note that narrative is not only conducted through interviews, it can also be through written diaries, autobiographies, or other forms of dialogue. For this study, I used Sarah's former class assignments, lesson plans, classroom artifacts and the interactions I saw her having with her students in the classroom (as documented in my field notes). Additionally, after witnessing interactions with students, it was also important for me to address what I was observing with Sarah to make sure I am most accurately representing her understandings of CRE to the fullest. The picture

painted of Sarah's classroom came from the interview transcripts as well as other dialogues and less formal conversations we engaged in (as recorded in my notes). I aimed not to change her language but rather share her story and interpret the meanings and experiences behind it. Therefore, as I went through the preliminary data analysis and began early coding, I shared my transcripts and notes with Sarah and asked for her feedback and clarification. Chapter five will share the story of Sarah as she progressed from her teacher education program and participation in the CSJFC into her classroom.

Establishing Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, results are considered trustworthy if findings are a close reflection of what participants have described to the researcher. Rather than using phrases such as "validity" and "reliability," qualitative inquiry seeks to ensure that empirical knowledge is trustworthy. Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert the goal of trustworthiness is that the study's findings are, "worth paying attention to" (p. 290). I have made a conscious commitment to monitor the research process closely to prevent a threat to trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba suggest five strategies to manage such potential threats: credibility, transferability, dependability, reflexivity, and confirmability. I will employ four of the five strategies suggested as a means to promote trustworthiness in this study.[30] Below is an explanation of my attempts to establish trustworthiness, as well as

[30] The fifth strategy, confirmability is the attempt to have as little bias as possible. I do not assert a bias-free orientation to this research. Rather I acknowledge the position I have as the researcher, my own biography influencing my analysis, and the fact that I know my biases will emerge throughout the research process.

the limitations and challenges to establishing trustworthiness.

Credibility

Credibility involves establishing if the results from the research are considered "believable" or "credible" from the perspective of the participants. First, a necessary step of this process involved triangulation to ensure accuracy. To ensure conclusions were drawn from multiple sources, I triangulated the data by cross-examining the interviews, observations, field notes and archival data. Second, to ensure the participants felt this research was credible, I used member checking as a tool to further integrate participants into the study and to confirm the accuracy of the codes I developed for the themes that emerged during data collection (Hatch, 2002). All of the transcribed focus groups, interviews, and field notes were shared with participants to review, reflect, and elaborate on or clarify any dictated part of our conversations.

Transferability

Transferability involves applying results to other contexts without generalizing, but still recognizing applicability. Though the results of this study will not be generalized to all populations of pre-service teachers, my hope is that readers identify similarities and differences between themselves and the participants in the study. Teachers and schools are not all the same, and perhaps the only way they are alike is their categorization. There might be some generalizable elements in terms of the themes or categories that emerge in the analysis. The application of this data might provide incentive for changes in policy and practice. Thus, while qualitative research does not generalize in the traditional

fashion of quantitative research, it still provides thick descriptions we often capture in other ways, which can inform a priori knowledge and theories giving us a space to question and critique the status quo (Becker, 1990).

Dependability

Dependability involves making sure the data and the findings are consistent, however in qualitative inquiry, we cannot actually measure the same phenomena, in the same exact capacity twice. The idea of dependability emphasizes the idea that research contexts are ever-changing and that data can change based on the surrounding environment. In this particular study, I discuss the context of teacher education in chapter six and how this may have impacted the results in this study.

Reflexivity and Positionality

Reflexivity acknowledges the researcher's active participation in the study (as well as my positionality). Goodall (2000) defines reflexivity as, "the process of personally and academically reflecting on lived experiences in way that reveal deep connections between the writer and his or her subject" (p. 137). I acknowledge in this study, as a qualitative researcher, I am distinctly different than an "objective scientist." To be reflective, I must keep track of my influence on the research setting, think about my biases, and monitor my emotional responses (Hatch, 2002). I think it is very important for me to acknowledge the bias that I know I have and be up front about it with the participants.

Additionally, many qualitative researchers would consider developing close relationships with one's participants as a limitation. I know I have developed a close rapport with my participants. They have asked me my advice on certain issues, requested I proofread papers for other classes, and want me to observe them teaching. Some qualitative researchers have written about how friendship biases data selections and might decrease objectivity. First, there could be an unconscious subjective selection process (Glesne, 2006, p. 116). While I do not feel I risk a subjective selection process since I opened up the research study to all students in previous classes, I was definitely pleased with the particular participants who chose to be in my study. I cannot separate myself from acknowledging our similar epistemologies and how this enhances the study.

Additionally, some friendships might cause research participants to *overidentify* with the researcher in which "they may begin to act in ways that they perceive the researchers want them to act or in ways that impress them" (Glesne, 2006, p. 117). While my participants have shared varying opinions and attitudes within our conversations, because we have become close, I wonder if they are ever trying to impress me. I have always struggled with this notion of *appropriate* relationships between students and myself and over who gets to decide what is *appropriate*. I personally do not understand how to separate the caring nature involved in teaching from the natural friendships that foster from these relationships. When I was an elementary school teacher, I often went to students' houses for dinner, joined families at the mall or park, and even had former students as bridesmaids in my wedding. I was often critiqued and even warned about the

rapport I developed with students. But, to me, it seemed like an expected progression of accord between students and teachers. Glesne (2006) contrarily discusses feminist and critical researchers who challenge the traditional concern to become detached and remain objective in one's research (p. 117). I support this notion and believe that if I attempted to disengage from the relationships I have developed with my participants, I would be going against my own positionality that teachers and students should develop mutual care for each other. In the meantime, I must continue to remain reflective and continuously question my assumptions, assertions, and conclusions I draw in this study.

Given the importance of the researchers' own experiences and biases when using a post-critical approach, I conclude this chapter by revealing my own positionality and how this influenced the nature of this study. I have chosen to include my positionality as part of my reflexivity because the very nature of who I am has shaped the questions I have asked in this study, the relationships I have developed with the participants, and the ways in which I analyzed the data. In the next section, I will share how different aspects of my identity influenced the commitments I hold to promoting social justice in teacher education as well as how this influenced the epistemological perspective guiding this study.

Positionality.

As much as we may try to be objective in our positions and perspectives, it is nearly impossible to separate oneself from the ideologies, beliefs, and experiences that have shaped who we are. My personal lens will influence my standpoint and my ability to

reflect on certain situations. In qualitative research, recognizing that subjectively is a part of designing one's research project and selecting frames of interpretation is imperative to a reflective analysis (Glesne, 2006).

Upon examining myself and what preconceived biases and worldviews I bring to the table, I must deconstruct my own identity and how this might impact my research. Whereas a surface concept of identity might include race and gender, an intersectional concept of identity dissects how other dimensions such as ethnicity, class, religion, sexual orientation, etc. might influence who we are as individuals. Kimberle Crenshaw (1995) introduced the term intersectionality as a methodology to study relationships across multiple dimensions and modalities of social relationships and how they specifically contribute to social inequalities. Delgado & Stefancic (2001) define intersectionality as an examination of "race, sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation, and how their combination plays out in various settings" (p. 51). My own intersectionality includes the identity of a White, middle-class, heterosexual, woman, and former elementary teacher. Each facet of my identity has determined where I am today and how this will affect my future research. I will explain each facet of my identity separately for clarity of reading with the understanding that each of these facets interact with each other.

Race.

This study will focus on social justice ideas and its impact on teacher practice. Given race is one of the topics in a social justice teacher education, it is important for me to position myself in terms of my own race. Having grown up in an uniquely diverse part

of the United States, I never really questioned the power of *Whiteness*. South Florida is home to many immigrants who have navigated to the U.S. for various purposes. The impact of living in such a diverse population evidenced itself when people commonly mistook my native language for Spanish rather than English (I have darker skin which automatically races me as Latina instead of White). In high school, I always felt that I was actually the minority; many of my peers who were White also shared a Jewish identity. Continually surrounded by people different from myself, I never thought about having a *White privilege*. In Peggy McIntosh's (1989) famous paper, she identified this *White privilege* as " . . . an invisible package of unearned assets that [she] can count on cashing in each day, but about which [she] was 'meant' to remain oblivious" (p. 10) As McIntosh described, as long as I did not acknowledge the advantage of my White skin, it did not exist. Over time, I have come to acknowledge my Whiteness and the advantages gained from it each day. Through courses studied in graduate school and working in a community where I became the racial minority, I realized that I exhibited a dysconscious racism. King (1991) defines this as a "distorted way of thinking about race" in which one accepts dominant White norms, not even acknowledging all the privileges granted in my life (p. 338). It is through such realizations that researching teachers' views on race and culture first interested me. This fed my desire for teachers to critically reflect upon their own race and how it might affect the students in their classroom.

Class.

Another aspect of the topics illustrated in social justice literature relate to socioeconomic status and access. I grew up in a middle-class neighborhood with an embedded belief of a meritocracy and endless possibilities. I never thought about my *quality* of education. Rather, I *expected* an education from the best teachers, had access to an abundance of resources, and unconditional parental support. It did not occur to me that I was growing up with ample opportunities not shared by all, and I naively took them for granted. I believed in this idea of an *American Dream* and that if everyone worked hard enough they could overcome their undesirable circumstances. However, just as I have come to a consciousness of my *Whiteness*, I soon acknowledged the leverage I had in my privileged upbringing. Anyon (2005) highlights the main systemic issues that create such disparities between classes. Such socio-economic differences can influence a child's success. She states:

> The fact that school achievement improves as family resources increase makes sense: Parents with sufficient time and money are more likely to nurture their children's development with private tutoring, lessons, sports and arts programs, and educationally useful visits to museums and concerts. (p. 70)

This knowledge leads me to believe that many teachers may not think about such systemic issues and how this might affect students.

Gender.

In my lifetime, I do not believe I have dealt with the sorts of gender inequality my mother and grandmother faced in the past. However, I am aware that women still do not earn equal salaries as their male counterparts. I chose a traditionally female career (The National Center for Educational Statistics (2013) reports that 76% of public school teachers are female), and therefore thought about gender issues while I was in my workplace. Outside of the classroom, I have heard sexist remarks and derogatory references toward the teaching profession. I believe this demonstrates the bias that still exists in our society and why careers such as teaching and nursing (predominantly women) are still vastly underpaid. Despite the fact that the education field is becoming more diverse, teaching is a female career that is still a stereotypical norm. With this in mind, I have sought to include both male and female voices in my study.

Religion and Sexual Orientation.

While these two facets of identity do not necessarily belong together, for me, because I identify as Christian, they very much affect one another. Growing up, I believed homosexuality to be a sin. I remember sitting in church sermons condemning homosexuality and learned about the "reconciliation" that could help gays and lesbians return to a "healthy" lifestyle. If we all prayed hard enough, a person could change their sexual orientation. While my parents never openly discriminated or were hateful to gays and lesbians, there was this unspoken silence that something was not right with *those* people. While I struggled with my religious convictions due to my upbringing at the

beginning of my graduate studies, I have since changed my views on sexual orientation and am committed to social justice for all students (and people). As a heterosexual woman, once again I have not had to deal with difficulties in my sexual relationships. I have not experienced judgment from society and I can marry whomever I choose. It is through these realizations that I have begun to think about my own positionality, in terms of heteronormativity and how it has influenced my teaching.

A Teacher: job or passion?

The majority of my friends and family know my story. Since the ripe age of eight years old I declared the profession that would become more than simply my job, but my very identity. While blessed with a proclivity to teach, I became aware that there was much more involved in the educational process and far more political, social, and historical forces that were at play. I believed that through both my undergraduate and graduate training I was prepared to confront the vastly diverse classrooms in this country. Despite all my knowledge of these factors affecting education, I still held on to my belief that me as the teacher had the power to make a difference (an individualistic view). Wanting to *make this difference* and be the savior teacher I admired so much in Hollywood films such as *Dangerous Minds* (Smith, 1995) and *Freedom Writers* (LaGravenese, 2007), I often documented my own reflections and thought processes at the end of my workday. I wrote my journal in a third person format because I remember thinking one day I might try to publish a memoir. An excerpt from an early journal entry in March 2007 demonstrates the role of "savior" I held to so dearly (see Appendix N).

Looking back at this entry, I do not believe I necessarily held a deficit view of my students, but I most definitely took the power away from them and awarded it to myself. I did hold a somewhat deficit view of parents who "provided a lack of support." Since leaving the classroom, the furthering of my own studies and my comprehensive understanding of schooling has fueled my fire to prepare future teachers for moments when they might be tempted to hold a deficit view or to keep the power for themselves. I hoped that through my experiences and what I have learned, the participants in this study will benefit from participation in the CSJFG.

The influence of my positionality on study and participants.

It is important for me to note how my own positionality has led me on this research path. My own discoveries of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and myself as a teacher will have an impact on my subjectivity. Instead of stifling my own emotions, I have used them to inquire upon my own perspectives and interpretations, and to shape new questions through re-examining my own assumptions (Hatch, 2002, p. 120). My own epiphanies have led me to my work with future teachers in hope that social justice conversations in teacher preparation positively affected their pedagogies and created reflective, critical practitioners.

Limitations of the Study

The most obvious limitation in this study is the size of the study. Scholars have argued that we need more research that goes beyond single-site studies, looks beyond short term effects, and examine links between teacher preparation programs and teacher

practice (Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Sleeter, 2012). While this study sought to provide insight connecting a teacher's education to their practice, I acknowledge a sample size of four does not provide the larger, more intensive study these scholars have called for. However, the longitudinal aspect of this study does have a slight advantage over other studies reported and the clear connection made to teacher education.

Another limitation is that this study does not directly address the interns/teacher's impact on student achievement. Studies involving teacher learning and teacher practice are important because of the role they have on educational policy (Desimone, Smith, & Phillips, 2007). Empirical results demonstrating higher scores on traditional measures of student achievement could enhance the results of this study and make it more meaningful to policymakers. Given the IRB restrictions put on this study, I am not at liberty to share official student data, however I am able to highlight teacher reported accounts of students' achievement, motivation, and engagement.

Conventions of the Language

Ethnographic methods were used in this qualitative study to answer the research questions. To make it clear for the reading regarding how I report my findings, I will explain my language choices below.

- Data will be presented in the past tense when participants describe a particular event that happened in the past (i.e., Natalie discussed the power of language with her students in class). By using the past tense, findings are, "statements of what was observed rather than too quickly assuming a timeless truth to what is always a situated observation" (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003, p. 23).
- When I refer to the interns abiding beliefs, the past tense is also used (i.e. Jack believed that individual agency is the way to promote social justice). While the

assumption is that the participants' beliefs continue behind this study, I will remain consistent by using the past tense.

- Participants' words are represented as close to the original tellings as possible and can be identified followed by codes, as described below, or quotation marks.
    - Teacher code: Jack (J), Natalie (N), Kayla (K), Sarah (S)
    - Data source: focus group (fg), or interview
    - Date of data collection: month/day (1020= October 20)
    - Lines within focus group/interview transcripts (ln2-3)
    - Pages within transcripts/field notes (p5)

As an example, the code J-fg1127p6ln6-9 should be interpreted as Jack, focus group, November 27th, page 6, lines 6-9.

In the next chapter I will present the findings from the CSJFG. As explained earlier, In vivo coding is used as much as possible but I have rephrased some of the dialogue to make it easier for the reader to understanding. When language has been changed or words added for clarity, I used brackets and aimed to maintain the central message participants' communicated. I used italics when placing emphasis on something, suggestion sarcasm, or mimicking words. I used quotations to refer to the participants words.

CHAPTER FOUR: CRITICAL SOCIAL JUSTICE FOCUS GROUPS

The purpose of this study was to examine the understandings and experiences of four interns' teachers participating in a critical social justice focus group (CSJFG). This chapter presents findings and provides discussion in relation to the purpose of this study. The intern teachers shared their understandings of social justice in our focus group meetings and provided examples from their internship year teaching to give insight as to how these understandings played out in practice for them. The topic of social justice is very broad and thus brought out many topics across lines of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexual orientation. Throughout this chapter, the themes the group brought out are addressed and connected to existing scholarship for the purpose of analysis.

This chapter begins with a profile of each participant,[31] including their backgrounds, interest in teaching, and educational experiences. The profiles are intended to provide a more complete picture of who the participants are and how their background, life experiences and dispositions have shaped who they are as teachers today. After each participant is introduced to the reader, the major themes and sub-themes I produced from the CSJFG transcripts are presented and discussed.

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[31] Participants have all selected pseudonym names. All names of schools and programs have also been changed to protect the identities of the participants'. Additionally, the city the participants' teach in and the name of the participants' institution will be replaced with [college] and [city] when necessary. The names of where participants grew up *will not be* changed because this is a part of their past experiences shaping who they are today. I have the participants' permission to include their actual hometowns in this study.

Participant Profiles

The four intern teachers who took part in this study were enrolled in a teacher education program at a large Southeastern University in the U.S. Each participant was in their early to mid-20s and took various routes to arrive in their programs and had different experiences along the way (see Table 4). Before beginning the CSJFG, participants filled out a teacher questionnaire (see Appendix L). The detail of these answers varied by each participant. I used the questionnaire answers, transcripts from the CSJFG meetings, and email communication that I have had with the participants as a means to explain the participants' backgrounds and my perceptions of their involvement in the study. Participants' words (in Vivo codes) will be used as much as possible throughout this chapter, but I have rephrased some of the language for the ease of reading dialogue and have marked changes using brackets.

My interpretations of the context of our dialogue guided me when rephrasing statements. Given the nature of the dialogue that occurred in our meetings, I am using their words to keep their ideas in context to the best of my ability and to give rich and thick descriptions (Gertz, 1972). I will use italics when placing emphasis on phrases, suggesting sarcasm, or mimicking words; not to be confused with when I use quotations to refer to the participants' words. As discussed in chapter three, I believe that my positionality impacts the analysis of my participants' words, thus the participants'

Table 4 Participant Demographics

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Race *	Major Concentration	Intern School Placement	First Year Teaching Placement	Second Year Teaching Placement
Jack	Male	24	White	Secondary Social Studies	11th Grade History; Suburban	Left teaching	n/a
Kayla	Female	23	African American	Secondary English/Literature	5th Grade Elementary; Urban	4th Grade; Urban	4th Grade; Urban
Natalie	Female	26	White	Urban Multicultural Elementary	10th Grade English; Suburban	7th Grade; Urban	8th Grade; Urban
Sarah	Female	22	White	Urban Multicultural Elementary	5th Grade Elementary; Urban	2nd Grade; Urban	3rd Grade; Urban

*Self-identified

positionalities impact their views and the perspectives they share regarding practicing social justice. In the following section, I will provide insight on each participant's background to better understand their posititionalities as well as include my perceptions of who the participants are as teachers.

Natalie Costigan

Natalie Costigan is a White female originally from Boston, MA. In her questionnaire, Natalie wrote about her upbringing in a poor community raised by her single mother. In our meetings, she identified herself as an "at-risk" child in school, treated differently by her teachers and peers because she had a "weird name" that was different from her mother's and she moved a lot. She explained how her mother instilled a love of education in her and sent her to the best schools available. Natalie graduated with a bachelor's degree in English Literature and a minor in Art History. She worked for a year in retail before deciding to return to graduate school to obtain her teaching credentials. Natalie was not initially thrilled with the idea of a teaching career:

> I actually resisted the idea of being an educator for the entirety of my undergraduate career. Right after graduation, I got a summer teaching position at [college] working with the Graduation Project and inner city students of [city]. I loved it! I got to create lessons, manage a class, and see students learn from me, and I fell in love with teaching. I learned very quickly that the best way to show my love for my subject was to share it with young minds. My passion for English

> and Literature led me to the field that I know I belong in, despite my early rejections of teaching. (Questionnaire)

Natalie brought up the impact of the Graduation Project again during our first meeting. The Graduation Project (TGP) is a non-profit partnership between the public school district and the private sector that serves underachieving schools to prepare students with college/career support, social services, and community engagement. She believed working with TGP had sparked her to think about things in a different way:

> [E]specially doing The Graduation Project I looked into things a little bit more than I think I would have otherwise because I didn't know what I was getting myself into teaching them . . I was thinking about what would be the best way to approach the difference between my TGP kids and potentially my High Falls kids and that kind of thing. (N-fg922p4ln13-15)

This was Natalie's first time working with historically underachieving students and it made her aware of the differences between her internship placement (which was a higher performing suburban school) and the TGP placement.

Natalie believed her freshman English teacher served as her catalyst to teach ninth grade English stating, "I think that this is the perfect age to influence students as readers and lifelong learners." She also referenced her experiences working with students in the

suburbs and "inner city," believing, "inner city schools are certainly more intimidating to a new teacher, but I feel that I could adapt*"*(Questionnaire). During her internship, she worked in a suburban school, but her first teaching assignment was an urban school in Middle Tennessee.

Natalie was the most vocal participant in the CSJFG, which I believe speaks to her personality. She is warm and friendly, making talking to her a pleasure. After her internship ended, she ended up taking six months off before accepting a teaching job in middle Tennessee. She made this decision due to personal reasons; Her fiancé was going to be deployed and she was not sure where they would be living, so she worked several part time jobs before accepting a 7th grade Language Arts position in January 2013.

Jack Bradley

Jack Bradley is a White male originally from Nashville, TN. In his questionnaire, he explained that he grew up in a middle-class home with both parents and his brother. He attended a diverse high school that was about 60% Black, 30% White, and 10% Hispanic. During our meetings he revealed that his mom paid a tuition fee to have him take a bus to another high school that was better than the one he was zoned for. This school offered an International Baccalaureate (IB) program, that attracted many great teachers who fueled his desire to teach:

> I had great teachers in a not so great environment. I didn't feel or understand their influence on me until late in my college career, but when it hit me, I knew this is what I had to do. I feel like I owe it to them (Questionnaire).

Jack shared his draw to the social studies content area because he felt, "there is much to do in terms of reading, writing, and critical thinking*" (*Questionnaire). During our meetings he referenced his exposure to cultural studies courses and how this influenced him. Jack had been exposed to ideas of social justice in a multicultural education course that he took. He learned about "shared responsibility" and "shared authority" as well as discussed his knowledge of achievement gaps and how this class served as the impetus for his final action research project starting, "[There's] really good stuff in [my multicultural education text] that led to the action research stuff. As far as [my background in] social justice, [that] really came from multicultural ed and issues [discussed in that class] (J-fg922p1ln15-17). Because of Jack's introduction to these ideas, he chose to do an action research project on "shared responsibility" with his 11^{th}grade students.

Next to Natalie, Jack was a very vocal participant in our meetings. He had a certain charisma and charm that made listening to him very easy. Looking back at my reflection notes, he was the participant that I felt most struggled with implementing ideas of social justice. Often when he seemed to be optimistic about how he could apply social justice in his classroom, he would counteract these ideas, stating, "I hate to be a bummer

about social justice." Jack never ended up entering the classroom after his internship. He did not think teaching was for him and started a small production and acting company. I checked in with Jack periodically to see if he changed his mind and came back to teaching. He replied:

> As far as leaving teaching, it was always a pretty tough decision. I still think about it and miss it actually. I try to keep in touch with some of the folks I interned with and live vicariously through their war stories, and that always a real pleasure. (email communication)

While he did not end up teaching history, he still incorporated his knowledge of and love of history working on educational documentaries with the History Channel©.

Kayla Smith

Kayla Smith is an African American female originally from Memphis, TN. She attended an urban high school that was about 85% Black, 10% White, and 5% other. Her grandparents raised her because her parents passed away when she was young. She also lived with her two aunts, two cousins, and younger sister. In her questionnaire, Kayla explained why she entered the field of education:

> I was inspired to be a teacher because I enjoy being around children, and helping them become successful. I started helping my little cousins with their schoolwork

> once they entered elementary school, and it made me want to help other children in the way that I helped them. I also wanted to serve as a mentor to younger children as well. (Questionnaire)

Kayla was a part of the Urban Multicultural Cohort and wanted to teach third or fourth grade in an urban community. I have less background information to share about Kayla because her questionnaire answers were brief and she was the quietest participant in the CSJFG. In my own reflection notes, I thought about her participating in a study on social justice issues with a White facilitator, two other White females and one White male. I wondered if this contributed to her being the least expressive participant. I often found myself having to draw answers out of her and would subconsciously turn to her when we talked issues of race (I tried to not ask her race related questions assuming she represented all African Americans, but at times I know that I did). Throughout the focus group meetings, she only referenced her position as an African American female one time.

I requested to interview Kayla individually to gain a better understanding of her positionality as an African American teacher in urban schools as well as to give her a chance to speak in a setting that might be more comfortable for her, but these are of course my perceptions of the situation. Kayla may not have spoken up because she just might be a more naturally quiet person. However, I never got the opportunity to ask her. Kayla never acknowledged meeting me for another interview, and after the focus groups

ended, I lost touch with Kayla despite my efforts. I was informed that she accepted a position teaching 4th grade at an urban school in Tennessee.

Sarah White

Sarah is a White female originally from Chattanooga, TN. Sarah is a third generation teacher and stated she wanted to teach because her, "interest in teaching is definitely due in part to the fact that the education profession has always been highly valued in my home" (Questionnaire). She attended a Paideia School[32] beginning in kindergarten to sixth grade and she believed that because she attended this culturally and socioeconomically diverse school, she was accepting of differences from a young age. She explained:

> Most of the faculty went to great lengths to minimize social stratification. We had no football team and no cheerleaders, for example, because faculty did not want those athletes to become the "elite" students in the school. (Questionnaire)

Additionally, Sarah shared how the motto of a Paideia School encouraged open discussions and this taught her the importance of discourse, even if it was controversial. When Sarah entered seventh grade she went to an all-girls' private school. She had many

[32] Paideia schools are private schools founded in 1971 by a group of parents wanting to be more involved in their children's education. The Paideia philosophy is based on a belief that schools must be individualized and caters to students' interest. Social skills are an important part of a child's development and students are often in multi-age classrooms that emphasize challenge and achievement over competition (www.paideiaschools.org)

opportunities there including enrolling in ten Advanced Placement courses and studying abroad in France. While she is an advocate of public schools and hoped to teach in one, Sarah stated:

> Though I am a strong proponent of public schools, I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to go to this school because it afforded me many opportunities, educational and otherwise, that I would not have had at a public school in Chattanooga. (Questionnare)

Contrary to her elementary school, Sarah estimated that only five to seven percent of the Paideia school's population were students of color and almost everyone was from a middle or upper class background. Sarah graduated from college with her bachelor's in Art History with a minor in Elementary Education. She was also a part of the Urban-Multicultural Education Cohort seeking to teach elementary school in an urban setting.

During our first focus group meeting, Sarah shared she was heavily influenced by the works of Paulo Freire (1970) and bell hooks (1994) from an independent reading course. She was the only intern who specifically mentioned scholars who had impacted her and how this influenced her pedagogy:

> I'm really focused on that and my work with urban and multicultural students and things that stick out to me that I try to put into praxis- the integration of theory

> and practice, and making sure but making sure that your theory matches what you're doing [as Freire discusses], then helping students to be deliberate about why they're learning and what they're learning. (S-fh922p3ln8-13)

Sarah's idea of teaching for social justice involved recognition of theory and practice matching which in turn would benefit the students. Like Kayla, Sarah did not speak as much as Jack and Natalie did in our meetings. My perception of Sarah is that she is deeply reflective and I felt that she was more expressive when writing her thoughts versus speaking them out loud. Sarah's story will be explored in further detail in chapter five.

Discussion of Findings

Throughout analysis of the CSJFG transcripts, I produced three common themes that unified the interns' understandings. As discussed in chapter three, I began with initial coding, reading through the transcripts while notating my initial impressions. After several reads through the transcripts, I organized the data with both *block and file* and *conceptual mapping* to create early themes by grouping together similar ideas (Grbich, 2007). Finally I was able to develop major themes that answered my first research question: *What are four intern teachers' understandings and experiences while participating in a critical social justice focus group?* These themes help to illustrate how the intern teachers participating in the CSJFG understood social justice in theory and in practice (according to their tellings). Throughout this analysis, I did look to see if there

was a progression in development of their ideas from the first focus group to the last, but there was not a clear linear progression, so this did not become a part of this analysis. Although each intern teacher had different experiences that were unique to him or her, they shared the commonality of participating in the CSJFG. These findings are not meant to communicate a cause and effect relationship from participating in a CSJFG. In others words, I am not asserting that should someone else conduct a similar study they would yield the same results. These findings reflect these individual interns' understandings and experiences and are influenced by their prior experiences and the contexts in which they teach.

The first major theme that consistently appeared throughout the data was *critical awareness*, which refers to the experiences the participants recognized, how they reflected throughout their teaching, fought deficit models, and held on to ideas of empowerment and agency for themselves and their students. The second theme that consistently appeared throughout the data is "*It's about the Students*." Here the participants discussed issues regarding the importance of knowing their students and meeting their needs. They also spoke about how they needed to create a safe environment for learning to occur. The third and final theme that consistently appeared in the data was *structural obstacles*, demonstrating the constant struggles the participants faced as they recognized inequity and lack of access. This theme also discussed the defeat the interns felt as they tried to promote social justice, but felt pressures from external forces (see

Figure 3). Each of these themes and their sub-themes are discussed in great detail in the following section.

Critical Awareness

It takes more than just being aware of something to practice social justice (Carlisle, Jackson, & George, 2006; Grant & Agosto, 2008). There has to be a critical component within awareness if one is truly working toward social justice, meaning that they are "engaged in self-reflection about their own socialization into [social] groups (their 'positionality') and must strategically act from that awareness in ways that challenge social injustice" (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. *xviii*). Each intern teacher engaged in a critical awareness in some fashion throughout this study. The interns held their own ideas of social justice from previous classes they had taken, scholars they had read, and teaching placements held in varying communities.

Central to their own education and experiences, they also believed in the idea of education as a means to increase awareness in the larger community. During our meetings the interns discussed ideas centered on, "making the community aware," having a foundation for knowledge to "trickle down," and different ways that those involved in education should undergo professional development.

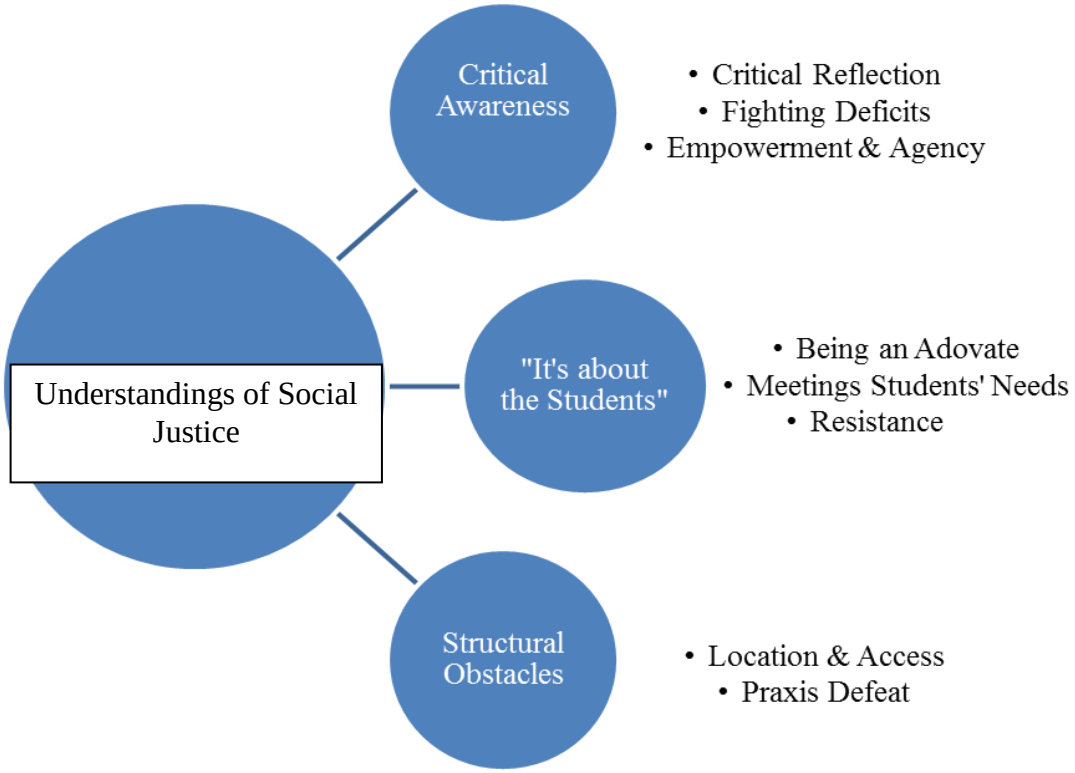

Figure 3 Major Themes and Sub-themes

For example, when talking about teaching social justice in schools, Natalie shared:

> I think it's a start though, that people think about [social justice ideas]. Just being aware that there exists a concept of social justice and that it's something that we're thinking about. You know, that's like anything, just thinking about it? (N-fg922p15ln15-17)

Sarah agreed with Natalie stating, "It's about making the entire community aware" (S-fg922p10ln5). Sarah felt awareness of inequality should not be limited to those suffering from poverty, for example, but that the general public held the responsibility to be aware of social justice issues impacting their world. Sarah shared with the focus group that she grew up in an affluent community and if it were not for the teachers who had helped her become aware of her own social status and privileges, she may not think about social justice in the same way. She believed the onus of responsibility for educating and making the community aware of social justice started with education. She explained, "the hope is that you would start by educating educators, and that would trickle down to the students and then eventually that would lead to an awareness among the general public" (S-fg922p14ln21-23). It was apparent that throughout the focus groups, the interns were aware of the inequalities in society and believed it was one of their responsibilities to

work toward change. Three sub-themes comprised the theme critical awareness: 1) critical reflection, 2) fighting deficits, and 3) empowerment and agency.

Critical reflection.

An important part of embracing a critical awareness was acknowledging the importance of reflecting, both for the intern teachers and for their students. Critical reflection occurs when a person analyzes and challenges presuppositions and one's knowledge base (Brookfield, 1990/1995; Mezirow, 1990). Howard (2003) explains, "the term *critical reflection* attempts to look at reflection within moral, political, and ethical contexts of teaching. Issues pertaining to equity, access, and social justice are typically ascribed to critical reflection" (p. 197, emphasis in original). Teacher education literature has documented the importance concerning reflection for pre-service teachers and how one's experiences, actions, and interpretations inform future decision-making (Gore, 1987; Gore & Zeichner, 1991; Schön, 1983; Sparkes, 1991). When teaching for social justice, reflection becomes critical and calls for teachers to, "reflect on their own racial and cultural identities and to recognize how these identities coexist with the cultural compositions of their students" (Howard, 2003, p. 196).

As we progressed through the CSJFG the interns were able to think about the assumptions they held, the knowledge they had acquired and how these assumptions influenced their pedagogy. This sub-theme brought up conversations from the articles the interns read and examples they were witnessing in their classrooms. They acknowledged

an important component of social justice was to be cognizant about how they addressed challenging situations in the classroom as well as evolve to be teachers more aware of "the bigger picture." Here the teachers used this critical reflection as an attempt to promote social justice in their classrooms as well as actively take a stance on issues they deemed as challenging.

Critical reflections: In the classroom.

An example of critical reflection displayed how the interns' used their social justice knowledge to inform their pedagogical decisions to increase awareness amongst their students. In a conversation over derogatory language used in schools, the interns provided several examples discussing how a teacher practicing social justice should respond to such a situation. Kayla believed that the responsibility to correct students was on the teacher:

> It's important for us as educators, if we know something is right or wrong, and if we hear our kids using [language] the wrong way, [then] that's the key time to really hit it right there when it's said instead of waiting. You know how busy our days are. You might not be able to remember [if you wait to address the situation] and you know how important it is when those teachable moments come. It's very important to address those issues then. (K-fg418p8ln16-21)

Natalie also shared her methods on how she handled the use of derogatory language in the classroom:

> I tell my kids all the time that you don't even understand the power of what you have to say. This power can lead you to great places [or] it can lead you to dark places over time. Think about what you say to people. Think about how you feel when people say things to you. That's why this article really hit me[33]. (N-fg418p8ln5-9)

In a similar fashion, Jack discussed the importance of addressing these situations and how as a teacher making students critically aware of their language that could potentially stop the cycle:

> [You can start] by having a talk with your kids. Say, *look, when you say 'retarded' and when you say 'gay' you're reproducing this power that is very unhealthy to society at large. So cut it out, and this is why you need to cut it out.* And so, it's about power but it is also understanding language. (J-fg418p7-8ln46-3)

[33] The article Natalie was referring to was "Social justice, democratic education and the silencing words that wound" by Barbara Applebaum.

Sarah discussed how making students aware of inequality in society was an important part of practicing social justice. She said, "Just really making sure that students are aware of the social justice aspect or at least trying to help them be deliberate about their own education and take that on as a goal [is important.] " (S-fg922p3ln16-18). Sarah and Natalie had a discussion about how social justice conversations were just as important in a school serving privileged students (typically middle/upper class) and that teachers who were in this type of school still had an obligation to promote social justice in their classrooms. Students who attend private and public schools serving communities of privilege appear to be doing well academically so it may seem absurd to view them as an "at-risk" group (Swal, 2013). However, in his ethnographic study of private schools, Khan (2011) found that teachers and White students naturalized social hierarchies as part of a meritocratic ladder system. Swal (2013) explained:

> Regardless of their demographic descriptors, what we know from the small body of empirical work about these students is that those who excel with privileged school settings tend to be those who embrace hierarchies, ignore structural inequalities, and demonstrate egalitarianism and politeness on the surface with a streak of independence and competitiveness just below. (p. 11)

With this knowledge in mind, Sarah worried it might be easy to overlook teaching for social justice in a suburban school if students of color were not present, however,

based on the evidence, it seems more important than ever for teachers to consider this if their aim is to promote equity and disrupt the status quo (S-fg1027p4ln31-33). Natalie added:

> [There are always going to be students who] identify as White, but there [are still] things in their backgrounds that [they are dealing with]. So getting to know your students, and then taking that extra step to also educate them about larger society [is just as important]. [You can start by giving them information about the context in which they live and make them aware they may not always live in this context]. So when [they] move out of that, [they can] be aware of these things that [they] are blind to now. (N- fg1027p4ln18-24).

Each of the interns were promoting critical reflection within their students in different ways. Cammarota and Romero (2009) asserts a key objective for social justice educators should be modeling critical consciousness in their instruction. "Ultimately, modeling critical consciousness facilities students' awareness of the social and economic forces bearing down on their lives, and the potential for disrupting those forces" (p. Cammarota & Romero, 2009, p. 469). In the examples above, the interns shared their stories of how they promoted critical reflection in different ways that worked for their classroom contexts. These types of conversations in K-12 schools are a starting point for

teachers practicing social justice to teach students about inequalities and work toward change.

Critical reflections: about self/about teaching.

In addition to promoting reflection amongst the students, throughout the CSJFG the interns discussed how important it was for them to address their own assumptions and biases. Jack worked at a school that was typically deemed without its problems. However, his highly affluent, mostly White, upper-middle class high school, Western High, accepted several transfer students from McGarther High- a school across town that served a majority of lower socioeconomic African American and Hispanic students. Jack's awareness of social justice was sparked when reading about deficit models in education:[34]

> [When you] read things like this, and really just in general, you don't think about the lack of prior knowledge that your students have and the people in your school have. Reading this kind of stuff has become common sense to me, you know from that one cultural studies class that I took. But I realize not everyone thinks like that and this isn't the norm. I mean, at my school we have transfers bused in from McGarther High, and at my school- *the transfers from McGarther High is a code name for the Black kids*. And you know, so teachers have stereotypes. That's a label- transfers from McGarther High. (J-fg1027p4-5ln40-2)

[34] The article Jack was referring to was "Critical Race Theory, Multicultural Education, and the Hidden Curriculum of Hegemony" by Michelle Jay.

Jack acknowledged that two of his three transfer students were failing his class but only the failing kids were talked about and never the one succeeding. He was aware of the bigger picture in regards to students living in poverty and the "3 million word gap" (J-fg922p6ln2-3)[35] and tried not to let that impact how he saw these students. Because of the articles we read in our focus groups and Jack's own experiences dealing with teachers at his school stereotyping students, Jack realized how important it was to confront these biases:

> In the article, [the authors] say that there are all these subtle and covert forms of racism and I think that contributes not only to permanence but also the dynamic aspect of it. It cites a need to identify these subtleties, and so we don't always know what subtle messages we're sending that are racist messages, that's stereotypical and all these, these deficit models. We're not even aware of them. You have to first identify those, [and because people don't] that's why the permanence of racism [still exists].[36] (J-fg1027p3ln5-11)

Acknowledging the permanence of racism and this might impact how teachers perceive students of color is not a simple task and often involves a feeling of discomfort.

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[35] Jack is referring to a study conducted by Hart and Risley (2003) who found that children who came from high-income homes are exposed to 30 million words. He kept saying "3 million" words instead of "30 million" in our focus groups.

[36] This example also coincided with the sub-theme *fighting deficits* but was used in this section to highlight Jack's assessment of his biases. They are similar sub-themes which is why they are both sorted under the overarching theme of critical awareness.

Howard (2003) explains, "teachers must be prepared to engage in a rigorous and oftentimes painful reflection process about what it means to teach students who come from different racial and cultural backgrounds than their own" (p. 198). In our focus groups, Jack began acknowledging the students who were zoned for Western High as "suburbanites" opposed to those students who were seen as the "transfers." The topic of transfer students sparked many conversations throughout the focus groups regarding race and access. The interns were aware of the perceptions that different schools had given their locations (see section on location and access) and knew it was a part of their responsibility to help inform ALL students about social justice issues, whether they were a part of the "suburban" or "urban" community. Overall, the focus group decided that promoting awareness in your students and being reflective as a teacher was a very important part of promoting social justice in the classroom. Throughout our focus groups, the interns exhibited their own versions of critical reflection. Natalie explained:

> First it's recognizing the subtleties. I mean you have to be able to think about the things you don't think about, you know, that metacognitive thing. How am I approaching this and from what lens am I using? You don't [always] think about [this] because it's your own lens. [You might think] how could I look at it through Critical Race Theory and incorporate that perspective? (N- fg1027p3ln39-43).

This quote sums up this sub-theme well. A part of practicing social justice involves understanding one's own positionality, where a person is coming from, and what biases he or she might carry. Throughout our meetings, the interns continually reflected on what we read and how it connected to their classrooms. Even though they all acknowledged their belief in social justice and each had exposure to it in past experiences, they still struggled with deficit thinking because of these experiences. In the next section, I will explore the sub-theme *fighting deficits.*

Fighting deficits.

Another important part of embracing critical awareness was knowing deficit models are prevalent in education and instead of believing achievement gaps persist because of students, families, or neighborhoods, rather the problem mainly lies with the educational system itself (Delpit, 2006; Valencia, 1991; Valenzuela, 1999). Despite critically reflecting and being aware of larger societal inequalities, there were a few examples throughout the CSJFG meetings where interns seemed to fall back into a deficit frame of thinking, but were aware of this and tried to re-shift focus back to the problems with the education system versus the students themselves.

Kayla discussed how students being bussed across town tainted her high school experience in Memphis. She shared how the dynamics of her school changed once the transfer students who were the "worse kids are far as behavior and everything" came (K-fg1027p6ln28-29). She struggled with our conversation regarding the negative image of the bused students because in her scenario the "stereotype seemed true" (K-

fg1027p6ln39). Even though she faced a negative example of kids from the other side of town (who were Black) coming to her high school and making it a more hostile environment, she began to consider why it might have been that way:

> I don't know if it was more [that the transfer students] were mad because they were at a different school (using questioning inflection) or basically they were just acting out in a way that they were used to from the area in town that they came from? (K-fg1027p6ln40-43)

There was an inherent deficit perspective within her reflection that kids acted poorly because that was how they *acted on that side of town*. This type of thinking is problematic regarding students of color because it *allows* for an explanation of why students are not achieving or are misbehaving rather than thinking about the way society has been conditioned to believe all stereotypes come from truths. To illustrate this point, Sensoy and DiAngleo (2012) share how cultural deficit theory blames people of color for, "struggles within a racist society while obscuring larger structural barriers" (pp. 106-107). They shared of the 2.2 million people incarcerated in the U.S, Blacks comprise 900,000 and Hispanics comprise 20% of the state and federal prison populations. Some people may look at these statistics and assume Black and Hispanics are more violent people and there is something wrong with communities of color that result in these statistics. However, if people were to consider "historical, institutional, and cultural

racism, this explanation might vary (p. 107). Sensoy and DiAngelo explain many incarcerated people of color come from communities with underfunded schools, limited access to health care, have historically been denied mortgages, and "have received inequitable treatment in every other major institutions that would have given them and their children an equal starting point in life" (p. 107). In other words, not every individual starts on the same playing field and therefore does not have the same chances in life. However, because of statistics such as Blacks and Latinos being the highest number of incarcerated peoples, it becomes a scapegoat explanation for why achievement issues exist in schools (i.e. myth that Blacks and Hispanics are worse believed and do not care about learning).

Thinking about Kayla's example further, Natalie reflected about how the very idea of busing students has been problematic in the past. It is typically not a safe or welcoming environment for the individual (typically a student of color) coming to the *good school* and this perhaps is what lends itself to an uncomfortable environment causing students to misbehave. Kerr, Mandzuk, and Raptis (2011) explain:

> Unfortunately, many of those students come to school feeling alienated, marginalized, and ambivalent about their identities as students and about learning in general. Some have difficulty accepting those in positions of authority and are reluctant to conform to their wishes. Understanding sociological concepts such as alienation, marginalization, ambivalence, authority, and conformity can help

> prospective teachers understand their past experiences as students, their current experiences as pre- service teachers, and, perhaps most importantly, the experiences of many of their own students. (p. 126)

This quote sums up how understanding and reflecting on larger societal issues can help teachers to understand why students might not "conform" as easily when sent to new school environments. It is through this type of reflection that prospective and practicing teachers can begin to fight deficit models of thinking.

Sarah noted teachers' attitudes about students coming from certain ethnic backgrounds or low-income families might also influence their judgment as well as students' perceptions of this judgment. Research supports Sarah's assertion and has demonstrated that teachers holding negative perceptions of students often underestimate their abilities (Banks & Banks, 2007; McLoyd, 1998; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007; Woolfolk Hoy, Davis, & Pape, 2006). The interns agreed students are aware of teacher's expectations and perceptions of them. Sarah and Natalie reflected:

> S: Especially if a student is coming from a background where maybe schools aren't valued or they don't think that somebody, especially a White teacher, cares about them anyway and then [the teacher starts] drilling them and punishing them . . . (S-fg1027p7ln18-21)
>
> [Natalie interrupts]

> N: And when kids are forced to leave a school and go to another one, that could be speaking back to [students' attitudes]. Adults do [this too]. If you're forced to leave your job and go to another location, you [might] have an attitude. I wouldn't have chosen to go here, and over time that [might] change but it's hard to do that to people. (N-fg1027p7ln28-31)

During this conversation the interns were working through the difficulties of why transfer students might have a harder time in a newly assigned school environment. Natalie even went so far as to say, "it's setting them up for failure" (N-fg1027p8ln1). However, inherent within this explanation, the idea that "schools aren't valued" reflects a deficit perspective. This is not surprising because despite pre-service teachers having knowledge of diverse student backgrounds, research has shown teachers still hold negative views of families of color. DeCastro-Ambrosetti & Cho (2005) found in a study of 160 secondary education pre-service and in-service teachers that the majority of them held negative perceptions toward the value minority parents put on education. They shared, "the participants continued to believe that the home and the lack of value that parents place on education were responsible for their students' deficient academic achievement" (p. 45). These findings were in spite of the fact that the pre-service teachers had taken multicultural education courses that positively influenced their attitudes toward diverse student populations. Based on the dialogue that Sarah and Natalie were working through

and the findings of this study, it is apparent that teacher education programs must do a better job with preventing deficit thinking not just for students, but their families as well.

Jack believed student achievement disparities had to do with the research that is reported to teachers but said it should not matter because "you're still projecting something that you don't know" (J-fg1027p8ln13-14). The interns agreed looking at test scores from previous years increases the risk of creating preliminary judgments of students. Ferguson's (2003) review of literature on black-white achievement gaps concluded that" teacher's perceptions, expectations, and behaviors probably do help to sustain, and perhaps even expand the black-white test score gap" (p. 495). If teachers already hold preconceived notions of how their students performed in the past, this might negatively impact the expectations they put on students in the future. Jack knew from his own experiences that when teachers focused on data, they were often prone to holding lower expectations for their students and more easily fall into a deficit model of thinking:

> I think that's what happens. I think we see these numbers and we think, *oh you know, low SES, this lower vocabulary from the time they were three years old has caught up to them*. We see that, but then we just add a bunch of stuff like *oh you know their motivation's going to be low [now]*. . . (J-fg1027p8ln25-28)

Jack is suggesting that when teachers identify low-performing students; they automatically assume it is a motivational issue as evidenced in the literature on teacher

expectations (Bower & Klecka, 2009; Ferguson, 2003). Making a personal connection, Natalie shared how when she was growing up she was often pegged as an "at-risk" kid because she came from a single-parent home, had a different last name than her mother, and they were poor. She often felt something was wrong with her in elementary school. For her, this made it more important than ever to really know your students and be aware of the initial impressions you automatically make.

While Kayla worked through her own life experience of a "stereotype seem[ing] true," she acknowledged that as the teacher the responsibility was really about looking at students as individuals and not immediately making assumptions:

> [This] comes with not stereotyping people based on their race or based on what you heard about them. It takes really getting to know our students and just because they come from, an underprivileged home or something like that, it doesn't mean that they are not smart. If you take the opportunity to really get to know your students and really learn how they learn, then you'll be able to judge [the student] based on what you know, [and] not based on the stereotypes transformed around certain persons and their race. (K-fg1027p3-4ln45-5)

The interns learned that teachers practicing social justice have to critically reevaluate their biases and how this impacts the decisions made in the classroom. From my own experiences, I have seen how easy it is to fall back into a deficit-thinking model

when teachers see stereotypes playing out. Teachers committed to practicing social justice must always go back and think about the bigger educational issues impacting these contexts if trying to fight deficit thinking (Howard, 2003; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). To illustrate this point, Sarah often brought the conversation back to wider societal inequalities and how this influences the perspectives teachers' have of their students:

> Based on what you guys are talking about with identifying [biases], there are so many different levels that you need to look at. [First] you [need to] identify what you're doing. [Then] you [need to] identify your students' thoughts and how they're changing and [last] you [need] to identify systemically what's going on. There are also the messages [students are] getting from curriculum and materials and from the outside world, and so, with all that identification, you have to move beyond that. After you do all that [and] develop your ability to do that, you have to move beyond it, to be able to change it in appropriate ways. (S-fg1027p4ln7-14)

In this instance, to fight a deficit form of thinking, Sarah believed identification was the first step. One may not have control over the situation, but at least identifying it might prevent blaming a student for something that may have stemmed from a larger societal barrier school as inequitable school funding (Kozol, 2006).

Many times, teachers make comments such, as *the family does not care about education.* I have seen this in my own teacher education classes as well as in former K-12 schools where I have worked. However, just because parents' are not always *present* in schools does not mean they do not care about education. There are many reasons why parents may not make themselves available to schools such as different definitions of what parental involvement looks like (Lightfoot, 2004),[37] unwelcoming school environments, lack of teacher training to promote parental involvement, job restrictions, and cultural differences (Ramirez, 2002; Yap & Enoki, 1995). Natalie understood that this type of comment is often a misdirected understanding of a culture or community:

> I think it would be hard to find a culture where education is not at least thought of as valued [with a parent] outwardly [stating] *I don't care if my kid learns*. I think that would be hard to find a group of people or a family that would even say that. [Teachers should be taking] the environment into account, like are we providing a stable, conducive environment to learning? (N-fg1117p22ln16-22)

[37] Lightfoot (2004) argue the ways in which *parental involvement* is talked about is problematic. Citing ethnographic studies she shared, "Lareau, for example, argued that the term parental involvement as used by schools, implies middle-class cultural capital in a way that implicitly defines lower income parents as deficient when they do not meet the schools' expectations (1987) and creates an "ideal type" of parent (1993), which is linked to both race and class. Fine (1993) described ways in which the "common values" constructed by schools support the cultures of some families while systematically excluding others" (p. 96)

Instead of focusing on whether or not the family promoted learning, Natalie put the responsibility back on the teacher and asked what she was doing to make school a desirable place to be. For many historically underserved students, school has been a hostile environment that is not welcoming and conducive to learning (Fine, 1991; Valenzuela, 1999). Instead of accepting that these students are unmotivated, or do not want to learn, the interns reflecting on their understandings that many things were outside of students' control and as the teachers they needed to fight deficit thinking if they were to practice social justice. It is with this knowledge that the interns were able to feel they had control of something in their careers. In the next section, I will explain the last sub-theme comprising critical awareness, *empowerment and agency.*

Empowerment and agency.

The last component of embracing critical awareness was to promote empowerment and develop agency for both the interns and their students. Those practicing social justice realize that they must actively seek change and in order to do so they must feel some sense of empowerment or believe they have the agency to do so (sometimes this is referred to this as being "change agents" or "agents of change"). McLaren and Farahmandapur (2001) describe agency as, "a form of intellectual labor and concrete social practice- in short, a critical praxis" (p. 149). During the CSJFG, the interns' awareness of the struggle for social justice prompted the need to have hope and perseverance as a means to gain agency.

Teacher empowerment.

Dierking and Fox's (2013) literature review revealed, "To feel empowered, teachers may need to feel supported, to feel they can make decisions affecting their own classrooms and students, and/or to feel they can make a difference in the lives of their students" (p. 130). The interns shared discussions they had in other graduate classes that supported them throughout their internships. One professor reminded them that in order to practice social justice they needed to keep their jobs, so this required being aware of the politics of schooling and *creatively* promoting social justice when they could. Natalie held on to the belief that over time, as she proved herself, she would gain more autonomy and this would make practicing social justice more approachable in her classroom:

> I think over time, [when] you get where you do a good job- then you can have a voice. I know Dr. Fox, who is in English Ed, she talks about [how during] your first year no one listens. [Then] you have your second year and no one listens. But [if] you're somewhere that you do good work and the kids care, you will have a small voice and it's like taking that and doing something with that at some point, you know? (N-fg1027p10ln29-33)

To *creatively* promote social justice in their classrooms the interns supported the notion that one had to hold onto hope and persevere:

> Well sometimes you've just got to put your head down and if you don't have hope, the work you're doing isn't going to amount to anything if you don't actually believe in it. You don't need to be doing it if you don't have hope, so I kind of keep that in my head even when I don't feel like having hope. (S-fg1027p19ln12-15)

This quote demonstrates Sarah's belief in hope as a necessary part of practicing social justice since it can be a challenging task. Sarah discussed how she felt sometimes things were more difficult when looking at the big picture, but she could "see hope at the individual level" (S-fg1027p18ln1). Natalie also expressed that despite the obstacles inevitably faced in schools, one could not let oneself feel defeated:

> On a good day you're fighting. You're only climbing one mountain and then you turn around to climb the next one. I feel like that every day. It's like you have to develop that inner strength that *keeps you going*. (N-fg1027p18ln26-28)

Throughout the CSJFG, the interns also displayed feelings of frustration and feeling overwhelmed (see structural obstacles theme). However, this did not prevent them from being aware regarding how teachers promoting social justice within their own classrooms worked through these barriers. For Sarah, it involved having successful examples in her internship that allowed for her to remain encouraged and feel she had the ability to remain idealistic:

> What I've noticed about the successful teachers, and I guess, you know, they're only there because they've been able to make it work, but that they don't get defeated. It's hard for me [to] not [feel defeated] as an idealistic person coming into a situation like that. [But successful teachers] don't get defeated by the realities [of the classroom] and by limitations that we were talking about. So that's encouraging to me, [that teachers can] make progress even given limitations. (S-fg922p11-12ln20-12)

A part of empowerment involves acknowledging that obstacles and barriers exist, but you use this knowledge to work toward change rather than allowing it to be a setback.

In a conversation regarding power and oppression, Jack expressed that while as a teacher you may not have control over how oppression works on a systemic level, you do have the control to create classroom that is "discriminatory free " (J-fg418p6ln22-23). Sarah questioned if thinking like this [Jack's comment] was actually limiting because of the fact that society has accepted oppression on the larger scale and people were allowing for this to happen. Natalie believed it depended on how one looked at the situation and that, "it can be empowering because you are doing something proactive" (N-fg418p6ln27-28). Here she was exerting the agency that she did feel that she had as a classroom teacher. She further explained:

> [I think as teachers and educators we can ultimately address discrimination]. Oppression you can't address. You can address discrimination and prejudice, but you can't address the oppression exactly. Before you can address it on that human scale, oppression is a cultural thing. It's like addressing alcoholism. You can address addiction maybe with a smaller scale of people or something. The whole idea becomes too big to manage. (N-fg418p6ln15-20)

Here Natalie was taking responsibility for what she thought was in her power as the teacher comparing addressing oppression to that of alcoholism. She believed addressing oppression on a larger scale was "too big to manage," but she did have the ability to address issues of discrimination and prejudice in her classroom. Jack agreed that teachers could address these issues within their own classrooms:

> I think it's empowering and it's setting an example if we are truly to believe that schools are models for democracy and the world at large. I think [addressing discrimination in one's classroom] is very empowering and maybe it could to lead to bringing down some of those oppressive barriers. (J-fg418p6ln30-32)

In this scenario, Jack saw himself as an agent of change with an ability to start small in bringing down some of the larger barriers. Teachers practicing social justice often see themselves as agents of change and see schools and society as interconnected (Villegas

& Lucas, 2002). As evidenced above, the interns "believe[d] that, while education has the potential to challenge and transform inequalities in society, without intervention, schools tend to reproduce those inequalities" (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The interns believed that they had some agency within their own classrooms and this was their way of promoting social justice.

Student empowerment.

The interns agreed that while there were bigger issues they might not have control over (as discussed in the structural obstacles theme), if they persevered and were cognizant about their classroom communities, they could have some control over how they impacted their students. For Natalie, it was not only about the teacher developing autonomy and having a voice, but also for students to be aware of their potential so that they could take charge of their own futures:

> But, talking to kids about [power issues], getting them to think about it [since] they are going to be the future. Teachers. Politicians. People that have power. So having them develop a voice and an awareness . . . (N-fg1027p11ln40-42)

There have been studies that connect teacher empowerment with student empowerment. Ingersoll (2007) found schools where teachers were able to exert more authority in their classrooms and schools in general typically experienced fewer behavioral issues with students, had more collaborative relationships between teachers and administrations, and

had lower rates of teacher attrition. Kayla shared a story from her classroom involving one student often viewed as the "problem child" in the rest of the school and how she dealt with this situation by giving the student *voice*. I have shared the entire dialogue to not take away meaning from her voice or take the story out of context:[38]

> K: I think there is hope with helping kids because it's all about building the relationships with students. For instance, when I [went] to Dandelion Elementary there was a student [my mentor] teacher [told me about]. She [told me] that he was *the problem child* and all this. So before I even met him [I knew] so many things about him that were so bad and everything. Then after, I got a chance to meet this [White] student, I sat down and I talked to him, and he really wasn't as bad as my teacher had said, and my teacher is White [too]. (K-fg1027p14-15ln37-2)
>
> Me: You just gave him a voice?
>
> K: Yeah. I basically just asked him *do you really want to succeed?* I just took the time to just ask him how he felt about everything. He's so used to getting in trouble all the time, so just taking that ten minutes out of the day [makes a difference]. I try to [ask] '*Are you doing ok? Are you focusing on your work?*' just

[38] Throughout this dialogue it is clear that I prompted Kayla by inserting my perceptions of what she was saying and also naming her actions as "voice." It is through examples like this that I acknowledge the impact I had on my participants' understandings and why I changed my role in the study from *constructivist* to *constructionist.* (See chapter three for a more thorough explanation).

> to make sure that he does know that someone cares. I figured that maybe he can tell that I do care about him because every morning, the first thing he says is '*Hey Ms. Smith, Good morning!'* I don't know if he would normally speak to the other teachers like that, but I know that it seems like, even when he leaves he tells me bye, so I feel like . . . (K-fg1027p15ln6-14)
>
> Me: He's feeling comfortable.
>
> K: Yeah. I feel like I touched him within these two weeks a little bit. So, I think there is hope for students, even if they have all of the negative stereotypes against them, just based on what you heard. It takes you really getting to know the student and thinking of ways that you know, you might not [have initially thought of]. (K-fg1027p14-15ln18-21)

In this particular example, by Kayla feeling empowered to make a difference in this student's life, she was also able to help him to feel that what he thought mattered and this helped him to succeed in the classroom. For the interns, to feel empowered and given agency, they held on to positive examples to provided them with hope and confidence in their abilities to practice social justice in their classrooms.

The theme *critical awareness* demonstrated one aspect of the interns' understandings of social justice. They shared their own examples and past experiences that influenced this understanding during our CSJFG meetings. After reading and analyzing the focus group transcripts, I found that this group of interns were critically

reflective, fought deficit thinking, and because of this felt empowered to make change in their own classrooms as they progressed throughout our focus group meetings.

"It's About The Students"

An important part of teaching for social justice is recognizing the needs of your students and being an advocate for them. I called this theme "It's about the students," using the interns own language, because when the interns spoke about students they often took a student-centered approach. Within this theme there were examples of "helping kids get to where they need to be," knowing who students were and how to make them feel comfortable, and being advocates for students when necessary. I produced three sub-themes comprising this theme: 1) being an advocate, 2) meeting students' needs, and 3) small acts of resistance.

Being an advocate.

Within social justice literature, student advocacy is centered on the idea of teachers working on behalf of their students to promote equity (Ladson-Billings, 1994; McDonald & Zeichner, 2009; Sleeter, 2009). Teachers practicing social justice are aware of the ways schooling reproduces inequalities and use this awareness to, "embrace their roles as student advocates and active community members" (McDonald & Zeichner, 2009, p. 595). In the CSJFG, the interns talked about advocacy different ways. I will highlight two different scenarios discussed on multiple occasions: 1) allies in the LGBTQ community, and 2) advocacy for racial awareness.

Allies in the LGBTQ Community.

Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) define ally as, "a member of the dominant group who *acts* to end oppression in all aspects of social life by consistently seeking to advocate for the group who is oppressed in relation to them" (p. 158). During several focus group meetings the interns, aware of their own "heteronormativity," discussed the importance of making LGBTQ students feel safe in the classroom.[39] Natalie learned one of her students was a victim of cyberbullying[40] outside of school because he had two lesbian moms. Though she felt she had no control over what occurred off of the school campus, she believed it was important to make the other educators and leaders in the school aware of the situation:

> I went to the principal about it and everything and spoke to her because I think it's really important that students feel safe at school. You hear about kids all the time who take their own lives or they hurt themselves or they feel emotionally distraught. (N-fg314p4ln2-4)

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[39] Jack and Natalie had the primary examples of working with LGBTQ students and families. This could be that because they taught in high school environments, awareness of sexual diversity was more prevalent. Sarah and Kayla claimed they were unaware of any LGBTQ students or families that might be a part of their classrooms nevertheless, they both expressed the importance for being advocates for LGBTQ students in our meetings.

[40] Cyberbullying refers to bullying through information and communication technologies such as text messages, emails and phone calls. It also includes social networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter.

When Natalie's principal replied that her "hands were tied," Natalie, suggested that the school hold an assembly to discuss what was happening. The principal agreed to hold an assembly, but only if they were to frame the issue of harassing LGBTQ students as a cyberbullying problem. The principal's reaction to the situation is not surprising considering the widespread belief that talking about LGBTQ issues in schools is inappropriate to discuss (Anagnostopoulos, Buchanan, Pereira, & Lichty, 2009; Meyer, 2008), and a prevalence of anti-LBGTQ climates in public schools (Griffin, & Ouelett, 2003; Poteat & Espelage, 2007). These beliefs are especially prevalent where Natalie taught in Tennessee, as it was well known State Representative Stacey Campfield, repeatedly tried to pass the "Don't Say Gay" bill, later called the "Classroom Protection Act" in efforts to silence LGBTQ voices in schools and make it illegal for teachers to acknowledge these students' identities. While Natalie thought a discussion with students and faculty about cyber-bullying was better than no action at all, she recognized that the LGBTQ students' voices were being silenced and speaking out against this would be going against the majority:

> Depending on the population of the school set-up, it's going against the cultural norm to say something that you're in support of gay and lesbian rights, because if everyone else is saying, *well this a school that condones good Christian behavior and we are going to love the sinner but hate the sin,* to speak out against that would put you in the minority depending on the school and the situation. I feel

> because I know in the Bible belt here, people don't outwardly say I am a homophobe, but they talk about *well it's not right*. You know, it's under the guise of it's ok, I am not going to judge you *but I am going to judge you*. (N-fg418p11ln13-20).

Natalie realized the risk she would be taking if she were to stand up against the "majority" in the school, but believed it was the right thing to do on behalf of her students.[41] Cochran-Smith (2004) might describe Natalie's actions as "teaching against the grain." She explained:

> Unlike researchers who remain outside the schools, teachers who are committed to working against the grain inside their schools are not at liberty to publically announce brilliant but excoriating critiques of their colleagues and the bureaucracies in which they work. Their ultimate commitment is to the school lives and the futures of the children with whom they live and work. (p. 28)

Natalie became a member of the Gay-Straight Alliance at High Falls to show her support of the one student suffering from bullying and to serve as an ally for LGBTQ students and families. For her, this was the first step to becoming an ally for her student and letting him know she was someone he could trust. Jack agreed despite homophobia

[41] This example was also coded as *a small act of resistance* but was used under this sub-theme to illustrate the point of student advocacy.

permeating school environments, there were still small things that teachers could do to be an ally for their students:

> [T]hey have the little bracelets and they have the shirts and stuff and the idea is you just wear that. If educators could do something so small as to wear a bracelet, that kind of opens you up as a teacher to all your LGBTQ students, and it says *I'm an ally*, right, that's the terminology that people want to use. *I'm an ally for the cause!* I think that's great because [research] talks about how teachers don't want to do anything or want to maintain the status quo, but [wearing a bracelet is] something simple that a teacher could do. (J-fh314p2ln8-15)

Both of these examples demonstrate how Jack and Natalie were wrestling with a dominant ideology [cultural, social, and political norms] and what small acts of resistance they can do to be advocates for their students. While both Natalie and Jack acknowledged the ways they could be advocates for their LGBTQ students, Natalie also shared that is goes beyond just wearing a bracelet, it means thinking about how this influences instruction:

> I think it's interesting to think, *do some teachers look it as all I have to do is wear this bracelet?* Because if that's the case that's not effective. Because if you're wearing a bracelet but you don't talk about the issues in class [then that's not effective]. (N-fg314p6ln1-5)

Natalie shared as an English teacher often teaching about "dead White guys" that maintained the status quo, she found other opportunities to think about how to positively frame the LGBTQ community in her classroom by thinking about how being a gay author might have impacted writing. For example, Natalie talked about how when teaching Shakespeare she waited for her mentor teacher to leave so she could talk with students about how he was allegedly gay. She would tell students, "*Ok let's get to the good stuff!* I'll be open with them and tell them we'll talk [being gay]." She shared, "At first they're intrigued, but [students] don't want to show it because socially they are not supposed to be interested in [homosexuality]" (N-fg314ln15-19). However, after several discussions, she found students were more open to the idea of homosexuality and it was less stigmatized in her classroom. Natalie believed in addition to showing that one supports LBGTQ students, teachers must also find ways to positivity promote diversity, such as sexual orientation, in their classrooms through instruction.

Advocacy for racial/class awareness.

Other examples of student advocacy were present in the CSJFG regarding race and class. Jack shared his a story regarding his efforts to teach the Civil Rights Movement using the PBS documentary series *Their Eyes on the Prize* that discussed the Emmitt Till tragedy. He posed one of the problems to the group regarding one of his "transfer" student's reactions to the documentary:

> One of my McGarther students, *one of my Black students*, he keeps making jokes. We're looking at slides from the March on Birmingham and the dogs are being

> brought out on these people and he's making a joke about how the dog's ripping the guy's pants off and I'm thinking why is he joking about this? (Jfg1117p8ln26-30)

Everyone in the meeting unanimously agreed that the one student making jokes could have been uncomfortable discussing race issues. As explained earlier, the term "transfer" was used to refer to the Black kids at Western High and was attached with a negative connotation. Kayla, an African American woman herself, felt that addressing this situation was important topic that should not be overlooked:

> You need to stress the importance and the seriousness of this subject, because you were saying [look] how far have we come… In some places… [like in this group] we can talk openly, and we can get along with each other, but in [other] places racism is still strong, so the key is [the students] need to understand it. Just because it's ok here [doesn't meant it's] going to be like that everywhere you go. (K-fg1117p9il8-12)

Kayla believed whether the topic was comfortable or not, it still needed to be discussed. She acknowledged racism was still present and with this understanding it was her job as the teacher to make sure students of color were aware of racism as well. Some scholars believe that teachers who are advocates for their students will have discussions around uncomfortable topics to promote awareness and social justice in their classrooms

(Howard, 2003; Daniels, 2011). While I agree that, "we must critically engage with difficult truths that have existed regarding injustice" (Daniels, 2011, p. 211), I believe teachers also need to be deeply aware of their own positionalities, the positionalities of the students they are teaching, and how what is taught is interconnected with these positionalites. Seemingly, having these "uncomfortable" conversations is one way for teachers to work against the status quo and bring representation to marginalized voices in schools, however I wish to problematize this idea. Leonardo and Porter (2010) contend that there is never a safe space for students of color to engage in conversations about race with Whites. They explained:

> If we are truly interested in racial pedagogy, then we must become comfortable with the idea that for marginalized and oppressed minorities, there is no safe space. As implied above, mainstream race dialogue in education is arguably already hostile and unsafe for many students of color whose perspectives and experiences are consistently minimized. *Violence is already there.* (p. 149, emphasis in original)

Given the fact that Jack's student was a "transfer" student surrounded by "suburbanites," he may not have seen the dialogue of race from a White teacher surrounded by White students as beneficial (Leonardo & Porter, 2010). Jack was concerned that racism was a problem within his classroom and there was a clear divide between the "suburbanites" and the "transfer" kids. One "suburbanite" student told Jack, *I don't like sitting next to*

this kid. I don't like how disrespectful he is, come to think of it; I don't like any of those transfer kids. (J-fg1117p8ln1-5). Jack asserted to his class that, "we're not going to make generalizations." He struggled with finding ways to integrate his classroom so that they could have meaningful conversations regarding race and class, but knew this was an important component of teaching for social justice. It is not uncommon for White teachers to feel this confusion and discomfort when directly dealing with issues of race in the classroom (Paley, 2009). As a member of the dominant majority (White middle-class male), Jack might have felt insecure about his role in addressing race topics in the classroom; however, importantly he did not embrace a "colorblind" approach and went about teaching the Civil Rights Movement bringing up issues of discrimination and prejudice.

Howard (2006) shares, "As White educators, we cannot fully know or experience the struggles of our students and colleagues of color, but we can work to create an empathic environment in which their stories and experiences can be acknowledged and shared" (p. 79). Through their conversations, Jack and Kayla clearly believed they were acting in the best interest of their students by being an advocate for them, however it was important for them to acknowledge some students may never feel "safe" having racial conversations. In the next section, I will explain how the interns worked toward creating communities in their classrooms in the next sub-theme meeting students' needs.

Meeting student needs.

All of the interns discussed in some way that you had to know one's students and create a "community or learners" and/or feel like a family. Kayla shared:

> We talked about how [our classroom] is really like a family. You're with these kids all the time, and especially if they feel like they can trust you as the teacher or the adult in the classroom; it's like once they trust you, they know you don't want to lead them astray. (K-fg418p8ln22-24)

A part of putting students first meant finding way to meet their needs. Natalie shared how she worked on catering her instruction to meet her students' needs. She focused on how to make her classroom an inclusive environment for all of her students, particularly her one student with two lesbian moms:

> It's basically getting to know your students and being able to handle if you had a student that was having social issues around that. [It's also about] how you differentiate instruction for a student, or how you create a classroom environment for all of your students that's non-restrictive or that kind of thing. (N-fg314p1ln21-24)

Natalie went on to explain that over time the student felt comfortable bringing up the topic of his family structure in class and she was able to create a safe place for the student (see section on Allies in the LGBTQ community). She stressed that it took time to create that environment but believed it to be a very important part of establishing a classroom community for effective teaching and learning to occur. Natalie did not discuss the cyberbullying that was occurring outside of school for this student again, but she seemed confident that this student was "fitting in" and classmates respected him.

Kayla agreed that forming a classroom community takes time and effort on the part of the teacher. She had seen success in her own classroom with the "problem child" mentioned previously because of the efforts she put into making him feel heard and like he belonged:

> Just as small as [showing a student you care], can probably make or break the child's day. Then they might be more willing to open up to you so you can build those relationships that you want to build with your students. (K-fg1027p12ln26-28)

Jack shared an example of what meeting students' needs played out in practice for him:

> [I have a student who] I'll print out my Power Point slides [for] and I give those to her [each day]. That's just something that she needs because otherwise I would

> spend twelve minutes on each slide waiting for her to copy the words down, but instead I print them out, and that's just one small thing. (J-fg1117p2ln15-21)

Jack explained the student he was referring to was one of his "transfer" students. Many of the other teachers in the school wrote off this student as an under achiever with a lack of motivation. Jack, however, believed this student felt "misplaced" in her environment at Western High and many other teachers had already written her off since she was going back to McGarther High School to work on "cosmetology stuff." Jack did not give up on her during her last few weeks in his classroom, but realized she was going to fail his class no matter what. He explained, "she's just a victim of the literacy gap and she's just one of those kids who has just been pushed through" (J-fg1117p3ln18-21). It is clear from examples like this one that when teachers are aware of social justice, they think about the bigger picture impacting their students' success and do not immediately jump to deficit-model conclusions. Although Jack shared, "there's a feeling of helplessness on her part and powerlessness on my part" (J-fg1117p4ln1-2) he still did what he could to be supportive for his student and meet her needs to the best of his ability.

The interns struggled with the idea of holding high expectations for their students versus letting them move on. Kayla warned, "as teachers if we continue to just give them the passing grade just so they can make it through, they're going to end up being in eleventh grade still reading at a third grade level" (K-fg1117p4ln9-11). For Natalie, this was also a struggle, but she saw the solution as knowing your students and understanding

where they are coming from before making an informed decision about how to accommodate them:

> It's hard; a dilemma here. I think it goes back to knowing your students and knowing where they start because that year's growth, or even some growth [is progress]. You have to know truly where [your students] are when they step foot into your classroom every day from the beginning. [Say you have] a gifted student, and [he or she is] excelling, they're acing their rubrics, and they're getting over 100's and [then] you have another kid who's not [at the same level], but from where [that student] came from [is] showing exponential growth, you have to take that into account. You could even have modified rubrics or something, but you still have that rigor set for them. You [shouldn't] sacrifice the rigor but monitor the growth, too. (N-fg1117p6-7ln24-6)

Jack agreed. Students do not fit a "one size" fits all model. They also come from different backgrounds, have had different experiences, and therefore will need different accommodations:

> I'm not advocating making 22 individualized lesson plans, but I do have 22 individuals [voice inflection]. And just the simple fact of recognizing that. *Oh I have three kids who are bused in . . . no, no, I have three individuals* and you

know [the key to fixing achievement gaps is] on the individual unfortunately. (J-fg1027p10ln35-39)

There is a balancing act to holding high expectations for one's students versus just making accommodations for them. Teachers practicing social justice, "tailor instruction to their students rather than impose a singular teaching style to which all students must adapt" (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 102). The interns all understood when "*it's about the students"* this means they will have to create classroom communities and cater instruction to meet students' needs. At times, this also might mean they must resist certain schools practices or structures if they want to strive to be successful advocates for their students. In the next section, I will explain the sub-theme *small acts of resistance.*

Small acts of resistance.

The last sub-theme for "it's about the students" involved small acts of resistance to take a stance against the *norm*. Within this sub-theme, the interns discussed issues which recognized when things "were not ok," and when they had to "stand [their] ground" for the betterment of their students. The interns felt many teachers fell into a place of complacency over time given the amount of pressures and requirements put on them (read more about this in the third theme structural obstacles). Even though they acknowledged many "obstacles" and "roadblocks" to promoting social justice in their classroom, there was an element of resistance that seemed important to them. Sarah thought maybe many teachers went into a "survival" mode because it is the only way

they can do their jobs. She said, “it makes sense, but it’s not ok and it’s not sustainable” (S-fg1027p9ln28-29). Natalie agreed to “recognize that it’s not ok” (N-fg1027p9ln31-33). Sarah believed that it might be easy to slip into acquiring the “bad habits of teachers” but you just have to step back and think, “whoa, whoa wait, that’s not good” (S-fg1027p9ln42-43). She reflected further believing in the “process of losing your sensitivity, there’s got to be something” (S-fg1027p10ln14-15). Natalie believed that even though as an intern she was “dismissed” all the time, it was important for her to “stand her ground” (N-fg1027p10ln19):

> [The idea or the] reflective component of- *when I’m faced with this, what will I do?* Kind of thinking about it ahead of time and standing your ground. This is not ok. I don’t care if everyone at this whole school looks at me like I’m crazy, when I say, *maybe we should reassess what we do*. And even if they don’t listen to me, you know what goes on in your classroom, and you have control over that. (N-fg1027p10ln26-31)

The interns all agreed it was not easy to go against the norm but that it was important to their own pedagogies and for their students to stay true to themselves. Jack explained:

> [D]on’t give up because [you see] those complacent teachers. Obviously it’s really challenging. I think you do what you can, [and] if that just means it’s in

> your classroom, that's fine. Maybe one day [you'll] get an intern of your own and say, *hey intern, come here, I want to teach you about teaching, learn about all these individuals.* And then you [can] pass it on, you *grandfather* it in that way. But, yeah, you certainly don't look at all this stuff, and say *well [I give up]*. (J-fg1027p10ln10-16).

Natalie continued to hold on to her optimism despite veteran teachers putting her down and telling her what she's learned in teacher education is a "waste of time." She believed thinking about the "big picture" and connecting it to what she was learning in teacher education was an important component of her pedagogy and what allowed for her to have "moments of resistance." She shared:

> I [want to] be an innovative educator and this is how you get there- by thinking about these things that so many teachers become complacent about. You try to apply it in the classroom instead of just thinking [about it]. (N-fg922p16ln8-19).

Here, the interns adamantly expressed their desire to not fall into "bad habits" or become complacent. This required a form of resistance to actively be aware of their attitudes and behaviors and hold on to the beliefs shaping their pedagogies.

Resistance against "banking methods."

Teaching for social justice promotes a student-centered teaching approach where students are viewed as, "active learners," and teachers, "motivate students by engaging them in activities that are purposeful and meaningful" (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 76). Freire (1970) critiques the "banking method" of education in which education "deposits" information into the students who passively, "receive, memorize, and repeat" (p. 58). He believed this fed into oppression because students were "told" what knowledge to acquire rather than to construct the knowledge themselves. To get past the cycle of oppression, action is required by educators and students.

Other ways the interns employed small acts of resistance was through rejection of "banking method" of teaching and by building lessons from students' interests. Jack discussed how one transfer student responded to the narrative structure in movies. When teaching about the Civil Rights Movement he showed clips from *Remember the Titans* (Yakin, 2000) and when teaching about the Great Depression he used *Cinderella Man* (Howard, 2005). He explained how for this student "it clicked for her" (J-fg1117p23ln11). Natalie shared she would use picture books even in her high school classroom because she believed media created a way to take a concept and present in a relatable way for students. Jack agreed that taking ideas you teach in school, connecting it to students' lives and that "media had been super, super effective (J-fg1117p23ln25) in making this happen for him. Sarah used a multiplication program called *Smart Shorties*, using popular rap songs as way for students to learn their times tables (S-fg418p16ln16-

17). Kayla also had positive experiences using media in her classroom because "the media and the things they are exposed to does play a part in how they understand" (K-fg1117p24ln6-7). She shared:

> I've used songs and hand movements and everything and they remember those types of things, not just lecturing from a book because that stuff goes into one ear and out the other, but when you use things [that are] hands-on, like visual and auditory things, [students] really pick up on those things and it helps them. (K-fg1117p24ln13-17).

Despite the interns' positive experiences using media in the classroom and engaging students through this media, they recognized it was *taboo* to use pop culture as a part of the curriculum. Natalie shared:

> [Policymakers/Education Leaders] don't think it's rigor. I will argue all day long about the fact that [there are] different learning styles in my room and multiple intelligences… to [students] it's rigorous and you cannot make them do anything rigorous if they don't get it on the front end or if they don't care about it. So you have to get them hooked and then you can take them to the next level, but start off where they are - why not? What does it hurt? (N-fg1117p24ln20-24)

Natalie is referring to a debate between what is known as "high culture" (related to traditional canonical readings such as William Shakespeare and Charles Dickens) as compared to "low culture" (readings from African American authors such as Maya Angelou or the use of hip hop pedagogy in the classroom) measured through a White-dominated societal perspective (Milner, 2012). As Natalie stated, a common argument against using popular culture in the classroom is that is lacks academic rigor. However, many scholars would argue using popular culture in the classroom provides a new way of engaging youth to develop academic competencies and this a part of emerging technology (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2005; Goodman, 2003; Mahiri, 2004). Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2005) argued with the growing pervasiveness of the media in the 21st Century, schools are the slowest social institutions to respond to this reality. They contended that students already enter educational institutions exposed to vast amounts of knowledge and historically "education often seeks to separate youth culture from notions of legitimate cultural knowledge" (p. 297) for that of "official knowledge" (Apple, 1993). Perhaps the success the interns all experienced with their students was stemmed from recognizing the students' "legitimate" cultural knowledge brought to the classroom. Using popular texts/media allowed the interns to maintain academic rigor while making the curriculum more engaging and relevant to the students' lives.

The interns also discussed some of the problems they had with censorship in the school district. Even though more than half of Jack's class was 18, he still could not show R-rated movies. He wanted to use clips from *Saving Private Ryan* (Spielberg, 1998)

when discussing World War II and met resistance from administration. Despite this, he found ways to incorporate lessons of resistance in his classroom. When discussing poetry from the book *On the Road* (Kerouac, 1957) Jack found ways to discuss drug usage and the controversies of homosexuality in the 1960s. Even though his mentor teacher told him, "you need to cool the homosexuality stuff down a little bit" (J-fg314p6ln22-23), he believed it was a very important part of the context and the creativity of the book and found ways to talk about these topics when he was left unmonitored with students.

The theme *"it's about the students"* demonstrates another aspect of the interns' understandings of social justice. While composing this theme from the CSJFG transcripts, I found that this group of interns believed when teaching for social justice teachers should always make their students' a priority. They did this by becoming advocates for students, individualizing instruction to meeting students' needs, and finding moments of resistance when they believed they were doing this in the "best interest of their kids." In the next section, I will address some of the challenges the interns identified throughout our focus groups.

Structural Obstacles

Any discussion around social justice will bring up some discussion of power. In the context of social justice, Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) define power as, "the ideological, technical, and discursive elements by which those in authority impose their ideas and interest on everyone" (p. 52). Foucault (1977/1995) analyzed the 19th century prison structure called "the panopticon" to illustrate how those in charge (the prison

guards) were able to watch the prisoners without their knowledge. The situation created a form of "self-policing" amongst the prisoners because there were never aware of when they were being watched and in turn began to monitor themselves. Foucault used this metaphor to examine the ways in which power is "transmitted, normalized, and internalized through social institutions such as prisons, military, hospitals, and schools" (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. 53). Society is socialized to be in compliance with norms that serve dominant interests.

Power was apparent throughout every conversation we had, so finding a way to describe what I believed the interns were feeling was challenging.[42] After many different variations of this theme, the third theme *structural obstacles* emerged from the data (through my lens). This theme illustrates the constant struggles the interns expressed throughout our meetings. While they held on to their views and understandings of social justice, their moments of doubt and hesitation could not be ignored. Throughout the understandings of social justice discussed in the previous sections, each of the interns expressed the frustrations and defeat they often felt in the classroom on a daily basis. Within this theme, I produced two sub-themes 1) location and access, and 2) praxis defeat.

Location and access.

During our CSJFG the interns were able to identify how location and access contributed to larger societal inequalities. Most of this discussion was stemmed from

[42] Through member checking the interns confirmed they were feeling this way and my perceptions of the situation was accurate.

conversations regarding “busing” children from one part of town to another. Sarah believed the very fact that busing still occurred gave “credence to the permanence of racism” in our society (S-fg1027p6ln11-12). Natalie was concerned that continuing to bus students, suggested to them that, “your community is not good enough so we’re [going to] tell you that this is the *right way to learn* and the *right way to be*” (N-fg1027p5ln17-19). The interns were aware of how busing students affected the development of their identity, the ability to feel that they “fit in” their new school, and teachers lack of knowledge to teach students they do not resemble (Cochran-Smith, 2000).

Furthermore, Natalie added:

> [T]hey never make the *failing school* try to bring in anything that will help it succeed. [T]hey always just let it fail and then they move everyone to the schools that are succeeding which is so funny to me. (N-fg1117p19ln20-22)

I believe when Natalie said “funny” she was really referring to how it was ironic that policies put in place often moved the “failing kids” versus putting resources and reform into the actual existing school they attend. The kids who had to pay the price for a failing school were forced to move locations to attend the *good school*.

By attending schools outside their own communities, students spend longer hours on the bus, often times have to find alternative transportation for extracurricular

activities, and lose the sense of community by attending a school outside of their neighborhood (Anyon, 2005; Kozol, 2006). This creates a problematic and undesirable situation for students zoned in schools not meeting accountability criteria. The interns acknowledged this was a power issue that served the interests of the dominant norm by *feeling good* about helping *those poor kids across town.* Critical race theorists might argue busing students across town is a form of "interest convergence" where those in power make changes only when it benefits them in some way (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Students from failing schools are always bused to the higher performing schools and not the other way around. Middle and upper class parents probably would not allow their students to be bused to an underperforming school in a poor neighborhood as evidenced from the increasing amount of "White flight" during school integration periods where parents from upper class communities sent their students to private schools (Anyon, 2005).

With this thought in mind, Jack shared a conversation he had with a professor about why students were even bused in the first place. He believed students should be growing up in a community where they feel safe and having them move from one side of town to another only made students feel "displaced." In a study of St. Louis schools, Wells and Crain (1997) found parents who allowed their children to be bused to high performing schools had good intentions and wanted their children to have the best educational opportunities. However, they found that the teachers at these schools were unprepared to teach the transfer students.

In Jack's own experience his mom paid a tuition fee to send him to the *good school*, so he understood why parents did this, but it did not seem like the school districts were "responding to the transfer students' needs" (J-fg1117p11ln16-17). Natalie agreed that transplanting students did not solve the problem of a failing school because, "if you're zoned for a failing school your child doesn't have to attend that school, but it's interesting that the solution is *ok, we're going to send them to school across town that supposedly does better*" (Nfg1117p12ln6-8). Morris (2004) claimed many Black students who attend predominantly White schools do not benefit because they are often tracked into low-level classes (Oakes, 1995) and are disproportionally disciplined (Gregory, 1995; Skiba & Rausch, 2006; Taylor & Foster, 1986).

It became clear in our conversations that the perceptions of the "failing schools" and the students who came from them were already stigmatized. Jack explained, "Socially I doubt that Western High School is going to meet the needs of [the kids being transferred in]. No one thinks like that; people look at the numbers" (Jfg1117p12ln12-13).

The interns agreed that people often have an idea about the culture of a school before ever visiting it based on its location. To highlight this point, Natalie shared a story about an experience she heard from another intern:

> Someone I know in English is doing action research about school perception and how a school performs. Even when I went to [City] High School when I

> started working in [City], people would be like, *Oh, you went to McGarther? Did you get shanked*, and *You probably saw somebody get raped in the bathroom*. I was like, "*Really? You are this ignorant*? Then you hear so many things about people, like Western people think things about schools that they've never even seen and [hold a] perception of [it]. (N-fg1117p13ln10-17)

The interns recognized how perceptions of schools cloud communities and teachers judgment alike. They discussed how systemic inequalities, such as transportation issues, further reproduced the status quo by limiting people's options. Sarah explained:

> My students only see [city name], one community, like a four-mile stretch of complete poverty, so they don't know what opportunity looks like or they don't know what middle class [neighborhood] looks like and the lack of transportation is what keeps them in that limited scope. (S-fg215p7ln13-16)[43]

The interns brought up examples of how bigger systemic issues are what made it challenging to implement social justice in classrooms because often band-aids are put on problems rather than addressing the root of the problem:

[43] Here Sarah is not acknowledging the fact that kids *do* have an idea of what opportunity looks like from what they see on television and the internet. They are aware of what middle and upper class communities look like, but perhaps she is implying that they do not know how to gain access to these communities.

> I think what [Jean Anyon's] trying to get at is with things like the Promise scholarship is that you are treating symptoms not the problem. The root [of the] problem is the systemic inequality and a lot of the critique against the things that I read and respond to is- ok, I get that the system is really bad and unfair, but show me and if [changing the system] actually works. You all were talking about [how] the minimum wage is one of her big arguments, but what if that doesn't really do anything? [I think within humanity] the way that we're carrying ourselves as a society leads to inequalities and that's [what people have] gotten comfortable with. So I don't know if there is a solution at all or definitely not an easy solution. (S-fg215p9ln6-15)

Sarah's doubt for reform was highlighted in the above quote. After reading Jean's Anyon's (2005) book *radical possibilities, public policy, urban education, and a new social movement,* the interns thought about access to education and how societal inequalities prevented many students from achieving such access. They brought the example of college tuition increases and minimum wage. While some students may have accessibility to apply for a scholarship or a Pell Grant, many are forced to take out student loans if they want to go to college. Kayla shared, from her experience within the African American community:

> A lot of my friends who came from the same background as me took out [student] loans because they had to and now they owe thousands and thousands of dollars. Luckily I kept my grades up but, if you don't keep your grades up… I mean you might have those scholarships for one semester or one year and then [your grades go down and you loose them]. That might be the reason why a lot of people don't finish college, especially coming from an African American background with people not having the resources in order to pay for it. (K-fg215p10ln17-23).

Researchers have confirmed too few African American students are offered access to the types of social mobility college degree attainment could offer (Harper, 2006; Perna et al., 2006). Alarmingly, The *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (2012) reported between 2002 and 2005 the graduation rate for all Black students entering college was only 44% (Black women at 48% and Black men at 38%), earning a bachelor's degree within six years. Kayla believed there was a need to take personal responsibility and keep one's grades up, but that students needed to be prepared to go to college and know how to find ways to pay for it. Kayla suggested that perhaps graduation rates are so low in the Black community because of existing achievement gaps K-12 education and a lack of access for funding options (K-fg215p11ln3-4). Likewise, Jack felt many kids graduating high school today are not prepared for college and are getting in over their heads (J-fg215p11ln15-17). Speaking from her own classroom experiences, Sarah shared:

> Just the leap to college for my kids… First [just] knowing what college is, knowing how it helps them, and seeing what it will look like, [and] being in the position to get those kinds of grants and that kind of information and then knowing how to study [involves access to knowledge]. [Thinking about] that responsibility and the training and all the background knowledge that [students living poverty] don't have [and an] achievement gap that's already so big by kindergarten, I mean it's [a barrier to equity]. (S-fg215p11ln14-20)

It was through these types of realizations that practicing social justice seemed out of reach at times for the interns. Even as interns held a commitment to implement social justice in their classrooms, they did not always feel that they were able to make a difference:

> Well I see social justice as [something that] doesn't exist in a microcosm, so that's the frustrating thing about it because you can be a great practitioner, [by] implementing social justice tools and nothing's [going to] happen because social justice really is about that systematic change. So anyway, it involves mobilizing affluent populations as well because they are the ones who are in control, they're the oppressors, you know to use a Frierian term. (S-fg922p9ln15-20)

Specifically in this section, the interns highlighted examples of transportation, where students' lived, and a lack of access to educational opportunities as examples of systemic inequalities that made practicing social justice sometimes seem out of reach. In addition to the examples they acknowledged in the greater community, they also pointed out examples seen within their school, specifically pertaining to the amount of work put on teachers and the perceptions the public and media portrayed of teachers at large. In the next section, I will explain the sub-theme *praxis defeat.*

Praxis defeat.

Despite being aware of the bigger issues influencing schools, and expressing ideas of hope, empowerment, and resistance, the interns often discussed elements of defeat that seemed to counteract these other ideas. Praxis refers to a connection of theory to practice (Freire, 1970), so when teachers feel they cannot apply what they have learned in theory to practice, they often feel a sort of defeat. Similarly, Villegas and Lucas (2002) refer to such concepts as "despair, " that prevents the hope needed to be a change agent. As acknowledged above, the interns held onto ideas of hope, which Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) argue is "the ultimate virtue on which a decent and successful school system depends" (p. 57). However, Villegas and Lucas (2002) explain:

> Hopefulness is difficult to sustain. The postmodern critique of power relations and the recognition of the pervasiveness of structures of domination and hegemony

> have had an important impact by bringing covert oppression and antidemocratic practices into the light of day. (p. 58).

At the same time, "the force of this critique can create a sense of despair, a sense that all actions are oppressive and that human agency is an illusion" (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 58). This frame of thought can help to explain some of the personal struggles the interns developed as they attempted to practice social justice in their classroom.

Personal struggles.

When talking about integrating her own beliefs about teaching with what she was able to do in practice, Sarah identified her struggles when she said, "that's much easier said than done, and then it becomes much more controversial, and then there are obviously road blocks everywhere that I look [and] wrestle with in my own work" (S-fg922p3ln13-15). The interns believed that while incorporating social justice as a part of their pedagogy was important, at times it seemed nearly impossible due to forces outside of their control. Jack expressed his frustrations regarding teaching for social justice in schools:

> [I]t's you're either getting social justice everywhere or you're getting it nowhere. And that's the way it has to be, and that's the challenge of it right there. That's why, you say, *can we ever get it?* I don't know. You know, it's [going to] take a lot more than the 4 of us at this table. (J-fg922p13-14ln21-2)

This quote illustrates the contradictions Jack felt teaching for social justice. Jack discussed how he believed it was pertinent for all the teachers in a school to be practicing social justice for it to mean something, which he had learned in his own experience was often unlikely. Sarah agreed stating, "you have to deal with the effects if [the students] come into your classroom after being in a [class that does not promote social justice]" (S-fg922p10ln18-19). These quotes imply that despite the interns believing they had some agency within their own practice, they believed there needed to be a greater effort among the general population and school system to work implement social justice fully.

Despite believing it was important to implement social justice, the interns also expressed the defeat they felt after they faced the realities of schooling: From her own experiences, Sarah shared:

> I'm a third generation teacher. That's what my parents and my grandmother did [were teachers]. You do what you can, but is there a point where that's not good enough? The achievement gap is widening and the majority of the [school] population is being dismissed. (S-fg1027p10ln20-23)

As I mentioned in her profile, Sarah was probably the most well-read and familiar with theories associated with social justice. In some ways this almost made it more difficult for her to practice social justice because she kept facing obstacles and felt she was unable to make the changes she believed would close achievement gaps. Villegas and Lucas

(2002) ask, "Without hope that their actions will make a difference, how can prospective teachers be expected to find the will to engage in action in increase social justice?" (p. 58). Sarah needed to focus on the positive examples she had with students, but at times this was a "daunting task" and left her feeling lost (S-fg1027p16ln3-4).

Posing a similar problem, Jack talked about how some of the ideas presented within teacher education often seemed idealistic and not in sync with the realities of the classroom:

> It's interesting cause in the pre-internship classes, [with] any talk of social justice [there are] all of these pie in the sky ideas of- *oh here's how you can approach some of these problems*, and you know, *you can equalize [with] social justice issues that you have if you just know your students well*. Well, I just got the fee-waiver list for Western, and in a class of 25, [students] 12 of my kids are on the fee-waiver list. At Western that's high! (J-fg922p5ln13-18)

Jack recognized that his students came from different backgrounds, many of them living below the poverty line which he perceived as challenging. As displayed in other examples, despite the fact that Jack looked at this "fee-waiver[44]" list as a challenge, he still promoted meeting students' needs and being an advocate for these students, he just

[44] Fee-waiver lists represent the number of students receiving free and reduced lunch. Typically students of color are enrolled in schools with much higher rates of poverty (Logan, 2001), so this was unusual for Jack because he worked at an upper-middle class, predominantly White high school.

saw this as an additional obstacle to promote the social justice ideals he was taught while in teacher education. Sarah also identified the frustration between what she was learning in teacher education and how she actually applied it to the classroom stating, "Yea, I mean it's a lot easier to talk about [practicing social justice] in the ivory tower and professors make it [seem easy]" (S-fg922p6ln10-11). Not being able to connect what is learned in teacher education to the classroom is not an uncommon phenomenon and has been documented for many years (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985; Griffin et.al. 1983; Stones & Morris, 1977; Zeichner, 1996). Some research suggests that much of what teachers need to learn can only be learned through practice and there is very little connection to the teacher education program (Ball & Cohen; Hamerness et al. 2005). However, there are many other scholars who contend that teacher educations programs in pedagogy and content in addition to field experiences are the best way to prepare teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Tatto, 1996; Valencia et al., 2009). Based on prior research, it is not surprising that the interns felt disconnect at time from what they were learning in their coursework and our meetings and applying it in their classroom.

"Superhero teacher."

The interns agreed that in their schools they watched veteran teachers become overworked and complacent in their jobs making it easy to overlook teaching for social justice. They identified the false portrayals in the media and how this impacted the way they thought about teaching. Natalie brought up the example from the movie *Freedom Writers* (LaGravenese, 2007) stating, it was "amazing that she [Erin Gruwell] could do

that and there are people that do make a difference. But it is a lot like, she lost her life essentially" (N-fg922p6ln16-17). Natalie concluded those who were able to make a difference in the classroom often had to sacrifice time and essentially teaching became their lives:

> N: It's frustrating. If you want to be someone that goes to try to make a difference, then you're either naïve or you're trying to be like a *White savior* in a Black school. You're damned if you do, damned if you don't. It's tough. There is no way to synthesize [how] you want to go to a failing school and help as a White teacher…
>
> Me: Right, because you're the superhero teacher…
>
> N: [Right], then you're trying to be a superhero or it's going to be like why are you even bothering? It's really uncomfortable – uncomfortable in terms of how to approach making that situation different, you know? (N-fg1117p20ln7-14)

Here not only is Natalie acknowledging the pressures that she feels being a teacher trying to do everything, she is also acknowledging her Whiteness and how she feels this adds yet another obstacle to her if she were to work in a diverse school. This example also highlights the myth of the teacher as a hero/heroine saving the day. Movies like *Dangerous Minds* (Smith, 1995) and *Freedom Writers* (LaGravenese, 2007) suggest that students of color are in need of "saving," and so remove them of any real sense of agency

or ability for social mobility for these students. Many White teachers, myself included, have been swayed by this sort of romanticized portrayal of the *superhero teacher* or the *white savior*, which effectively "renders the misrepresentation of the potential of people of color to resist and lead the transformation of oppressive conditions within their own social context" (Cammarota, 2011, p. 245). Brown (2013) highlights that, "It is important to note that this [idea] is reproduced in teachers' minds, not only through mass media, but also in teacher training and professional development programs, as well as through national policy debates in education" (p. 129). By comparing herself to Erin Gruwell, Natalie problematized the concept of *white savior,* but still clung on to the idea that Gruwell "made a difference" which ultimately made her feel frustrated and that she could never accomplish what Gruwell did.

Time, pressures, and negativity.

Throughout the CSJFG the interns expressed the many pressures they felt and the time it took to teach for social justice. It might appear that teachers have some degree of autonomy in their classrooms, but the amount of time in their work day to do anything other than teaching and carrying out bureaucratic duties is limited (Collinson & Cook, 2001; Firestone & Pennell, 1993). Teachers have to make many sacrifices to teach for social justice in their classrooms:

> [Y]ou become your job in terms of what you're doing for your kids. And I think, depending on the school, social justice does require more work and more

> flexibility from the teacher. You can't look at it like *this is my 8-3 job, summers off, weekends off*. It doesn't work like that. Good teaching shouldn't look like that regardless. Especially if you are in a position where your kids look at you like you might be the only stable thing in their life. (N-fg922p7ln2-11)

Esposito and Swain (2009) found time was one of the major factors needed to teach for social justice in urban schools. The teachers in the study spoke of having to use their personal time and spend their own money to create supplemental materials so they could meet their students' needs. Similarly, the interns often felt that the burden of responsibility was on them to create materials and spend their own money. Talking about how to implement social justice was a continuous struggle for Jack. As evidenced in other examples, he expressed the individualization of instruction for students, but at other times, he seemed overwhelmed by this idea:

> And it's hard on [the students] and it's hard on you if you aren't willing to make the sacrifices. There's no system-wide [answer]. You can't force people to [recognize your students as individuals]. Maybe you [can] implement this line of thought] in teacher education programs, which I think the article advocates, [but] the burden is on the individual though unfortunately. When you pick up four classes, you've got over 100 kids, but that's over 100 individuals that you at least have to be aware of! (J-fg1027p10ln39-43)

Additionally, the interns tried to hold on to their hope and remain optimistic, but at times they seemed to excuse why veteran teachers fell into complacency. Teachers who have been in the system for a long time have to go into a "survival" mode. Natalie explained, "It's easy to become complacent, like in this profession. I can see it" (N-fg1027p9ln18-19). The interns discussed how it was easier for teachers to adapt to a deficit model of thinking because they have been in the system for too long and do not feel they can change things. Sarah felt, "There are so many extra pressures they're dealing with from every angle" (S-fg1027p9ln23-24) and it is hard not to begin to think like that when this is all you are exposed to:

> N: [The negative attitudes are] infectious. [In the] first week I [could] see all these things that [veteran teachers] told me I would see, but I didn't think I would. And then you see people that were interns like last year, [or] two years before, and they're doing the same thing [having negative attitudes].(N-fg1027p9ln23-25)
>
> B: [Novice teachers are] already down that path.
>
> S: And it's hard like [to blame them] because as a teacher they are having such a hard [time]. They have so many pressures [on them] so when a parent comes in [for example], it's easy to make a joke and or say [the parents are] crazy. You know, [to just] do something [to] desensitize yourself [questioning inflection] so that you can get through the day. (S-fg1027p9ln28-31).

The interns also expressed their frustrations regarding the image they believed society had of teachers. Natalie shared a story she read about how teachers were paid too much because they did not work a full forty-hour workweek. Jack shared he had heard talk about how easy it was to become a teacher and that teachers typically graduated from the bottom third of the class. Kayla agreed that these were negative portrayals of teachers and felt it unfair given the amount of responsibilities teachers held:

> [You not only have to be] their teacher, you have to be their parents [and] you have to be the nurse. You have so many roles, and you don't get paid for being just one person with all these different hats. (K-fg1117p15ln8-10)

They also expressed their belief that in addition to knowing how to teach they were expected to fully know their content. Jack expressed one of the hardest things he has had to learn to do is "figuring out how to teach it" (J-fg1117p15ln24):

> [When we're told] *write a lesson plan,* you're creating. You're talking about all these different ability levels. You don't just sit down and write that out off the top of your head. At least [for] me, I have to go sit down and think about it a little. And it's not, *let me mull this over*; it's like, *I have no idea what I'm going to do* . . . (J-fg1117p16ln24-28)

Natalie shared with us that other people she had talked to told her the answers were all in the teaching manuals. In agreement with Natalie, Kayla reflected on her experiences with learning to teach:

> Something that I think about all the time is *what worked for me*? When I was growing up [as far as how I was taught in] elementary school, doesn't necessarily work for these kids. Just because we've gone through it, doesn't necessarily mean that we're pros at any of these subject areas. I [have] found myself [having to go] back and relearn everything and go over the content because, yeah, we might have the answers [in the teacher manual], but just because we have the answers that doesn't necessarily mean you know how to teach it to get the kids [so that they learn]. For people to say, *teachers, they get paid too much*, [that really] upsets me because we have to do *so much* and we have to *prepare a lot*. Some people might say well writing a list and planning doesn't take [time]. [What these people don't know is that] you have to consider the kids in your class. You have the higher achievers; you have the lower achievers, and [those] who are in the middle. You have to formulate the lesson so [that] it can cater to all the kids [and so that] you can make sure that all of them thoroughly understand the lessons that you're teaching. *Every single lesson*. (K-fg1117p16ln2-14)

Kayla is acknowledging that she has to learn about teaching through a different lens and just because she learned that way does not mean it will work for her classroom

which is commonly how many teachers teach (Lortie, 1975). She knew that her students will be different than the students that she grew up with and therefore she will have to accommodate her students' needs. This is something that takes time and professional knowledge to be able to do. Kayla explained further:

> You don't want to spend time having to go back and reteach because that takes away from the other time that you have to teach [and the] other things you have to get done. [Then there's] the different checkpoints and the different assessments that you have to give them periodically to make sure they're on grade level and all this, and it just becomes overwhelming sometimes. [I don't think people] necessarily understand [the demands of teaching] unless they're actually in the school. (K-fg1117p16ln16-21)

The theme *structural obstacles* demonstrates a less desirable understanding that interns held of social justice. While analyzing the transcripts, I found that for all the many positive and inspiring examples the interns gave for how they implemented social justice in their classrooms, there were these moments where they succumbed to the system wide pressures and felt defeated in their practice. Within this theme they noted how larger systemic inequalities created inequitable situations for some students and limited the access they had to some educational opportunities. They also identified the amount of

pressures that were put on teachers and how negative images impacted their views on teaching.

In the next chapter I will focus on Sarah White's story as she transitioned to the classroom. Using the analysis from the CSJFG as a foundation, I will share how Sarah's understandings of social justice were implemented in her practice. I specifically use the conceptual framework culturally relevant education (Dover, 2013), which is a part of social justice education, to serve as an analytic tool describing her practice. Following this, in chapter six I will return to my research questions summarizing the major findings in the study and connect them to the larger landscape of teacher education. In chapter six I will also discuss the implications of this study for teacher education, teacher educators, and educational leaders.

CHAPTER FIVE: SARAH WHITE

From the first time I met Sarah White I knew that she was a motivated and passionate individual. We first became acquainted in Spring 2011 when she was enrolled in my Applied Educational Psychology (EP401) course. My initial impressions of Sarah were that she was a serious person who took her role of learning to teach seriously. She worked hard in class, always had her assignments completed ahead of time, and usually went above and beyond in everything that she did. I began to understand her commitment to social justice after we had a conversation about restorative justice in EP 401. Sarah already was familiar with concepts of restorative justice and came to me after class to "pick my brain" and ask suggestions for additional reading. From my view as a teacher educator, Sarah was always trying to find ways to be more critically reflective.

Reading my reflection notes, it was clear that I believed Sarah was the most well versed participant in social justice literature. She read Lisa Delpit (2006), Paolo Freire (1970), and bell hooks (1994) outside of her required coursework and often referred back to these scholars in the Critical Social Justice Focus Groups (CSJFG) and our interviews. From her teacher questionnaire, her commitment to social justice was evident:

> I am also really committed to teaching for social justice, so for me teaching provides a way for me to contribute to the creation of a better society. A discussion of what a better society would look like in my opinion is complicated,

> but the goals I will be working toward within my classroom will be to ameliorate the harsh inequities within American society. I want to enable students who are marginalized, specifically those from urban, minority, and low socio-economic backgrounds, to find success in society. More importantly, though, I want my students to develop the kind of critical thinking skills that enable them to challenge injustices when they are confronted with them and to work to create a more equal society. Specifically, helping my students to question racism, classism, colonization, neoliberalism, and xenophobia are all priorities for me. I believe that this is the real power of teaching, as there is only so much one can do to change society as it is today, but that the future has yet to be determined. (Brittany, maybe I should edit this if you're going to use it in a final paper because it sounds kind of radical).

Even Sarah's question to me in the last part of this paragraph demonstrated her reflectiveness as a practitioner and her awareness of social justice issues in society before we ever even began the CSJFG.

Throughout the study, I repeatedly reminded Sarah that I wanted her to be honest with me and not just say things that she thought I wanted to hear. As explained later in this chapter, we did not see eye to eye on everything and I reminded Sarah that this was ok. Knowing she may not understand the academic language of dissertation writing, I explained to her I was taking a constructionist approach to this study, meaning that it was

ok for me to influence her and vice versa, but that she should always remain true to what made sense to her (read more about this in chapter three). As we progressed through the study, Sarah's optimism about teaching for social just seemed to fade slightly, however, she was aware of this and continued to reflect on her own practice and think about ways to implement social justice.

This chapter seeks to understand the relationship between participating in a CSJFG while in teacher education and the development of a culturally relevant education (CRE) in theory as well as what it looks like in practice for Sarah White. It is important to note I am not claiming there is a direct correlation between participating in the CSJFG and CRE in practice. Sarah already possessed social justice knowledge prior to our meetings; rather I believe her knowledge prior to our meetings, *in addition* to the understandings she gained from our meetings while in her internship year of teaching informed her practice during her first and second years of teaching. As explained in chapter two, this dissertation rests on the belief that social justice teacher education (SJTE) encompasses the tools needed for teachers to learn how to employ CRE. CRE was the conceptual framework used in the study to help with understanding how Sarah acknowledged concepts of social justice and implemented them into practice. This chapter also seeks to address the obstacles Sarah faced as she attempted to connect theory and practice.

In the following sections I will describe my observations of Sarah's practice related to her teaching and pedagogy in regards to CRE. In chapter four I demonstrated

how Sarah's understandings (as one participant) progressed throughout the CSJFG including the ways that she understood social justice: involving having a critical awareness, making "it about the students," and the structural obstacles that teachers face when implementing social justice in their classrooms. This chapter extends this study by sharing Sarah's continued understandings and implementation of social justice during her first and second years of teaching specifically using CRE as an analytical framework. The analysis in this chapter is based on observations I conducted in her classroom from October 2012 to January 2014. I have also used interview data and archival sources, such as lesson plans, teacher evaluations and standardized tests scores, to inform my understandings of Sarah's practice. In the next section, I will review how I produced the major themes to share Sarah's story.

Overview of Analyzing a Narrative Case Study

This chapter directly relates to Sarah White through the research question: *How do social justice understandings play out in practice? That is, what does one first-year teacher actually do in the classroom context? What obstacles might she face?* The analysis of Sarah's White's classroom was ongoing and occurred throughout the observational period. During the initial observational period, the first level of analysis occurred to identify which practices exhibited CRE from evidence seen during classroom observations. This initial level of analysis utilized *a priori* codes to help identify culturally responsive teaching practices based primarily on existing literature (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). These attributes of CRE provided an

initial starting point for coding, but as observations were underway, additional inductive codes were added based on classroom practices, lesson plans, classroom artifacts, and interviews.

A second level of analysis was conducted after the initial interview and beginning observations. I made note of the barriers and obstacles that existed and shared my thoughts and feedback with Sarah. I was available as a resource to Sarah throughout the entire process and gave suggestions to her when she asked me advice. For example, when Sarah received a new English Language Learner (ELL) student from Iraq, I found relevant research and books for her to learn new strategies to work with this student. Also, I offered suggestions for effectively managing a student who had severe attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and often served as a distraction in the classroom based on my own experiences and relevant research. I collaborated with Sarah to help her modify and/or implement new practices throughout the study while also listening to her views on teaching and learning and how they shifted from her time spent in teacher education to her beginning years teaching. In the following section I will explain the teacher education program Sarah was a part of to better understand her preparation.

Urban-Multicultural Teacher Education Program

Sarah was a part of a multicultural teacher preparation program. She received both her undergraduate and graduate degree from an Urban-Multicultural Teacher Education (UMTE) program in the College of Education. The UMTE program is committed to preparing teachers specifically to work in urban school settings. Teacher

candidates typically pick a content area major in the College of Arts and Sciences before meeting the basic requirements for admission in the UMTE. Once admitted, students complete the requirements to minor in education while completing their major course of study. The undergraduate program is followed by one-year of a professional internship in an urban school setting after which candidates can apply for teacher licensure. Those opting to complete an additional 12 hours of graduate study receive their Master's degree.

The UMTE is shaped on a Talent Development Model based on the concept that teaching is a talent involving three phases: discovery, discipline, and divergence. This model is research-based stemming from work including: Gardner's (1985) work on multiple intelligences, Feldman's (1994) work on non-universal development, Bloom's (1985) and Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) works on talent development, and works on learning and development by Vygotsky (1934/1962), Pestalozzi (1909/1977), and Whitehead (1929). Throughout the program, students come together in a learning cohort that is meant to enhance a collaborative learning approach. Teacher candidates are also presented with multiple instructional strategies to prepare them to work in urban schools (see Table 5).

Throughout this program, Sarah explained she was exposed to literature on and had regular dialogue regarding critical pedagogy, critical race theory, and other issues relevant to urban and multicultural education.

In the following sections I will describe the demographics of Sarah's students as well as detail a typical day in Sarah's classroom. This will aid to better understand the context in which she teaches and the mandates controlling her instructional time.

Student Demographics

In 2012-2013, Sarah's second grade class consisted of 16 students, 11 girls and five boys. Nine of these students were White, six African-American, and one student was from Iraq. Fifteen students received need-based free or reduced lunch. The student from Iraq, Farrah, was an English Language Learner (ELL) who spoke Arabic and scored a level one on the English Language Development Assessment (ELDA);45 the rest of the students' primary language was English.

Classroom Context

In 2013-2014, the third grade class consisted of 16 students, nine girls and seven boys (with two of the students from the previous year leaving and Sarah gaining two additional students). Of these students, eight were White, six African-American, one Hispanic, and one Iraqi. All 16 students received need-based free or reduced lunch. During this school year Sarah gained another ELL student, Jose, who was a Spanish-speaking student who tested level one on the ELDA when entering kindergarten. Jose

[45] In this county, the English Language Development Assessment is a test given to English Language Learners to determine how proficient in English a student is. There are five levels on this assessment: Level 1, pre-functional; Level 2, beginning; Level 3, Intermediate; Level 4- Advanced; and Level 5- Full English Proficient (and exited from receiving services).

Table 5 Urban Multicultural Teacher Education Program Instructional Approaches

Instructional Approach	Description
A Learning Cohort	Students come together as a group for instruction. Our intent is to model the kind of teaching we advocate by having students engage in thinking and acting in ways that exemplify aspects of our Talent Development Model
Case-based Lessons	These are complex scenarios describing teacher and student interaction. Cases come in two kinds: dilemma and exemplary. Both types are intended to develop analytical, evaluative and problem solving skills. Some of the cases are purchased and some have been created by the faculty with help from local practitioners.
Simulations and Gaming	These are methods of teaching that require learners to engage in behavior that typifies real-world activities. An example is a role-playing classroom management game.
Problem-based Lessons	These are "ill-structured" classroom-related problems in which learners have to analyze, acquire, apply and synthesize information in the solution of the problem. New real world data are introduced into the process as learners move toward solving the problem.
Technology Integration	The use of computer technology is integrated into the classes in terms of lessons designed to teach technological skills and the creation of assignments in other parts of the program requiring the application of those skills.
Collaborative Teaching	The courses are taught by the faculty with other faculty participating as appropriate on that day. One or more persons assumes primary responsibility for teaching a topic. Other faculty commit to attending and participating in those classes.
Alternative Assessment	A number of different kinds of assessment are used that depart from traditional teacher education. These include: pre-assessment to discover what students think teachers need to know, two performance assessment days spread across the semester, and a capstone experience.
50% Time in Field	Teacher education programs are often criticized by their participants as being disconnected from practice with information loaded on the front end and practices separated from learning pedagogy. Our commitment is to have students spend half of their pre-internship program and all the time in the intern year in the field.
Academic Circle	In order to further our goal of building a community of learners, Academic Circle is a standard part of the pre-intern courses. Once a week during the senior year, the cohort meets for one-two hours to discuss issues, to compare readings, to build a glossary of educational terms, and to reflect on their development as teachers.

tested at a level two in the beginning of the third grade year (which was the same as he had tested in second grade indicating he made little progress).At the time of this study, his most recent test results were not back but he was newly diagnosed to receive speech therapy for twice a week for ½ hour (as of March 2014). Farrah relocated in the middle of the third grade school year but had made progress and was able to communicate in conversational English before she left. This information serves as a snapshot into Sarah's classroom to better understand the students she teaches.

A Typical Day in Sarah's Classroom

When I first walk into Sarah's classroom, the first thing I notice is the dimmed lighting and classical music playing in the background. The environment is very welcoming and students seem at ease in the classroom. I notice a poster on the wall that Sarah shared was collaboratively made with her students:

Classroom Motto

Why We Learn
"So we can fill up our brains"
"So we can go to college"
"To have fun!"
"Because it's not fun to learn by yourself"
"So we can become inventors"
"To learn about things we don't know"
"To get to 4th grade"
"To help our world"

- Ms. White's Class

Sarah's classroom is arranged purposefully to meet her instructional objectives throughout the day (see Figure 4). It's the middle of October in Sarah's second year of

teaching. By 7:30 am[46] *students begin to walk into Sarah's classroom. During this time they work on the warm-up problem*[47] *on the board while some students eat breakfast they got from the cafeteria at their desks.*

Sarah pulls Farrah and Jose to the back of the classroom and works with them on reading in the back of the room at her reading table. Sarah's classroom walls are filled with academic vocabulary, instructional objectives, and student work. There are three simple rules posted above her Smartboard: "Respect Yourself," "Respect Others," and "Respect our School." Sarah's reading corner is cozy with a lamp and beanbags. Her library is organized by genre and filled with both picture books and novels.

Soon the morning announcements come on through the overhead audio system and students stand to say the "Pledge of Allegiance." Students are shuffling around the classroom, getting ready for their day, sharpening pencils and turning in homework in a labeled box by Sarah's desk. Sarah does not have to provide any instruction, the students seem to know what to do.

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[46] Sarah's scheduled remained the same in both second and third grade with the exception of specials time. I will share the most recent version of Sarah's schedule in this chapter (her third grade year).

[47] Warm-up problems are often seen in classrooms as students prepare for their days. In Sarah's classroom, she would often put up a math problem that students independently worked on at their own pace while she took care of administrative duties (i.e. attendance, lunch count, signed papers, etc.).

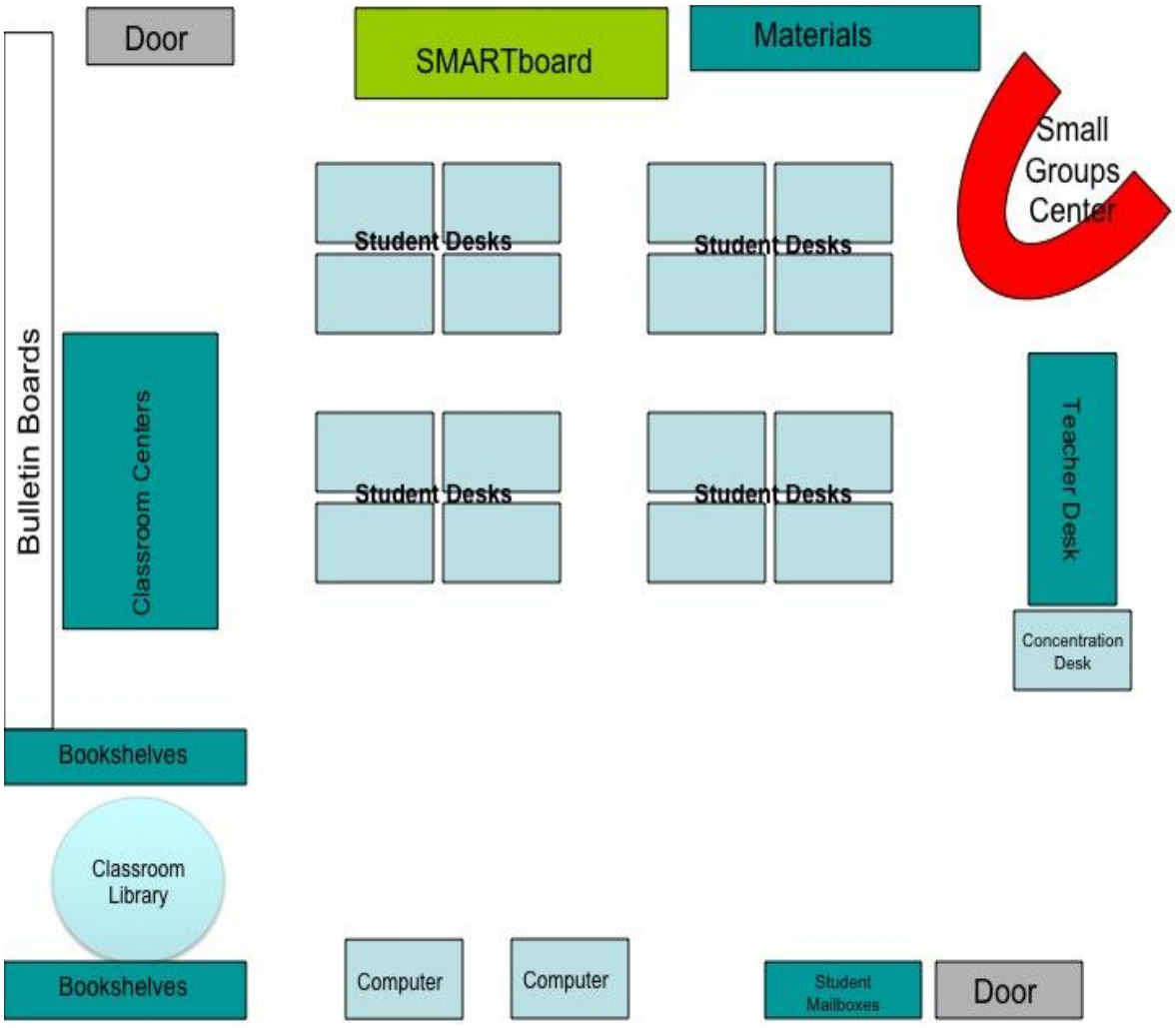

Figure 4 Sarah White's Classroom

Between 8:00 and 9:45 students work on literacy. Students are arranged in reading groups by ability levels. The first small group Sarah calls to the small group table (8:00-8:20) are Sarah's medium or high reading groups. The lowest reading group leaves with the teaching assistant to work in the back of the classroom. Between 8:20-8:50 Sarah leads whole group instruction. Within her literacy block, there is a unit theme with a common story read among each small reading group. The students learn about the author and illustrator, the genre of the story, and whatever particular reading skill and strategy they are working on that week. During this time, the story is also connected to a grammar skill (i.e. parts of speech, linking verbs, etc.), phonics skill, and spelling words. Sarah has a choice in the spelling words she uses so she often designs these around different students' interests and what they are reading in their small groups. Between 8:50-9:10 and 9:10-9:45 Sarah rotates between the other two reading groups, therefore her lowest reading group meets in small group twice to get extra support.

Students go to specials between 9:45-10:30. Specials include art, music, library, and physical education. When students return it is writing time. Sarah rotates whole group instruction with small group instruction depending on what part of the writing process they are in. Students work with each other on peer-editing and Sarah holds individual conferences with students to consult on their writing. From 11:00 to 11:30 students participate in Explorer, a county wide "Response to Intervention" (RTI) initiative. During this time students rotate to different classrooms for additional reading intervention depending on their reading benchmark scores. For example, students

struggling with reading might go to a first grade teacher to work on phonemic awareness (sometimes there are third grade students with kindergarteners and first graders). One week, Sarah taught social studies because she had a group of students who were on or above grade level. Essentially, the lowest performing students in the school do not receive social studies or science instruction, but instead receive more reading instruction. Because of this Sarah tries to integrate science and social studies concepts into her small reading groups or other unit lessons.

Between 11:50-12:40 students are in lunch and recess. Sometimes Sarah eats with her students, but often times she uses her lunch break as another planning period to make copies of worksheets or center work if needed, work on lesson plans, grade papers, or call parents. She tries to eat her lunch while doing this at the same time. Students come back in from recess recharged and ready to learn again. Between 12:40-2:00 math instruction occurs. Sarah begins math with a whole group lesson focused on a particular concept and strategy. There is a detailed pacing guide that forces math instruction to be swift and build upon each concept (so if a student falls behind on a concept, it makes is difficult to proceed). Sarah also has small math groups that she works with, but students often work collaboratively at their group desks solving problems. Students are assigned different heterogeneous groups named by continent (i.e. North American, Africa, Europe, etc.) and when they are finished with work they are able to work in one of these centers with their peers. In these centers, students might work on math games, times tables, vocabulary words, or reading the newest issue of Time for Kids. Students are aware of

the procedures set up in Sarah's classroom because she has spent time teaching students routines so they can independently move about the classroom. From 2:00-2:30 students not meeting math benchmarks leave for math intervention with the teaching assistant while the rest of the class focuses on whatever science/social studies objective is for that week (science and social studies are rotated weekly; again students performing low in math do not receive science or social studies instruction). By 2:30, students begin to pack up for the day, visiting their "mailboxes" to get any papers that might need to go home such as her weekly newsletter or graded papers. Each student has a communication folder with a log documenting student performance, behavior, and other important information Sarah may need to share with parents. Sarah walks around the room at the end of the day and signs their daily logs making notes to parents and reading any notes they sent her. Parents sign students log weekly but Sarah has made sure they know they can contact her anytime they need to. Announcements come through the overhead again and the process of dismissal begins.

As will be evident, many of the strategies Sarah employed are reflective of the practices suggested within the literature on CRE. Gay (2010) describes culturally responsive teaching as multidimensional in that it "encompasses curriculum content, learning context, classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, instructional techniques, classroom management, and performance assessments" (p. 33). Ladson-Billings (1994) explains culturally relevant teaching "empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge,

skills, and attitudes" (p. 18). In particular, Sarah's CRE teaching practices are most evident in her caring classroom community, high expectations, cultural competence, and sociopolitical awareness. In the remaining part of this chapter, I will report the findings of this study regarding Sarah's implementation of CRE in practice. I will also discuss the barriers she faced as well as my own reflections throughout this process.

Culturally Relevant Education in Practice

In this section, I will closely examine particular aspects of Sarah's teaching and provide examples of how she employed culturally relevant education within her classroom. I will use her words from our interviews as well as examples from observations in her classroom to highlight the successes and barriers she encountered while attempting to enact CRE. See Figure 4 for Sarah White's model of CRE in her classroom.

Care and the Classroom Community

Care was an obvious part of Sarah's teaching philosophy. Sarah frequently talked about how much she cared about her students' well-being and achievement in our interviews and during my classroom observations I was able to witness the different ways Sarah exhibited care.

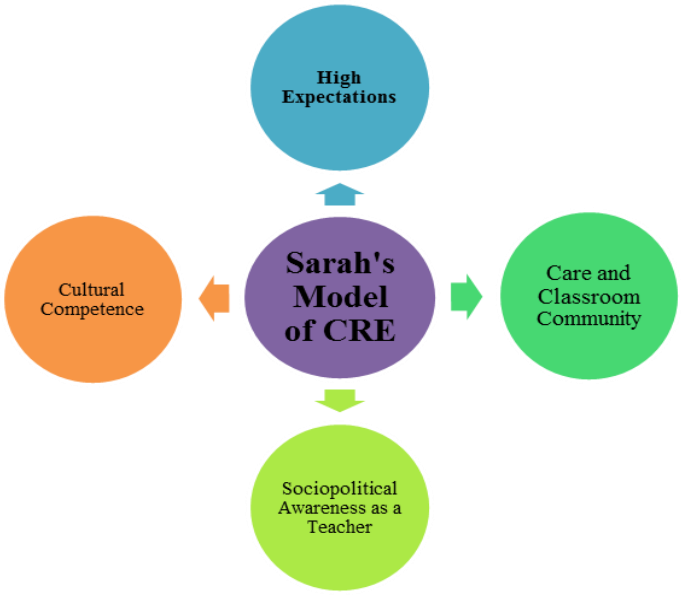

Figure 5 Sarah White's Model of Culturally Relevant Education

Webb, Wilson, Corbett, and Mordecai (1993) explain:

> [Care] is a value, an ethic, and a moral imperative that moves 'self-determination into social responsibility and uses knowledge and strategic thinking to decide how to act in the best interests of others. [Care] binds individuals to their society, to their communities, and to each other. (pp. 33-34)

Sarah reflected these attributes through her moral commitment to creating a caring and welcoming environment for her students. She believed the success she has had in creating a trusting community was because she "takes on more in terms of caring" compared to

other teachers in third grade (interview, 9/9/13). Sarah felt care was a major consideration in the success of her first year teaching:

> A lot of it was that I worked really hard at the beginning of the year and kids can perceive that as well, how much effort you're putting into it, so I hope I can keep up that effort. When I'm reflecting of why it was successful, I know it wasn't because I had a bunch of experience, but because I cared so much about the kids and I worked so hard . . . even though I didn't do everything perfectly, I think that that made up for a multitude of sins if that made sense. (interview, 6/10/13)

One example of her commitment to *going above and beyond* was seen when she purchased water bottles and food for her students. Some of her students came into the classroom each day having not eaten breakfast yet. These students would often request trips to the water fountain and getting up during class was a distraction that took away from instructional time. Sarah acknowledged staying well-nourished was a basic human need for her students so she went out and purchased reusable water bottles for each student. I noticed the water bottles on each child's desk with their names written in thick black marker. She explained each day after school she went to the sink and filled up the bottles so that students always had water at their desks and this did not take away from their time learning. She also kept healthy snacks, such as goldfish and pretzels, in the classroom for students who may be hungry. This example demonstrates what Valenzuela

(1999) found in her ethnographic study to be *authentic caring*, viewing student-teacher relationships as sustained, trusting, and respectful and serving as a foundation of learning. The authentically caring teacher is engrossed in her students' "welfare and emotional displacement" (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 61). Sarah's commitment to her students developed a sense of competency within students that that was apparent throughout my visits to her classroom.

Gay (2010) explains, "Culturally responsive caring focuses on caring *for* instead of *caring about* because it involves an active engagement in doing something positive. It encompasses a combination of "concern, compassion, commitment, responsibility, and action" (p. 48, emphasis in original). When I was in Sarah's classroom I witnessed several examples of Sarah *caring for* her students. One student, Eli[48], constantly came up in conversations because she viewed him as a behaviorally challenging student. I came to know Eli's background and the struggles Sarah had helping him to become a part of their learning community. Despite the difficulties Sarah had keeping Eli on task she always showed him compassion. One day he had come in late and she knew he had not had breakfast, so she set him up in the back of the classroom with a snack until he felt "ready to learn" (fn, 3/19/13).

In other example, Sarah had a new student, Gavin, become a part of her third grade classroom. She had expressed concern to me before that because Gavin was new to

[48] All students named are changed to protect identities in Sarah's classroom. Demographic information will be shared if it is pertinent to the example. All behaviors are accurate accounts of what happened during my observations and used for examples throughout this chapter.

her community, now in its second year of being together as a class; it was probably going to be hard for Gavin to fit in. He often complained of stomachaches and would go to the nurse when he first joined the class. Sarah acknowledged it was taking time for him to feel comfortable so she set up a place in the library for him to rest when he was not feeling well. Over time, Gavin stopped asking to go to the nurse and would instead sometimes sit in his special place when he was not feeling well (fn, 2/27/13). After witnessing Sarah's empathy and compassion for her students on several occasions, it was no surprise to me when I asked her about the successes of the classroom; her first response was often about the community she had established.

Ladson-Billings (1995b) explains, culturally responsive teachers consciously create social interactions to "maintain fluid student-teacher relationships, demonstrate a connectedness with all of the students, develop a community of learners, and encourage students to learn collaboratively and be responsible for another" (p. 480). Sarah was aware of the classroom environment she had created both during her first and second years of teaching. Overall, her classroom was a comfortable and organized space. The students knew their role and moved around the classroom with a sense of purpose, aware of the expectations Sarah had set. When asked how she achieved such an organized and comfortable environment after the first year, Sarah responded, "I'd like to think maybe a lot of that was the classroom community I built" (interview, 6/10/13). Sarah discussed how she set her classroom up like a neighborhood where students were all *friends* or

neighbors. It was clear from observations that she had developed a learning community in which all students were supportive of each other and often worked collaboratively.

In the beginning of the third grade school year Sarah gave students a puzzle piece and had each child decorate it to represent him or her. They then put all the puzzle pieces together to create one complete picture that represented their learning community. This example demonstrated Sarah's connectedness with students to make sure they knew that each one of them was valuable and an important part of their community. Ladson-Billings (1994) asserts, "Culturally relevant teaching advocates the kind of cooperation that leads students to believe they cannot be successful without getting help from others or without being helpful to others" (p. 70). In another example, during a small reading group instead of correcting a student's wrong answer, Sarah directed the student to get support from another classmate, "Do you get that Brian or do you need some help from the group? You're a very important part of the group Brian. I want to make sure you understand." In the classroom environment Sarah established, students felt accountable for one another and were expected to help one another and were able to depend on each other for support (fn, 9/30/13).

CRE literature clearly asserts creating caring classroom environments promote student engagement and lead to higher student achievement (Gay, 2010). During my observations, it was clear Sarah had developed an atmosphere where students' were encouraged to question one another regarding instructional material and understand rationale behind their answers, as evidenced by the classroom posters on discussion and

the expectations that students share and discuss their thinking and work. I often walked into a classroom where dialogue was present and students were encouraged to question one another using evidence to support one's thinking.

After attending a professional development workshop in her county, Sarah subscribed to a pedagogical strategy called "accountable talk" which encouraged students to ask one another about their thinking and to build on the responses of others.[49] Instead of just expecting students to know how to do this, she spent time preparing them and teaching about what it looked like to give rationales and explain thinking to one another. Over her daily objectives bulletin board, an overarching objective read, "We can participate in conversations and build on each other's ideas." The poster she hung beneath this objective helped students to craft phrases that taught them how to implement these conversations (see Table 6).

During one observation, students were learning about quadrilaterals. Sarah began her lesson by questioning students on math vocabulary and asking them to give examples of where they see quadrilaterals around their community. During group work students used manipulatives to determine which figures qualified as quadrilaterals. Sarah asked students to explain their reasons to one another and told them to listen to how their partners explained answers, because it might be different from how she did and help them to understand it better. These types of practices are supported in the literature on CRE where, "students are held accountable for knowing, thinking, questioning, analyzing,

[49] "Accountable Talk" is an instructional program developed by the University of Pittsburgh.

feeling, reflecting, sharing, and acting" (Gay, 2010, p. 34). Sarah told students that in math there were many different ways to come up with answers so it was important to listen to other perspectives and encouraged them to hold each other responsible using "accountable talk." She also reminded them that it was ok to respectfully disagree during their conversations (fn, 10/9/13). Sarah consistently expected students to share what they were thinking and draw upon the collective efforts of the group to promote a shared sense of learning. In alignment with CRE, students in Sarah's classroom did not just care about their own achievement, but the classmates' achievement as well (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

High Expectations

Sarah continuously discussed the high expectations she held for her students. This included both academic expectations as well as behavioral expectations. She held the belief that all of her students could succeed and that it was her responsibility to get them to work hard, but they also had to do their part as well. She expected them to contribute to their learning community. Gay (2010) asserts that teachers who truly care about their students are "persistent in their expectations of high performance" and "are diligent in their efforts to ensure that these expectations are realized" (p. 245).

Table 6 Accountable Talk

Accountable to the Learning Community	**Listen**	**Mark**	**Build**	**Summarize**
Discussions are on topic.	I still have questions about __. I notice ___. What I hear you saying is ___. This is confusing because ___.	I can apply what I know about __ to __. I agree/disagree with __ because __. How you thought about . . . .?	I'd like to add to that by saying ___. When you ___, it helped me understand ___. In other words, ___.	An example of __ is __. I understand ___. I figured out __. __ is an important point. If I understand you correctly, you think ___.
Accountable to Knowledge	**Support**	**Link**	**Verify**	**Unpack**
Use accurate information.	The evidence is supported by ___. According to the author …. Various sources stated ___.	The relationship between __ and __ is __ and __. This reminds me of __. Your evidence is the same/different because ___.	I know this because ___. An example of __ is __. The evidence is supported by ___. I did it this way ___.	How did you arrive at your answer? Clarify what you mean by ___. At first I thought ___, but now I think __. What if you/we . . .?
Accountable to Rigorous Thinking	**Challenge**	**Combine**	**Predict**	**Defend**
Think deeply about what is being said.	How did you arrive at your answer? Clarify what you mean by? At first I thought ___, but now I think ___. What if you/we . . .?	I know this because ___. An example of __ is ___. The evidence is supports by ___. I did it this way ___.	I predict that ___, because ___. Based on what I know about ___, I predict that __. I wonder if ___.	Based on my evidence, ___. I reached that conclusion by ___. The evidence shows ___.

Sarah shared how she established expectations for the classroom:

> I start off with one level of teaching or modeling or any level of expectations for students and then I differentiate until everybody's been able to meet that in some way. It often takes time to pull back more small groups and more practice and different types of things at least with curriculum. And then in expectations for behavior I try to be consistent and try, because I'm a new teacher things are going to change from the beginning of the year based on what worked and didn't work but they've [her students] been really flexible with me on that, so that's good. I try to really keep up with everything being fair and I know that's big for younger kids and urban kids so even if everything's not equal, keeping it fair is key. (interview, 1/29/13)

Sarah realized that in order for her expectations to be effective she would have to be flexible at times but also consistent. On several occasions I was able to witness examples of Sarah's consistent expectations. In one example, working in a small reading group with students, Sarah put emphasis on the *process over the product*. She told the students, "we are not reading to get through the material. We are reading to understand" (fn, 2/12/13). In another example during math class, students were discussing their problem solving strategies with one another. She told them she, "didn't care if they got the right answers because we'll figure this out as a class, but the fact that [she] hears them talking

about how they solve problems makes her proud" (fn, 1/15/13). Again, Sarah was consistent in her expectation that students should focus on the process of learning. These sentiments echo what Delpit (2006) refers to as the process approach. Students are given the chance to work through their ideas that will ultimately lead to a product, but this journey may look different for each student.

Sarah's acknowledgement of flexibility in her expectations was also present. Eli often had a hard time focusing in class and Sarah gave him the choice to either "sit with the group" or at his "concentration desk," which was away from his classmates and next to her desk, when working. During one writing assignment, while Eli was sitting at the "concentration desk," Sarah walked over to him to see how far along he was on his draft. She told him that most kids were already on their second draft but, "it's ok because not every kids writes at the same speed" (fn, 1/29/13). Sarah held high expectations for her students to stay on task, but she realized this was harder for some students than others. Eli suffered from severe ADHD and was not always able to get his medication. His mother worked full-time and did not always have enough money to buy it when the refills were due. Sarah noticed a huge difference in Eli when he was off his mediation and did her best to accommodate his needs in balance with her expectations for him (interview, 1/29/13).

CRE aims to share responsibility for learning amongst teachers and students. Ladson-Billings (1994) explains, "As they strive for excellence, such teachers function as *conductors* or *coaches. Conductors* believe that students are capable of excellence and

they assume responsibility for ensuring that their students achieve that excellence" (p. 23, emphasis in original) "*Coaches* also believe their students are capable of excellence, but they are comfortable sharing the responsibility to help achieve it with parents, community members, and the students themselves" (emphasis in original, p. 24). During different times of the year, Sarah practiced both a *conductor* and *coach* role. When *conductor,* Sarah believed it was her responsibility to keep her expectations high in order for students to succeed. She stated:

> I'm really trying this semester to focus on increasing the kids' rigor and increasing their independence. So when you were in the other day, you may have noticed I was super strict regarding where they were looking and where their attention was because I really want to get kids to take school really seriously. (interview, 1/29/13)

As time went on, Sarah's consistency holding high expectations taught students to be co-dependent with one another and independent for themselves. She was able to move into more of a *coaching* role at this point. When *coach,* Sarah included her students as part of the decision-making process:

> I feel like my students and I have a nice class culture. It's not just top down and they have an input in creating the class culture because they're more comfortable with our class expectations and they're able to give more so it doesn't always

> have to be so top down. They're more room for their personality. I don't have to be strict with all of them because they are meeting my behavior expectations. For example, with Terry, because he's so inquisitive I don't mind if he talks out in whole group and asks a question or if he's going to add something because I know his intent behind that. And the culture of the classroom that we've established allows for that and will not result in John blurting out necessarily. (interview, 10/29/13)

Sarah tried to always be available to her students but she often tried to promote independence by having students see they were capable of performing tasks and relying on their own skills. For example, instead of telling students what words meant, they knew it was their responsibility to use a dictionary to look up meanings. Sarah also scaffolded learning on a regular basis. I rarely saw her give a direct answer. She would often answer students' questions with more questions, helping them to reach the answer on their own. As mentioned in the section on caring, Sarah held an expectation to provide rationales behind thinking. During a writing lesson, students were working on outlines. Sarah walked up to a student and read over the student's shoulder. She asked the student if he liked animals and he nodded that he did. She asked him, "Ok well why do you like animals? I need you to explain your reasons to me so that I can better understand what you mean" (fn, 1/15/13). Sarah made sure that her students followed through and never gave them "permission to fail," or what Ladson-Billings (2002) describes as giving up

and allowing students to choose not to work (p. 110). Instead, Sarah worked hard to understand why some students were struggling and what she could do to fix it. Sometimes this involved going to other teachers, administrators, or parents, but mostly she would talk with the students about how she could help them to reach their potential.

Behavioral expectations.

Magnolia Elementary school adopted a school-wide behavior plan that all teachers were expected to use. This school-wide behavior policy, called "failure to earn" was intended to be a positively framed behavior management system. For every 5 minutes in school, students earned one point (the whole school day was worth 100 points). The teachers were supposed to focus on earning points versus taking them away, hence why it was called "failing to earn." Sarah explained that the system should focus on using positive reinforcement rather than be punitive, but in practice it often became punitive in nature. Overall Sarah stated that, "coupled with consistency, a positive classroom environment, and structure [the "failure to earn" program was] very effective. Depending on the environment and the culture you could do something a little more constructivist and a little less behaviorist, but its' effective for me" (interview, 5/1/14).

Within CRE, culturally responsive classroom management (CRCM) addresses the need for teachers to, develop the knowledge, skills, and predispositions to teach children from diverse, racial, ethnic, language, and social class backgrounds" (Weinstein et al., 2003, p. 56). The aim of CRCM is for teachers to create classroom environments where students can feel a sense of personal responsibility in their interactions with one another

(Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran, 2004). Weinstein et al. (2004) outlines components for teachers practicing CRCM:

1. Recognition of one's own ethnocentrism and biases;
2. Knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds;
3. Understanding of the broader social, economic, and political context of our education system;
4. Ability and willingness to use culturally appropriate classroom management strategies; and
5. Commitment to building caring classroom communities (p. 27).

Using these components to enact CRCM, Weinstein et al. (2003) expresses an importance in establishing clear expectations, creating clear expectations for student behavior, creating caring classroom environments, building partnerships with families, and communicating with students in culturally appropriate ways.

As evidenced from Sarah's participation in the CSJFG, she had an understanding of her Whiteness and also the boarder social, economic, and political context of the education system. Additionally, in one interview she shared:

> I am aware that I'm a part of the dominant culture and so I don't want to be a dominating force over any kind of difference. So just being a member of the

> dominant culture, I think you have to actively work against dominating, because if you're imposing [your ideals]. If you're imposing your philosophies and morals on people who think differently, and you don't even realize that's something you're doing because that's something you've always been around, and it's always been affirmed by your culture, because you've always been in the dominant culture; you've never been a minority or marginalized and so you don't know. I think it's easy to think of your truths as absolute truths and when you portray your truths to your students as absolute truths, and their background tells them something different you're de-legitimizing their backgrounds. (interview, 9/10/12)

In alignment with CRCM, Sarah tried to use her knowledge of her students' cultural backgrounds to create expectations that were culturally appropriate. Sarah discussed her internal struggles between holding high expectations and being "too strict," and often reflected on her actions to make sure she was working in the best interest of her students. She believed she was able to make the "failure to earn" policy work in her classroom because she often used classroom incentives instead of individual incentives to create group efforts and collaborative learning. For instance, when an entire group succeeded on a activity, they would receive the "Wonderful Workers Award," a decorated 8 by 10 picture frame that sat on the students' desks allowing them to feel proud of their accomplishments as a group.

Sarah also worded her expectations in positive ways to reinforce expected behavior. Students knew their daily procedures and it was not uncommon to hear Sarah giving positive and specific feedback such as, "I'm so thrilled that you are respecting the math materials" (fn, 11/8/12). She did not wait for a student to do something *wrong* before scolding them, but rather focused on when students did things *right* to use this as a model for behavioral expectations. She made it clear that students were held accountable for their own behavior and their own learning.

During one observation, Eli was off task and Sarah asked him, "Who's in charge of you and what you do in school? How are you going to make it ok for yourself?" (fn, 11/18/12). On another occasion, when Eli was off task she pulled him aside and listed a bunch of behaviors that Eli had done well that day. She then told him how she was proud of him and asked him, "How are you going to show me that you corrected your behavior?" (fn, 2/27/13). Eli was one of Sarah's African American students and she wanted to make sure she held him to the same expectations as the other boys she had in her classroom. Gay (2010) explains, "when teachers fail to demand accountability for high-level performance form ethnically diverse students under the guise that 'I don't want to put them on the spot in case they don't know how to do the academic tasks,' they really are abdicating their pedagogical responsibilities" (p. 54). In the same vein, during whole group sessions, Sarah would call on her ELL student, Jose, whom often did not have the confidence to speak aloud. If she saw he wrote down a correct answer, she would try to find ways to call on him to help him see he could answer questions correctly.

Overall, in Sarah's classroom, she did not give students the option *to not* be "friends." She believed that by the way she framed conflicts or behavior problems that occurred in the classroom influenced students' perceptions of one another. However, Sarah did express her concern that she should make conflict resolution more student-centered after her first year of teaching:

> We didn't do enough of restorative justice conflict resolution, and like I hinted before a lot of conflict resolution was *this is how this is going to be, go sit down.* I felt like it was more teacher-centered than I would have liked it to be. I would have liked to get into more conversations with students about conflicts and I think I'll have more chance to do that in third grade especially since they're growing up a little. There will be more opportunities to do that in a more student-centered way. (interview, 6/10/13)

The following year I witnessed how Sarah spent more time having one-on-one conversations with students when conflicts arose. I spent time brainstorming with Sarah and sharing ideas with her about how to handle particular situations. I encouraged her to keep working on including students' voices and helping students develop autonomy in their learning to aid in maintaining a productive learning environment (interview, 10/29/13). I will share more about my influence and perspectives on Sarah's practice at the end of this chapter.

Cultural Competence

Gay (2010) asserts that the culturally responsive teacher, "filters curriculum content and teaching strategies through [her students'] cultural frames of reference to make the content more personally meaningful and easier to master" (p. 26). At the beginning of Sarah's first year teaching, she struggled with ways to cater the curriculum to meet her students' interest. In her first year of teaching, the Common Core Standards (CCS) were implemented in the classroom and the county she worked in was very strict about following the pacing guide precisely. At first, this made Sarah very hesitant to create lessons on her own or supplement the curriculum. Over time, Sarah became more confident in her teaching abilities and the autonomy she held in the classroom.

Gay (2010) stresses, "curriculum content is crucial to academic performance and is an essential component of culturally responsive pedagogy" (p. 128). Sarah was aware of its importance and became more deliberate in her choices of teaching material:

> [W]hen I'm planning, if I notice like, wow, there are only White people in the story or you know, then I just choose a different book, or if I can't avoid it then I bring in something else additional that shows a different perspective. (interview, 9/12/12)

Sarah's class schedule did not allow much time for science or social studies, so Sarah would often use her reading block as a time to incorporate these subject areas. Given the

CCS emphasis on informative text, she was able to support her instructional decisions with appropriate standards. For example, several of Sarah's students were African American so Sarah had students read biographies on Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, and Jackie Robinson. She did not wait for the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday or Black History Month to introduce these important historical figures; rather she began her second year of teaching incorporating multicultural literature into her curriculum from the beginning.

Sarah also chose other readings that reflected the students' in her classroom including bilingual texts (Spanish/English) and used children's literature that reflected differing perspectives. For example, during Thanksgiving, Sarah knew she could not avoid discussion of "Pilgrims" and "Indians" and the myth of the first Thanksgiving (Bigelow & Peterson, 1998). She decided she would teach students about the "story" of Thanksgiving with a focus on who the Native Americans were. She used the children's literature book *Encounter* by Jane Yolen that told the story of Columbus's arrival from the perspective of a Native American boy. She taught the students the words, "colonization" and "colonizers" so that they could compare Columbus' colonization to the Pilgrims. After reading the text she asked students to reflect on the Native Americans and to think about how they felt when a new group of people claimed their land. The students created KWL charts[50] discussing their experiences and reactions to the story.

[50] KWL is an acronym for Know, Want to know, and Learned. Teachers use these organizational charts when they wish to have students visually represent what they

Sarah worked through another article with students from the book publication *Rethinking Columbus* (Bigelow & Peterson, 1998). The articles discussed what Native Americans gave to the colonizers and she worked through misconceptions that she found students held.

In alignment with CRE, "teachers can no longer be dispassionate and distant in their relationships with students, or attempt to avoid controversial topics and harsh realities"(Gay, 2010, p. 52). While Sarah often struggled with the developmental appropriateness of addressing social justice issues in the early elementary classroom, she focused on building tolerance and respect for one another as a starting point. Sarah did not passively overlook race in her classroom and instead embraced "colortalk" allowing students to have discussions on race by acknowledging they all came from different backgrounds (Thompson, 2004). She did not go into deep conversations about racial inequality because she did not feel they were developmentally ready to handle such discussions, but she also did not embrace a "colorblind" approach in her instruction.

In another example, Sarah specifically expressed an interest in adopting more culturally responsive math strategies in her classroom to increase engagement in underperforming students. She asked for my help in creating a unit that tied together math with a social justice emphasis (see Lesson Plan in Appendix O). We met over Spring Break 2013 and planned an interdisciplinary unit-incorporating math, science, social studies, reading, writing, and technology. We decided that using the environment

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already know about a topic, what questions they have and what they are seeking to learn, and what they learned after a lesson is complete.

would be a good starting point for teaching social justice to second graders because we could easily connect this to her theme of community in the classroom and the broader global community.

In CRE, teachers see themselves as part of the community and "help their students make connections between their local, national, racial, cultural, and global identities" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 25). Sarah began this unit by reading *The Great Kapok Tree: A Tale of the Amazon Rain Forest* by Lynne Cherry, a children's literature book about cutting down trees and the impact this had on people and animals. She asked the students to think about their community- Magnolia Elementary- and then think broader to the larger community of the county, city, state, and country that they lived in. She asked the students to think about how they could relate the lesson they learned from the book to "our world." The class brainstormed a list of things that they needed to take care of at Magnolia Elementary (their community). The students came up with: trees, the school, water, animals, and places. She asked the students how they might do this and as we anticipated (and hoped), several students suggested recycling was one way they could help the environment.

Sarah moved into her math lesson reviewing the previous week's skills. The students' math objective was multiplication so she wanted to connect multiplication to real life applications. First, Sarah sent a letter to parents sharing her efforts to make math more relevant: "In order to make math more relatable to students, I am going to try to increase the connections between "school math" and "real-world math" over the next few

weeks" (parent letter sent home, 2/26/13; See Appendix P After reading other literature I shared with her on family-school partnerships in math (Ensign, 2003; Tate, 1995), Sarah thought it would good idea to include students' families in helping them to create math word problems centered on their lives and what they were learning in this unit. This would be the culminating activity in the unit and the final assessment (students would create their own word problems using multiplication and solve these words problems with each other).

Sarah also used her writing block and other free times she had (i.e. walking to and from recess) as an opportunity to incorporate her science objectives (asking questions and making predictions). Sarah used this time to have students "tour" their community using a school set of I-pads to take pictures of "issues" or "problems" they saw related to the environment. Most students took pictures of litter around their school campus and decided this would be the problem that they tackled. They shared their pictures in small groups and had discussions regarding the implications of this litter. Connecting back to the story, the students again decided recycling was one way they could help the environment.

Sarah asked parents in her weekly newsletter to donate aluminum cans to the classroom during this unit. The plan was for the class to recycle them in the end, but in the meantime they collected the cans in the front of her classroom to "witness the impact they'd have in the environment" by not littering. Sarah taught them about using repeated addition as a form of multiplication using the cans as visual manipulatives. She reiterated

the point that trash gets "multiplied" over time as we litter, trying to make the connections between using math and their impact on the environment. The students used the cans and themselves as models to write simple math multiplication sentences using multiplication in class.

Finally, students worked independently writing letters to a community organization or leader they voted on as a class. Students decided they would write a letter to their principal about keeping their school community clean. Students used the "evidence" they documented from their campus tour to convince the principal that the school community needed to work harder at keeping their environment clean. On the last day of the unit, students were asked three questions:

1. *What is math?*
2. *Why do you think math is important?*
3. *What are possible connections between math and taking care of the environment?*

Students associated math mostly with a numerical representation of numbers (i.e. math is adding and subtracting, math is counting), but some students associated math with problem solving (i.e. math is when you learn and think, math is figuring things out). Most students believed math was important to get a job, to go to the store and get what you need, and to be able to do basic arithmetic. Students were able to make connections between what math is and how it is related to the environment mostly by acknowledging *how much* recycling might take place and also *how many* kinds of animals there were

(referring to animals being extinct). One student said, “we can add how much pollution and litter there is on the ground.” Another student said, “Scientists can use math to keep track of pollution.” It was clear through this unit that Sarah was able to instill community pride within students (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Sarah was also able to empower students in the learning process as they took control of their own learning and found solutions to the posed problems collaboratively. In alignment with CRE, Sarah was able to have students, “engage in more ways of knowing and thinking, and to become more active participants in shaping their own learning” (Gay, 2010, p. 38).

Sociopolitical Consciousness as a Teacher

A central component of CRE is for teachers to embrace an awareness of the sociopolitical issues impacting schools (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Teaching with a sociopolitical consciousness is not easy, as it often requires teachers to “incorporate the required curriculum and associated academic responsibilities with issues of social justice” (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 120). Ladson-Billings (2001) shares indicators of teachers promoting sociopolitical consciousness:

- The teacher knows the larger sociopolitical context of the school-community-nation-world.
- The teacher has an investment in the public good.
- The teacher plans and implements academic experiences that connect students to the larger social context.

- The teacher believes that students' success has consequences for his or her own quality of life (pp. 120-121).

As evidenced in the CSJFG as well as interviews I had with Sarah, she was already aware of the broader community around her and was informed about larger systemic inequalities facing schools. She also made attempts to connect curricular lessons to the large social context as seen in the section on cultural competence. After her first year teaching and reflecting while reading through CSJFG transcripts Sarah actually expressed her concern that she was *too idealistic* in our focus groups. She explained:

> Back then I was focused on writing about pedagogy and not actually practice. So theory over practice because that's what I knew and that's what I was comfortable with. I could read a book but I hadn't had enough success in the classroom to feel that I was really an expert on practice so I kind of reverted to theory at times. I don't know now that I am able to combine the two and match the two well but I at least have the capability to do so now in better ways. (interview, 6/10/13)

I shared with Sarah that I never felt she was *too idealistic* but I understood how things seem different once you are practicing in the classroom (see more about this in Lessons from a Teacher Educator section below). We talked more about her connection of theory

and practice and I concluded, that while it was not always explicitly apparent, Sarah's pedagogy *was informed* by theory and research that was instilled within her. She often referred back to Freire (1970) and Delpit (2006) in our conversations. She stated her struggle with theory was that it was not individualized for *her students* (i.e. "no one ever wrote a book about Eli or John"). She was looking at theory as a singular approach and I believe she was dealing with some of the frustrations of what she had learned in teacher education and its applicability to the classroom. During this conversation, I was not sure if she understood my belief on integrating theory and practice and if I understood her correctly. I summarized what I thought she was saying to ask her if I understood her perspective correctly. She agreed on my summation and finally concluded:

> [T]heory informs how I do that, and why I do that [rationale behind instructional decisions]. Theory informs and challenges me, as a White girl from a middle class background, and if it weren't for theory I wouldn't be able to understand my students as well as I do and to understand the macro systems that are going on-systems of subjugation versus systems of empowerment and how that's working. (interview, 6/10/13)

I am not sure what Sarah thought about when she pictured an ideal teacher "practicing theory," but after the many interviews I had with Sarah and the two years that I spent in her classroom, in my opinion, it was very clear she was informed by theory and this was

a part of her pedagogy, whether she acknowledged its influence or not. Ladson-Billings (2006a) explains:

> The first thing teachers must do is educate themselves about both the local sociopolitical issues of their school community (e.g., school board policy, community events) and the larger sociopolitical issues (e.g., unemployment, health care, housing) that impinge upon their students' lives. (p. 37)

Sarah was educated on the issues circulating in her school community and other issues affecting her students' lives. This often guided her when making decisions and sorting through tough scenarios.

Perhaps one of the biggest struggles Sarah continually reflected on was working with her ELL students. Her one Spanish-speaking student, Jose, was born in the U.S. but did not start learning English until he entered kindergarten. Sarah was beginning to think that there was something else causing Jose not to succeed and wanted to get him tested for special education services but she explained, "I was hesitant to do it because I didn't want his language barrier to be misconstrued as a learning disability. It's difficult because there are so many things going on with ELL" (interview, 10/29/13). She was aware that students from racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds are more likely to be placed in special education classrooms than their White peers (Fierros & Conroy, 2002; Parrish, 2002), but at the same time, Hispanic students tend to be under-identified for special

education in elementary school and over-identified in high school (Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, & Higardea, 2002). Sarah believed if she ignored the situation, it was a social justice issue because she would not be advocating for her student's academic needs. However, she worried that if she had Jose tested by the school psychologist, his language barrier would automatically make him score lower since the test was only administered in English. While Sarah was not able to change the system that might perpetuate inequality among ELL students, she was able to be an advocate for Jose and try to get him tested so that he could receive the services he might need, despite being aware his language might get in the way. Jose has not been tested for special education services as of yet, but he did start receiving speech therapy in March 2014.

Throughout my time observing Sarah, it became clear that her attempts to develop positive relationships with students extended to developing positive relationships with parents. Embracing a sociopolitical consciousness recognizes the importance of parents' involvement with their children and how teachers should open up the door for this to occur. One example I witnessed was how Sarah supported the use of native languages not only with students but also with parents. One of her newer students from Iraq, Farrah, came at the end of the second grade school year and did not speak any English. Sarah learned that Farrah's parents only spoke Arabic so when trying to communicate Sarah would use Google Translate to write letters for her parents. They often would send back hand-written letters in Arabic so Sarah could not use Google Translate in return, but she found someone in her school that spoke Arabic to read it to her so she could respond to

the parents. Sarah felt it was really important for parents to know they could write her in their native languages and she would respond in their native languages whenever possible. Sarah also spent the summer between teaching second and third grade learning Spanish because she knew she would inevitably have more students with Spanish-speaking parents in her future classrooms and wanted to be able to communicate with them.

Sarah believed it was her job as an educator to stay up to date with political issues in education as well as the most recent research impacting students. She sometimes worried that because this was where her priorities lied, she was missing out being a critical practitioner (as compared to the times she was reading Freire, (1970); Delpit, (2006); and hooks (1994)), but felt that being a part of my study was helping her to stay connected to the "bigger picture" (interview, 9/9/13). As a part of a book study at Magnolia Elementary, several teachers opted to read the book *Teaching with Poverty in Mind: What being poor does to kids' brains and what schools can do about it* by Eric Jenson (2009). Based on brain-based research, this book discusses what poverty is and how it affects schools, what drives change at both the micro and macro level, and how to engage in resources that make change happen. Sarah explained that in the book study some teachers were misrepresenting the research Jenson was presenting, believing that his research explained reasons why their kids could not learn or did not care about school. She expressed that:

> The whole thing shouldn't be a defeatest thing or lower our expectations. Sometimes the learned helplessness students have is supported by teachers. The point is that this is happening so we have to be aware of it and think about how do we combat it and counteract it. Not- ok we're done, it's happening and it's bad and it's their [the students] fault. (interview, 9/9/13)

Sarah's awareness of sociopolitical issues allowed her to recognize the more troubling factor of poverty impacting schools and how this affected students rather than to focus on the students themselves as the problem. From this perspective, Sarah rejected a deficit mindset of "blaming the victim" and instead charged her school community with a responsibility to think about what *they should* do about the problem (Gay, 2010).

Barriers to Engaging in CRE

As I observed Sarah's classroom, it became clear that there were several challenges she faced as she attempted to enact CRE. Throughout my analysis, I found that state, county and school wide requirements along ELL student issues made implementing CRE a challenge for Sarah. In this next section, I will highlight examples of some of the barriers preventing Sarah from implementing CRE in her classroom.

There are a number of institutional requirements that impeded Sarah's ability to be responsive to her students and enact CRE. Much of these requirements have to do with

the accountability and testing movement in education today. At one point I asked Sarah about how she was currently implementing CRE. She responded:

> It's very easy to be a teacher who's focused on the achievement. All day you're hammered with achievement, and you can be a teacher who focuses on achievement and not focus on cultural awareness. It's very easy to do that. And you're not being pressured to focus on cultural awareness, but you are being pressured for test scores all day. So of course one of them ends up getting more of your attention unless you're very conscious of it. (interview, 9/9/13)

Sarah did not directly answer the question because she focused on the academic achievement, which she implied was test scores, because that was a requirement for her. She felt that it was hard to think about CRE because she was held accountable for traditional student achievement and not teaching in culturally relevant ways. Despite her focus on test scores, Sarah did express her frustrations with the mandated curriculum that prevented her from meeting her individual students' needs:

> I'm getting frustrated with [city] county this year curriculum wise. They are on this push to unify everything to where kids can move from one classroom one day to another school [the next]. They should be reading the same story one day at one school that they are reading in another school. So that's frustrating because that's

> very *micro-managy*, especially with the shift to . . . I mean I have enough trouble with the pacing. You can't expect us to pace ourselves with how another school paces themselves. (interview, 9/9/13)

Sarah expressed how vocabulary might differ from school to school and she worried about the "lack of understanding they [the district] have for what my students need" (interview, 9/9/13). Additionally, the district created PowerPoints that teachers were *strongly encouraged* to use that basically dictated math lessons each day. There was no room for creativity or professional judgment on the teachers' part.

Unfortunately, when teachers assume they must solely rely on the curriculum prescribed by the school, they prevent their students from learning other perspectives and understanding power dynamics that maintain the status quo. Ladson-Billings (2001) explains teachers must encourage their students to critically examine what they learn in school in order to have power over their own lives in the real world. After her first year of teaching, Sarah discussed her efforts to empower students in the learning process:

> The theory that education is empowerment, that's what I try to do and that to me is the truth. I try to teach in that manner with that goal in mind. Empowering them [the students] to work in the world as it is and you're empowering them to see the world as it is. This means learning critical thinking plus discrete skills. Those are kind of big things that drive my practice. (interview, 6/10/13)

However, over time the strict requirements of the school and accountability system made Sarah question how much *she should* empower students to question the school system and the demands put on them:

> I want to hear students' voices and it's different from inside thinking *oh that's how it should be*. I want to hear their voices and I want them to question the testing. I would love to be the kind of teacher that thinks my main role is to prepare them to think critically in society and I want that to be a big part of my role. But day-to-day my role is to help them learn and to prepare them to continue learning [to take the test]. Part of that learning is book smarts, and part of that learning is critical thinking. And I feel like in a way if I encourage or stimulate the questioning of that testing, then I might be doing them a disservice in terms of their academic achievement, at least in terms of that test in later years. (interview, 10/29/13)

Sarah felt it was her responsibility to prepare students to "continue learning" particularly in regards to the institutional requirement of standardized testing.

Often seen in CRE literature, testing is not the sole determinant of students' achievement, however it is one indicator of success. Making sure students pass and go on to the next grade level is an obligation Sarah has. After her first year of teaching, Sarah

shared how she aimed to prepare her students with test-taking strategies for third grade. Sarah's attempts to directly teach her students strategies for succeeding on standardized testing is related to Delpit's (2006) concept of the "culture of power." Delpit advocates explicitly teaching skills to succeed in the dominant society to make it easier for students to acquire power. By not talking to her students about their views on testing and putting such a heavy emphasis on it, Sarah risks her opportunity to empower students. The inflexibility associated with state and county mandates should not prevent the growth of students by not allowing teachers to teach *"to and through* [students'] personal and cultural strengths, their intellectual capabilities, and their prior accomplishments (Gay, 2010, p. 26). Gay (2010) warns:

> If educators continue to be ignorant of, ignore, impugn, and silence the cultural orientations, values, and performance styles of ethnically different students, they will persist in imposing cultural hegemony, personal denigration, educational inequality, and academic underachievement upon them. (p. 27)

Throughout my observations, I witnessed the struggle Sarah had with fulfilling her requirements as a new teacher and sticking to her pedagogical beliefs she adopted prior to entering the classroom. As shown in the previous section, there were several other examples of how Sarah enacted CRE, but sometimes institutional requirements,

such as testing, shifted her focus.

While Sarah's teacher preparation prepared her to work in urban school environments that are typically deemed more challenging, there were some aspects of teaching students in this environment that served as barriers to engaging in CRE. For example, student attendance, student health, and family issues all remained a concern in the classroom and Sarah felt these were issues outside of her control (interview, 2/23/13). Sarah specifically mentioned the struggles she had with keeping her students motivated:

> I've noticed from second to third grade, and maybe it's just this class, maybe it's this year or maybe it's my external stress that I'm putting on them . . . but I feel that there's inherent achievement versus effort, and I feel like that balance starts to tip much more towards effort in the third grade. It's really becoming a stark contrast between those who are doing lots of extra work and always completing their homework and who are always on task and [those who are] starting to get lazy. (interview, 10/29/13)

I talked with Sarah about third grade being the first grade that students were tested so perhaps students were less motivated because of a focus on testing. She agreed this might be a potential reason in addition to her own stress that might be trickling down to the students:

> I think maybe because of my stress and maybe the expectations of third grade learning has been less engaging and less . . . well more challenging. And I think some kids, when they need a challenge, get less motivated especially when the wrong support is there or they see others succeeding faster than them. I'm trying not to let that influence me, those [bad] attitudes have influenced them [the students]. But I know it's my responsibility to get them ready for upper elementary stuff. It's a balance. (interview, 10/29/13)

While Sarah felt that her classroom was more "engaging" and more "fun" than the other third grade classrooms, she still felt a decline in motivation for students that bothered her. She wanted her students to maintain a love of learning, but as time went on and standards became more rigorous, some students seemed less engaged in the classroom. Whether or not the decreased engagement had to do with testing is unknown because this would have required interviewing the students, which was not a part of this study.

Another barrier facing Sarah was working with her ELL students. López, Scanlan, and Gundram (2013) share:

> Although circumstances that disrupt education such as poverty and mobility pose barriers to academic success for ELLs that are difficult to ameliorate, the 'inequitable access to appropriated trained teachers' with specialized training to

> meet the needs of ELLs presents obstacles that can be more readily addressed' (Rumberger & Gándara, 2004, p. 2036). (pp. 2-3)

During our interviews, Sarah often expressed her frustration regarding her lack of preparation for working with ELL students. She shared, "I should have taken a class [on teaching ELLs]. I mean it should be required. They put you in schools with all these ELL students" (interview, 10/29/13). It is not surprising that Sarah felt this way considering Ballantyne, Sanderman, and Levy (2008) found over 70% of teachers lacked the training to be effective with ELLs. This lack of training is evident both through required coursework in teacher preparation programs as well as surveyed teachers who have expressed their inadequate preparation for instructing and assessing ELL students (Herrera & Murry, 2006, p. 201). In addition to obstacles of adequately preparing teachers to meet the needs of ELLs, are "policy initiatives or legislative mandates" constraining bilingual programs, and "inadequate resources or institutional will" (García, Jensen, & Scribner, 2009, p. 12).

Preparing teachers to meet the needs of ELLs is a social justice issue because approximately one in five students in America speak another language than English at home as their native language (Shin & Kominski, 2010). The longer state legislatures and teacher education programs continue to ignore this factor, the greater the chance that achievement gaps will continue to grow. I will discuss more about the current landscape of teacher preparation and policy initiatives in chapter six.

Sarah is clearly dedicated to serving her students' and I believe she has students' best interests in mind from her perspective. Observing her in the classroom, I was able to witness her attempts at enacting CRE (sometimes she was explicit about it, others times she was not). She was able to enact CRE through the caring community she set up, the high expectations she consistently held for her students, her attempts to be culturally competent in the curriculum, and through her own sociopolitical awareness. Despite her attempts, state, county, and school wide requirements made testing a central part of daily life in school and this might have contributed to decreasing student motivation. Also, Sarah did not feel she had the preparation or support to adequately meet her ELL students' needs. Overall, Sarah is a teacher who was clearly committed to her students and I believe she has their best intentions in mind, however, I do not always feel this is enough. In the next section, I will describe my role throughout this study in more detail as well as the critiques, struggles, and new found understandings I gained from observing Sarah's practice for two years.

Reflections as a Teacher Educator

I am passionate about teaching for social justice and preparing teachers for this challenge in the classroom. I do view teaching for social justice as a challenge, because I know from my own experiences this is not the number one priority for most school districts. People often misconstrue my description of teaching for social justice to mean that I do not value teaching math or science for example. This is quite the contrary. For

me, it is about *how* I approach teaching math or science acknowledging the need to empower my students to use math and science in meaningful ways for them. Given my proclivity towards social justice, I was very excited to find out Sarah would be a part of my study and allow me to come into her classroom.

Sarah's unique teacher preparation program exposed her to critical literature that not many other teacher preparation programs require. I was impressed by her knowledge and automatically assumed this would translate into wonderful lessons in the classroom. In one of our early interviews, Sarah shared with me:

> I think that's important for educators to question what they think, and to question their safe position in the world, especially for educators from the standard culture. Educators that haven't been from a counter-cultural background or outside of the main population, and haven't felt marginalized I would say need to do this. So trying to help understand marginality, and I think the program I went to was really unique in that it did that and it was really critical for me. (interview, 9/10/12)

Sarah began this study expressing her commitment to social justice and to being a critical practitioner. However, sometimes my view of being a critical practitioner differed from Sarah's. As discussed in chapter three, this study used a constructionist research paradigm because Sarah and I mutually engaged in knowledge construction (Crotty,

1998). I shared my concerns and critiques with Sarah throughout this process and she shared her rationales behind things. Sometimes she and I agreed; other times we did not.

Throughout this study, I found myself questioning my ability to *practice what I preached*. After one visit to Sarah's classroom, I wrote in my reflection journal:

> There is such a disconnect between theory and practice and I often wonder if my teacher educators who have all these *ideas* could really do it in a lesson themselves? This will be a challenge for me. Can I do the very thing that I am expecting Sarah to do? (journal, 11/8/12).

I also thought back to myself as an elementary school teacher. After observing a scripted math lesson, I wrote:

> There are several times when the students are expected to chant back in unison when Sarah asks a question aloud. At first, I began to feel disappointed because I have such high hopes for Sarah (I do believe I am slightly biased because of her extreme reflexivity and how well-read I know she is). Then I began to think about when I was in the classroom. *Did I teach like this? Did I make math so mundane and boring?* (journal, 9/3/12)

Early on, it was hard for me to watch some lessons that I did not feel reflected students' interests, but then I remembered I had not seen the whole picture ("there is nothing worse than someone coming into your classroom with all their critiques from only a snapshot lesson" (journal, 9/30/12)). I came to realize over time that even though it has been less than four years since I left the elementary school classroom, so much has changed. When I was a teacher, we had standards and testing, but compared to what I saw in Sarah's classroom, I had far more autonomy than she did. I was not micro-managed nearly as much as she was and teacher evaluations were not nearly as demanding. Sarah is a product of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) but attended a private high school, so she never had to deal with the pressures of testing as a student. She liked being held accountable but acknowledged its' problems as well:

> For me I like having a clear goal for what we need to do to succeed. So I don't mind that there are tests, I don't mind that they make the school accountable. I think, obviously, it could be done a lot better. It could be done more equitably, especially for urban schools, but I don't mind it on principle. I don't think that you're necessarily a bad teacher focusing on the test, but if you do that to the exclusion of other principles that's a bad thing of course. (interview, 6/10/12)

Sarah often brought up her students' test scores so I knew for her this was one way she measured her ability as a teacher. Additionally, Sarah was supportive of CCS, but also recognized limitations of implementation:

> I think the Common Core is great about having students' work on metacognition and think about what they are thinking and explain their thinking, not just being passive. And it encourages students to take more active roles in their learning; I think that's awesome. I think that the big change in testing in conduction with the high-stakes testing is putting undue stress on teachers and it's going to skew achievement results. I understand that there are growing pains while we adjust and while we change, but it's gotten to the point that the stress on teachers is no longer productive. It's hindering our growth as educators, as a field. I think that the English standards are poorly written. The math standards are much better than the ELA standards. (interview, 10/29/13)

As I expressed to Sarah on number occasions, I found the idea that the CCS helped students to explain their thinking insulting. I did not believe that *the standards* are what allowed students to develop metacognition or critical thinking. That is just good teaching. One of the philosophical orientations typically taught in teacher education programs is constructivism. This is a central part of CRE as Villegas and Lucas (2002) explain:

> A constructivist view is respectful of student diversity and recognizes the central role that individual and cultural differences play in the learning process. By giving students an active role in their own learning and by expecting them to learn for understanding, a constructivist education can also cultivate the sense of agency and the critical thinking skills they will need later in life to participate responsibly in the democratic process. (p. xv)

To me, the skills Sarah referred to from the CCS was just a part of good teaching, and in my opinion, that included teaching as constructively as possible in the classroom. Whether or not I agreed with Sarah's support of the CCS, once I came to terms with the fact that testing was just a part of the everyday culture of school (much of what Sarah had no control over) I began to focus on what she did have control over. Sarah read Ladson-Billings's (1994) *The Dreamkeepers* and we talked about the ways she could be more culturally relevant. She particularly related to Ladson-Billings emphasis on high expectations and community building and felt this was an area where she could have impact (interview, 2/23/13).

Sarah understood my strong opposition to testing stemmed from some of my own experiences. I shared with her my story working in the Atlanta Public Schools and the cheating scandals that had occurred there. I do not think we ever came to an agreement about the standards and accountability movement, but we understood each others' views and respected them. Sarah also taught me about holding high expectations for students

and how this looks differently for each teacher. Similar to what Ladson-Billings (1994) found with one of the teacher's in her study, to an outsider Sarah sometimes appeared to be "too regimented" or "too authoritarian" (p. 98). After interviewing Sarah, I knew much of the time she did not want to "set students up for failure" and it was through her consistency and high expectations that she was able to do this. She was meeting her students' needs the best way she knew how because *she knew her students*. I acknowledged the fact that I was an outsider coming into her classroom and so talking to her before making assumptions became an important part of the research process for me.

The differing views that Sarah and I had regarding teaching for social justice were most likely influenced by our prior experiences and the contexts in which we taught. I wanted to see Sarah provide a little more *push-back* against the standards and accountability movement, but I also acknowledged that there were many requirements put on her that could cost her her job if she did not fulfill them. Regardless of this, Sarah's prior K-12 education and teacher education training were clearly factors influencing her decisions in the classroom. While Sarah was not always as able to be as CRE focused as I would have hoped, she participated in this study with a goal to improve her practice, specifically in terms of teaching for social justice. She welcomed critique from me and asked for my guidance (whether she took it or not, she considered my advice). She reflected back on readings of Paulo Freire (1970), Lisa Delpit (2006), and bell hooks (1994). She asked for additional readings from me to help her deal with challenging situations. I fully consider her to be a critical and reflective practitioner and I

believe that as she continues in her career, she might become less and less focused on testing and have more confidence in her abilities to practice social justice in a high-stakes testing environment. I plan to continue interviewing Sarah over the next several years (for as long as she will let me) as part of my future research agenda.

In the final chapter of this dissertation, I will return to my research questions summarizing the findings from this study. I will discuss the current landscape of teacher education and return focus to the problem situating this study: a need for social justice teacher education. I will also provide implications for teacher education, teacher educators, and educational leaders.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study examined the understandings and experiences that four intern teachers[51] had of social justice while participating in a critical social justice focus group (CSJFG). This study also examined how culturally relevant practices manifested for one participant's, Sarah White, classroom after she graduated from a teacher education program while simultaneously participating in the CSJFG during her internship year. In this chapter, I begin by providing an overview of the major findings in this study. To set the stage for implications and recommendations, this chapter will discuss the competing agendas within the landscape of teacher education. I will then discuss the implications of this study's findings for teacher education programs, specifically those with a social justice orientation. I will also tie this discussion to implications for teacher educators and educational leaders alike. I will conclude this chapter with suggestions for future research.

Overview of the Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the understandings of social justice four intern teachers experienced while participating in a CSJFG. This study addressed the specific research questions:

[51] Throughout this chapter I will use the terms pre-service teachers, intern teachers, future teachers, and teacher candidates interchangeably. When I use these terms I am referring to individuals enrolled in a teacher education program before they are graduated, full-time first year teachers in a classroom.

(1) What are four intern teachers' understandings and experiences while participating in a critical social justice focus group?

(2) After participating in a critical social justice teacher focus group during teacher education, what is one teacher's understandings of social justice, particularly related to culturally relevant education?

(3) How do these understandings play out in practice? That is, what does one novice teacher *actually do* in classroom contexts? What obstacles might she face?

(4) What are the implications of these findings for teacher education programs in the U.S.?

I addressed findings for the first research question in chapter four. During our CSJFG meetings I recorded and transcribed our conversations. I used thematic analysis of the transcripts to produce major themes summarizing the intern teachers' understandings and experiences. The analysis concluded: to enact social justice one must possess a *critical awareness* that included critical reflection, fighting deficit thinking, and empowering both students and oneself as an educator. I also found that the interns believed a central component of teaching for social justice meant embracing pedagogy that is, "*about the students*." They believed teachers should be advocates for their students, teachers had to work to meet their students' needs, and sometimes this required small acts of resistance. Finally, I found that the interns' understandings of social justice also included structural obstacles that they could not always overcome. This included larger systemic issues such

as location and access as well as the defeat they felt when they tried to enact their views of social justice.

Research questions two and three were addressed in chapter five. Using the literature of culturally relevant education (CRE) as a framework, I found Sarah White, the CSJFG participant whom I was able to observe teaching in practice, believed creating a caring classroom community was an essential component of teaching for social justice. I also found she believed in holding high expectations, both academically and behaviorally for her students. She promoted cultural competence in her classroom by connecting lessons to her students' interests and honoring diverse cultural backgrounds when she found flexibility in her curriculum. Finally, she held herself responsible for informing her own sociopolitical awareness through her own teacher education as well as continuing professional development in her early years of teaching. There were also several barriers that served as obstacles to implementing CRE in her classroom. These included school and county wide requirements that made it challenging to cater the curriculum to meet students' needs as well as frequent standardized testing that took up time and prevented flexibility for Sarah. Because of the frequent requirements imposed on her, Sarah often felt she did not have the time to do some of the things she believed would best benefit her students. Finally, Sarah felt she was ill prepared for certain aspects of teaching, specifically regarding working with English Language Learners (ELLs).

Grant and Agosto (2008) confirm there is a limited amount of research that connects what teachers learn in teacher education into their practice or their impact on

student achievement. This gap in the literature regarding teacher education specifically in regards to social justice makes it difficult to defend its necessity. While this study did not directly report student achievement (nor did it intend to given the different aims of social justice compared to traditional definitions of achievement), the types of courses intern teachers took, the critical conversations they had during our focus groups, as well as the examples of successes and challenges they faced during their internship year are documented.

There is critique about the overabundance of small-scale, narrowly focused, qualitative studies that do not necessarily produce outcomes that can be generalized supporting the need for social justice teacher education (Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Sleeter, 2012). This study does not overcome the critique of being a small-scale study, however evidence from this study suggests having critical dialogues regarding social justice while in teacher education *could* impact teachers' understandings and reflexivity while teaching. While this might not address the systematic need to understand teacher education programmatically (Sleeter, 2014; Zeichner, 2005, 2011), it does provide hope for teacher educators and other advocates for social justice, that there are ways to provide professional development for new teachers in restrictive school environments. Before I am able to move on to implications and recommendations, I must address the context of teacher education so the challenges and struggles many teachers have implementing social justice in schools are better understood.

The Current Landscape of Teacher Education

As argued in chapter one, I believe social justice should be a part of teacher education and that courses and critical conversations pertaining to social justice issues while in teacher education could aid in the development of CRE. Likewise, scholars have argued that if teacher education programs equip future teachers with the ability to think critically about schooling and learn how to employ equitable practices in their classrooms, then in turn, historically underserved students (HUS) will benefit and achievement gaps will decrease (Banks, 1995; Butin, 2004/2005; Cochran-Smith, 2004a; Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; Gay, 2010; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994/2006b; Liggett, 2011; Miller, 2010; Sleeter, 2009/2012). However, despite the research documented concerning the effectiveness of employing CRE in classrooms (see chapter two for a substantial literature review); teacher education programs have *limited* coursework that allows spaces for teachers to develop critical pedagogies, such as multicultural education and social foundations in education (Butin, 2005; Neumann, 2010; Tozer & Miretzky, 2005).

Teacher education programs (and teachers themselves) should not be seen in isolation from the increasingly complex competing agendas shaping educational policy, and in turn teacher education. Rather than simply blaming teacher education programs for the marginalization of social justice coursework, or teachers for their conformity into a school system, I wish to discuss the *bigger picture* that is shaping teacher education discourse and the images portrayed of teachers. I will begin by discussing several

competing agendas seen in teacher education since the 1990s. I will then move into some of the attacks on traditional teacher education programs and more specifically attacks on social justice as a necessary part of teacher education. Finally I will conclude with some of the problems teachers face in schools due to increasingly regulated educational policies pouring into the public school settings.

Teacher Education Policy in the 21st Century

From the late 1990s into the 21st century several political movements impacted teacher education research, policy, and practice including the standards and accountability movement, initiatives to privatize education, pressures for market-based education reform, and an emergence of educational access as a civil rights issue (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005, 2011; Zeichner, 2010).[52] During the time of these political movements, it was widely agreed upon that "teacher quality" was an essential ingredient to student success; however definitions about what "teacher quality" was differed drastically (and still do today) (Floden, 2005). Widespread concern over the importance of teachers along with a concern over "low-standards" held in public schools brought critique to teacher education as a cause of the *problem* of achievement gaps and international underperformance (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005, 2011; Kumashiro, 2010).

[52] The purpose of this section is to provide background information on teacher education policy and not to give an in depth analysis. For are more complete background see Cochran-Smith & Fries (2005) or Grant & Gibson (2011)

Debates regarding teacher education reform were centered at the forefront of educational policy in the early 2000s yet again.[53]

Competing agendas.

There are several scholars who have repeatedly written about teacher education reform over the last decade and have informed my understandings of teacher education policy today (e. g. Cochran-Smith &Fries, 2005, 2011; Sleeter, 2008b, 2009, 2012, 2014; Zeichner, 2005, 2010, 2011). In this section, I will briefly highlight these scholars' main arguments to better understand the competing arguments seen in teacher education discourse at present.

Cochran-Smith and Fries (2005) highlight four major political agendas impacting teacher education reform. While these agendas are competing with one another in many ways, they are not mutually exclusive and often overlap (p. 44).

- The *professionalism* agenda aims to making teaching a research based profession and that all teachers are fully certified to implement professional standards (i.e. NCATE).
- The *deregulation* agenda aims to eliminate entry requirements into the teaching profession and allow for alternative routes to certification [i.e. American Board for the Certification of Teaching (ABCTE) and Teach for America (TFA)].

[53] This is not to suggest that critique of teacher education was something new that happened in the 1990s. In the U.S. particularly critique over professional education coursework and experiences has been critiqued for over five decades (Cochran-Smith, 2004b).

- The *regulation* agenda supports increased involvement from both the federal and state governments regarding regulations (i.e. content of course in teacher education) in relation to outcomes (i.e. teacher entry examinations).
- Finally the *social justice* agenda has conceptualized teaching in terms of social justice as a means to end inequitable practices (i.e. tracking or students of color overrepresented in special education) in public schools.

More recently, Cochran-Smith and Fries (2011) conducted an in-depth policy analysis of all the policy statements, press release reports, research studies, new articles, position statements, editorials, transcripts of debates, testimonies, speeches, and journal articles of over 225 sources between 2005 and 2009. They identified five major discourses discussed in teacher education related to larger worldviews and aims of education.

- *The teacher quality gap and educational inequality* discourse follows such logic: Research has shown teachers are the most important factor in student achievement; schools with HUS are more likely to have teachers who are inexperienced; these inexperienced teachers exacerbate achievement gaps; thus direct action impacting "teacher quality" will address educational opportunities. Underlying this discourse is a distributive notion of justice (North, 2006), that includes a body of modern "civil rights activists" such as Al Sharpton, Katie Haycok, and Michelle Rhee. Cochran-Smith and Fries (2011) contend it is important to note there is little recognition to larger societal inequalities (Anyon,

2005) and that diversity becomes something to be "overcome or neutralized" (pp. 344-46).

- *The teacher quality and the market* discourse follows such logic: teachers are the most important part of student success; the current system of preparing teachers is not producing "highly-qualified" teachers; the "invisible hand" of the market cannot fix this problem of producing failing teachers; therefore teacher education must be deregulated to attract new and highly talented individuals to teach. Cochran-Smith and Fries (2011) contend, "implicit in the market discourse is a notion of educational progress as a matter of private self-interest rather than public trust and a firm belief in 'letting the market decided' who gets access to well-qualified and effective teachers" (pp. 346-47) (this is similar to the neoliberal argument made by Zeichner and Sleeter below).
- *The teacher quality in a globalized society* discourse follows such logic: we live in a global society that requires high standards for problem solving and decision making; the U.S. economy depends on the country's educational achievements; international comparisons indicate teachers are not meeting world-class standards (particularly in math and science); therefore we need new, rigorous standards and assessments, a more effective teaching force including evidence-based teacher education. This discourse is the foundation for the Obama administration's reauthorization of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (2009), or better known as the Race to the Top Initiative (RTT) that has produced the Common

Core Standards (CCS) and the Partnership for Assessment for the Readiness of College and Careers (PARCC). This discourse also reflects colleges of education as part of the problem in national economic decline (pp. 347-49).

- *The teacher quality and professional teacher education* discourse follows such logic: teachers are central to student success, especially when professionally prepared; current policies and practices disproportionately place the least well-prepared teachers in the schools with the highest needs; these placements exacerbate achievement gaps; revisions in professional and governmental policy are needed to redress inequalities, especially in the distribution of teacher quality. This discourse suggests hope in improving teacher preparation as part of the solution to the achievement gap and global competition (pp. 349-51).
- Finally, *The teacher quality and social justice* discourse follows such logic: there are significant disparities in educational resources; long-standing policies and systemic inequalities perpetuate achievements gaps; inequities in distribution and lack of acknowledgement of HUS knowledge and cultural background exclude them from the educational discourse; therefore teachers must enhance students' life changes by building on their resources and challenging school and societal inequalities (pp. 351-53).

Cochran-Smith and Fries' (2011) analysis makes it clear that debates regarding "teacher quality" and teacher education are inherently political. They involve values and

ideologies about the priorities of the U.S., teaching and learning, curriculum, diversity, and accountability. While Cochran-Smith and Fries' (2005, 2011) focus on the framing of "teaching quality," Zeichner (2010) and Sleeter (2008b, 2009, 2014) shift the conversation to neoliberal and neoconversative forces at play in teacher education.

Zeichner (2010) asserts the recent trends seen in U.S. teacher education today are tied to larger global neo-liberal forces. These forces are tied to ideas supporting privatization, deregulation, and competition between private versus public good.

- The *commoditization of teacher education* is opening up the door to several alternatives to traditional teacher education (similar to Cochran-Smith and Fries; deregulation agenda). This is a bi-partisan effort actively encouraging states to loosen their teaching certification requirements through programs such as the ABCTE and TFA. Zeichner (2010) explains, "what is important to note about the alternatives being encouraged is that they are often closely linked with a technicist view of the role of teachers and with efforts to erode teachers' autonomy and collegial authority" (p. 1545).[54] In terms of social justice, this movement encourages "good enough teachers" to teach HUS by obediently following scripted curricula and raising standardized tests scores.
- Zeichner (2010) also reports *increased and often excessive accountability demands* placed on teacher education programs by states and national accrediting

[54] While often times one might attribute "professionalism" to greater autonomy and control, it was been argued that the professionalism movement in education "reflects the reality of greater external controls and surveillances that comes with organizational professionalism" (Zeichner, 2010, p. 1546). For more on this see Evetts (2009).

bodies. While Zeichner asserts there is nothing wrong with having teacher educators determine that candidates are prepared to meet agreed-upon standards, the problem lies when the "level of details teacher educators are required to produce for evaluators begins to interfere with the accomplishment of the goals of teacher educators and is loosely if at all connected to actual program quality" (pp. 1547-48). Teacher educators are at risk of becoming as regulated as classroom teachers have become.

- The final trend Zeichner (2010) reports is the *attacks on multicultural education*. He explains, "these attacks equate a focus on social justice and multiculturalism with a lowering of academic standards and blame university teacher educators for the continued problems in educating public school students who are increasingly poor and of color" (p. 1549). These attacks divert attention away from the real problems impacting public education: underfunding of public schools, lack of affordable housing and transportation, healthcare, and jobs that pay to support a decent standard of living.

Similar to Zeichner's (2010) analysis, Sleeter (2008a, 2009) contends teacher education reforms are undermining equity and democracy by restructuring education around corporate needs. She borrows from Harvey's (2005) definition of neoliberalism to suggest liberal policies promote opportunity and competition by encouraging private enterprises (i.e. charter schools). She explains that neoliberals have joined with

conservatives to transform education through market based competition, choice, and privatization. As a result, teacher education programs are (1) steering away from social justice preparation in order to prepare "teachers as technicians to raise test scores," (2) moving away from professional knowledge and teacher quality to become more content focused, and (3) become shorter and/or by-passed altogether due to alternative methods of certification (Sleeter, 2009, p. 612). In the next section, I will discuss some of the specific attacks on teacher education, especially in regard to social justice.

Attacks on Teacher Education

While some of these competing agendas suggest ways of improving teacher education, others marginalize the importance of teacher education. Because of this, some scholars believe teacher education is "under siege" (Sleeter, 2008b, p. 1947), that it has become "commonsensical" to view teacher education as irrelevant (Kumashiro, 2010, p. 56), and that it is under "outright vicious attack" (Villegas, 2007, p. 370). Darling-Hammond (2010) expressed her hope in the Obama administrations' commitment to improving teaching and learning, but also warned that this agenda could be "hijacked or waylaid" into the "slippery slope we have been on as a nation since the 1980s" (p. 35).

In one example, shortly after the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) Rodney Paige, then Secretary of Education, deemed teacher preparation was of little importance to the task of producing "highly-qualified" teachers. He argued in his first report to Congress (2004) that the current teacher certification system produced poorly qualified individuals and created barriers for those more talented. He advocated for

alternatives for college and university-based teacher education, which quickly became an impetus for the deregulation agenda mentioned above. Since then others have questioned whether pre-service teacher education in colleges and universities should continue (Duncan, 2009; Hartocolis, 2005; Levine, 2006).

Outside of policy, critique has also been seen in the news media. In another example, Peter Schrag (1999), a California journalist, critiqued several diversity courses seen in teacher education programs in his periodical *University Business.* He claimed that the "heavy dose" of multiculturalism is what is wrong with teacher education. Critics of social justice types of course in teacher education assert there is a preoccupation with multicultural issues that divert attention away from high standards and rigorous coursework (Kanstoroom & Finn, 1999). It is also suggested that social justice work is poorly aligned with rigorous content-area instruction (Wasley, 2006; Will, 2006; Wilson, 2005). They also claim the social justice agenda is a form of "political indoctrination" from those on the left (Villegas, 2007).

Additionally, philanthropic organizations such as the Gates Foundation and the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), created by the Thomas B. Ford Foundation in 2000, have been highly critical of our nation's schools of education. This sentiment is not isolated to private organizations, but rather has spread to the political debates in several states over the past few years. For example, in 2013, Colorado Senator Bennett re-introduced the Growing Excellent Achievement Training Academics for Teachers and Principals (GREAT) Act to reshape teacher preparation by virtually

removing programs from university settings and establishing teacher and principal academics (Cody, 2013). At the writing of this dissertation, the bill has not passed.

More recently, in 2013 NCTQ released its first national ratings of teacher preparation programs. Only four institutions rated (out of 1200 programs that were reviewed) received full credit, or four stars. Critics have been leery of NCTQ's process of analysis which was based solely on websites and course syllabi, but that has not stopped NCTQ from promoting a particular vision for what teacher education *should* look like. Pallas (2013) reports:

> No one really knows if meeting NCTQ's standards results in better teachers—but that hasn't slowed down the organization a whit. If an ed school had a mix of goals and strategies different than NCTQ's and chose not to cooperate in this institutional witch hunt, well, they must have something to hide.

However, we must ask ourselves, what is it that NCTQ finds most important to produce effective teachers? One thing is clear: social justice is not one of the qualities. While the standards used to rate schools of education did address English language learners (ELL) and special education, there was no mention of preparing teachers to become culturally relevant practitioners. Rather, the focus of the standards was on such things such as becoming proficient in CCS, content area, and the instructional role of standardized tests in schools (NCTQ Standards for Rating the Nation's Schools, 2013).

It is clear that given the competing discourses in teacher education, we have moved away from a focus on social justice and toward a "technician" role for teachers to stick to their prescribed curriculum and prepare students for mandatory high-stakes testing (Kumashiro, 2010; Zeichner, 2011). It is important to acknowledge these competing agendas when conducting research on teachers' work because teachers do not work in isolation from these forces. While the findings in this study still suggest hope for me as a teacher educator to prepare future teachers to be critical practitioners, I also must acknowledge the many barriers teachers are facing when trying to teach for social justice in public schools today. In the next section, I will briefly discuss the educational climate seen in public schools and share some of the similarities of this study to other studies conducted by teacher educators.

Educational Climate in Public Schools

Many pragmatic barriers prevent teachers from developing agency in public schools today. As evidenced in this study, the intern teachers believed a part of understanding social justice is becoming a change agent so that they could work toward change, however, at times they often felt defeated in their ability to do so given other structural barriers in schools. Additionally, because of the many institutional requirements found in public schools, many pre-service teachers and novice teachers alike worry about their teaching evaluations, keeping their jobs, and what their colleagues think of them (Margolis, 2006; Papola, 2012).

As I described in chapter five, I was bothered by Sarah White's support of CCS and standardized testing in general. However, the standards and accountability movement have been a part of Sarah's entire preparation and became "normalized" for her. Other researchers have found similar results in their dissertation studies. Morrison (2013) observed three pre-service teachers in a traditional teacher education program as they transitioned into their student teaching internships for five months. She found they relied heavily on prescriptive curricula and state-adopted textbooks as well as accepted testing and accountability as "normal" with very little critique.

Similarly, Papola (2012) found that the six teachers in her study relied on outside factors for planning and instruction with a particular emphasis on the CCS. She uses the term "policy cascades" to describe the process that occurs in schooling as a result of educational policies. She explains, "[Policy cascades] occur when teachers, after receiving information from other groups and individuals above them in the hierarchical structure of a schooling system, have their own professional knowledge base and beliefs eroded, and instead adopt the actions and ideology demonstrated by other individuals" (p. 153). Even if teachers are willing to implement social justice in their classrooms, some form of "policy cascades" might overshadow their own professional knowledge and beliefs without teachers even realizing this. I felt this was happening with Sarah White at times when discussions on student achievement were equated back to benchmark testing or other exams.

Given this regulated educational climate, pre-service and novice teachers are

more inclined to yield their voices rather than speak out against unjust practices they might witness in schools. It becomes more difficult to promote teaching for social justice because teachers are fearful to speak up or challenge the status quo and they are afraid of losing their jobs (Liggett, 2011; Margolis, 2006; Papola, 2012).[55] I understand how the current educational climate impacts the ability of teachers to practice social justice in their classroom as well as the types of courses teacher education programs are able to offer. However, evidence from this study addresses small spaces where teachers and teacher educators can make change and do have agency. These understandings will inform the implications and recommendations I have for teacher education programs, teacher educators, and educational leaders.

Implications and Recommendations

Many scholars agree that teacher education is in need of change, but not elimination (Cochran-Smith et al, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Kumashiro, 2010; Sleeter, 2008b, 2014). Sleeter (2008b) asserts:

> While internal criticisms can serve to strengthen teacher education, external assaults that have their origins in global economic and political restructuring aim not only to deprofessionalize teaching by devaluing professional preparation of

[55] Fear of speaking out against the status quo is not new for teachers. Other historical studies have documented the conformity in teachers' work. For example see Quantz (1985) or Rousmaniere (1997).

> teachers, but also to undermine equity and democracy by restructuring education around corporate needs. (p. 1947)

As evidenced above, some external critiques from politicians, private organizations, such as NCTQ, have problematized teacher education as a cause of continued achievement gaps and economic decline. In agreement with Sleeter (2014) I believe it is the role of teacher educators to conduct research and suggest improvements from *within* teacher education to better prepare teachers to transition into the classrooms and aid in narrowing educational disparities. With this in mind, I will use the findings from this dissertation study, as well as my own understandings of the competing forces impacting teacher education to suggest implications for teacher education, teacher educators, and educational leaders in the following sections.

The final research question: *What are the implications of these findings for teacher education programs in the U.S.* is the last research question that will be addressed in the remainder of this chapter. Throughout this discussion, the findings from research questions one through three will provide additional insight as well as my own experiences as both a K-12 teacher and teacher educator.

Implications for Teacher Education Programs

This study provides several implications for teacher education programs in the U.S. While the aims and scope of this study were not to evaluate a teacher preparation program or to claim a direct correlation between participating in a CSJFG and the

development of teacher pedagogy, it is suggested that the intern teachers' exposure to literature regarding social justice *did influence* or at least supported their understandings' and experiences. Additionally, Sarah White was the only teacher I was able to observe into the classroom. I successfully documented evidence of her implementation of some tenets of CRE (care and community, high expectations, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness as a teacher; see chapter five) despite other structural obstacles impeding her practice. I believe we have to focus on these small examples of success so that we continue to have hope in the possibilities of teacher education in the future.

In the next section, the results of this study provide some implications for faculty in teacher education programs. Specifically, I support a need to recruit a more diverse pool of teacher candidates in teacher education and to intentionally pair teacher candidates with cooperating teachers[56] who support social justice in their own classrooms.

Teacher candidate recruitment and selection.

Evidence from this study suggests the diversification of candidates in a teacher education program would benefit the candidates' intercultural experiences. Findings from my study are consistent with the findings from Garmon's (2004, 2005) research regarding

[56] "Cooperating" or "mentor" teachers refers to practicing teachers in school districts who agree to have a student teacher, pre-service teacher, or intern teacher either shadow their teaching or become active participants in instruction. These partnerships are typically formed between university-based teacher educators and coordinators within a school district.

pre-service teachers' attitudes and beliefs while enrolled in social justice coursework. Garmon's research contends that pre-service teachers' prior life experiences can greatly influence how they respond to social justice courses. He found changes in beliefs are comprised of three main types of experiences: *intercultural, educational,* and *support-based.*[57] All of the participants in my study had prior intercultural, educational, or support-based experiences. While I do not claim that this study made a "change" in the intern teachers' beliefs (I did not measure any beliefs from the beginning of this study), I do suggest the literature on social justice influenced or supported their already existing understandings.

For Jack, his experiences were influenced through his ethnically and racially diverse high school where he was numerically a minority (intercultural), and the coursework in cultural studies that introduced him to new concepts (educational). For Sarah, it was through her experience in an ethnically and racially diverse primary school (intercultural), her experiences in her high school that promoted critical dialogue (educational), as well as her teacher education program that promoted critical pedagogy that she was influenced (educational). In addition to this, she also gained experience from the one-on-one mentorship relationship that she developed with me (support-based). For Natalie, her experience growing up in poverty and being labeled as an "at-risk" child as

[57] Garmon's (2004/2005) research is discussed in more depth in chapter one. Intercultural experiences refer to interactions with groups different from one's own. Educational experiences refer to information and experiences supported by teacher educators during pre-service teachers' training. Support-based experiences refer to the mentorship and support systems developed during teacher education.

well as her work with The Graduation Project (TGP) made her cognizant of societal inequalities (intercultural). Kayla grew up in a traditionally segregated city that still deals with integration issues to this day, as well as had the experience of attending a predominantly White institution (PWI) where she was in the numerical minority of African American teacher candidates (intercultural). Additionally, all of the intern teachers were exposed to support-based experiences while participating in the CSJFG with each other as well as from me.

Teacher candidate recruitment.

This study adds to the literature regarding the influence of social justice coursework on pre-service teachers' understandings. Garmon's (2004, 2005) research, along with my findings aid in making the case for why recruiting different demographics of teachers is more important than ever. In agreement with Duncan-Andrade, (2011), if teacher education is going to do its part in adhering to the changing demographics of students in the U.S. then we must address teacher candidate recruitment.

Each of the participants in this study had prior intercultural experiences that impacted their understandings of social justice. Duncan-Andrade (2008, 2011) advocates teacher candidate recruitment is a process that must start early on. He has successfully used high schools as spaces to recruit high school students of color into teaching. He also suggests visiting students as early as elementary school to form relationships with parents and communities, encouraging matriculation into teaching. Faculty members in teacher education programs need to more aggressively recruit teacher candidates of color and

difference (including religion, ethnicity and sexual orientation) because we know these sorts of intercultural experiences enhance teacher candidates' abilities to be receptive to social justice coursework. Even if the majority of the "White, middle-class, monolingual, heterosexual, female" teachers had not been exposed to those different from themselves in their past experiences (which research has confirmed), having other teacher candidates different from themselves can at least enhance their intercultural experiences that provide critical spaces for dialogue while in teacher education. Thus, we should be encouraging teacher candidates of color and difference by connecting with communities as early as elementary school. Perhaps setting up a mentoring program between an elementary school and a university or a student organization such as Future Teachers of America in elementary school would be a start.

Attracting teacher candidates of color or difference may remain challenging depending on the location of the institution. Faculty members need to be aware of this and actively seek spaces for these teacher candidates to feel supported and welcomed. For example, a teacher candidate who identifies as gay might not feel comfortable attending a university set in a smaller conservative town adhering to fundamentalist religious beliefs. Faculty members can work to support a Gay-Straight Student Alliance/Ally Organization on campus to demonstrate support for the LGBTQ community. This is just one example of how faculty might be proactive in recruiting students of difference.

Teacher candidate selection.

Garmon's (2004, 2005) research has found that the ways in which individuals respond to social justice courses often depends on a number of personal variables and experiences, which could help to explain the inconsistent findings regarding research on the effectiveness of social justice coursework in teacher education programs. Garmon reveals that part of changing dispositions toward affirmation of student diversity includes *openness*, *self-reflexivity*, and *a commitment to social justice.* The participants in my study reflected each of these personal variables. Their commitment to social justice was evident through their participation in an *optional* focus group. They demonstrated openness and self-reflexivity throughout our meetings and one of the sub-findings in this study was directly related to how practicing social justice required critical reflection. This suggests that teacher preparation programs with a commitment to social justice should be recruiting teacher candidates possessing such dispositions as openness and self-reflexivity.

Teacher education programs typically select candidates using quantitative measures such as college entrance test scores (i.e. SAT or GRE) and grade point average, and some also use qualitative measures such as essays and/or interview questions to determine a candidate's attitudes and dispositions (Tenore, Dunn, Laughter, & Milner, 2010). Faculty in programs with a commitment to social justice should conduct qualitative interviews to better understand candidates applying to their teacher education programs. Many teacher educators and researchers regard a disposition toward social

justice as an important component in the teacher preparation process (Cochran-Smith, et al., 2009; Hill-Jackson & Lewis, 2010; Murray, 2007; Villegas, 2007). Qualitative interviews are perhaps the best way for teacher education faculty to assess a teacher candidates' commitment to social justice. The interview process is timely and more labor intensive for the faculty involved; however it has been done successfully at some institutions, which could provide examples for how other institutions might incorporate interviews into their teacher candidate selection process in the future (Tenore et al., 2010; Villegas, 2007).

Critics argue that attempting to assess teacher dispositions in a teacher education program imposes a professor's ideological views on students. However, in agreement with Villegas (2007), whether we like it or not, schools and teachers *do* play a significant role in the stratification of our society. While teaching for social justice cannot be reduced to a single disposition, teachers need a broad range of knowledge and skills, deep understanding of pedagogical concepts, and varied instructional strategies to build on strengths of HUS (Villegas, 2007). If teacher educators wish for courses in multicultural education, social foundations in education, and social justice in education to have impact on students, teacher candidates must have a willingness to self-reflect and hold a commitment to social justice. A teacher candidate's ability to do that might be screened for in a qualitative interview.

Each individual's definition of social justice might vary slightly depending on life experiences and personal belief systems. However, at the heart of social justice is a belief

in supporting access for all students to learn. Also, building on students' cultural backgrounds to promote respect and tolerance in the classroom is essential. One does not have to agree on every concept argued in social justice literature; in fact many scholars do not agree either, however, a candidate should have the ability to hear other voices and embrace the value of perspective taking. Finally, social justice promotes teachers serving as advocates for students (McDonald & Zeichner, 2009; Sleeter, 2009). If a teacher candidate does not believe that these concepts are an important part of teaching, perhaps that individual is not the most desirable candidate in a SJTE program. I would not want a person without these qualities teaching my child. We have a *moral obligation* to support all students and I argue this obligation requires that teacher education diversify its candidates and recruit candidates with the dispositions toward social justice (Ladson-Billings, 2006b).

Cooperating/Mentor teachers.

Another implication that became apparent throughout this study involved interns' placement with cooperating teachers. Research shows that cooperating teachers hold influence over their intern/student teachers' knowledge (McIntyre, Byrd, & Foxx, 1996; Téllez, 2008). Téllez (2008) reports educational research shows that cooperating teachers do not typically focus on social justice when working with interns and that beginning teachers begin to become skeptical about what they are learning in teacher education and how it applies to the classroom. Therefore, she decided to study cooperating teachers at a school where multicultural education and equity pedagogy were a priority in the school's

professional development community. The study found that the student teachers were able to connect schooling to the larger goals of equity pedagogy with the mentorship of their cooperating teachers.

In my study, the interns shared experiences confirming Téllez's (2008) findings. For example, when Jack tried to promote discussions of homosexuality in his classroom, his cooperating teacher told him he needed to, "cool the homosexuality stuff down a little bit" (J_fg314p6). While Jack thought it was important to include information on gay historical figures, his cooperating teacher did not share this same commitment. Natalie also faced challenges discussing homosexuality in her English literature classroom when her cooperating teacher was present. Instead, she would wait for her mentor to leave the room before bringing up such topics.

The implications from this study reveal a need for faculty in teacher education programs claiming a commitment to social justice to work intentionally to place intern/student teachers in settings with cooperating teachers who embrace similar pedagogical values and aims. This might be done through nominations from school principals or other teachers, or maybe through a survey that can assess a candidates' compatibility with a potential cooperating teacher. I realize this is a difficult implication to bring to fruition as I have witnessed the challenges associated with not only pairing intern and cooperating teachers who embrace social justice pedagogies, but also challenges to make placements for interns/cooperating teachers that are compatible

personality-wise. Nevertheless, it is a goal faculty in teacher education programs should aspire to meet that will benefit HUS students in the end.

Implications for Teacher Educators

This study also has specific implications for teacher educators. My experiences as a teacher educator and researcher throughout this study have informed my analysis and the suggestions that I have for teacher educators in connection to the literature.

Critical dialogue is necessary in teacher preparation.

Evidence from this study suggests that teacher candidates might benefit from participation in critical dialogues focused on social justice topics. As discussed above, there are many political forces impacting the ability of teacher education programs to include spaces for critical reflection. However, I believe the findings in this study are promising for additional ways teacher educators can *creatively* find spaces for dialogue and reflection.

For me, I found that space by holding focus groups outside of required coursework. It is important to acknowledge the additional time and preparation this took given it was not a part of requirements in my doctoral coursework or for my graduate teaching assistantship. I spent time recruiting students, reflecting on the most influential readings to share, setting up our meetings, as well as facilitating the actual meetings. In the end all this hard work was beneficial to me because it became a dissertation. However, this would be a time-consuming task to ask of teacher educators who already have a long list of duties and responsibilities associated with their jobs.

My intention is for this study's findings to confirm the need for teacher educators to incorporate issues of social justice within their courses. As I went through this study I made a commitment to integrate social justice topics in the Applied Educational Psychology course that I teach. For example, when teaching about intelligence, I included readings on "stereotype threat" and when teaching about classroom management I presented alternative information about "restorative justice." Other researchers have also found ways to incorporate social justice concepts in traditional teacher education courses or through other forms of professional development and research (Durden & Truscott, 2013; Laughter, 2011; Ullucci, 2012).

These positive examples should encourage teacher education faculty to promote awareness among teacher educators and provide training for ways to effectively integrate social justice topics in other mandatory coursework. Wiedeman (2002) explains:

> [W]hile "taking a stand on social justice'' is critical to transforming the preparation of teachers in light of the changing student population, it is even more important to assure that such a stand becomes ubiquitous and pragmatically accessible within teacher education curricula. That is, infusing content related to diversity and social justice throughout the teacher education curriculum requires that candidates have multiple, recurring opportunities to examine issues related to diversity, teaching, and learning within diverse communities of students. (p. 206)

In agreement with Wiedeman, teacher educators must take the commitment to preparing future teachers for diverse student populations seriously. For future teachers to be able to place equity and social justice at the forefront of their teaching pedagogies, they must present opportunities to challenge racism and other forms of bias through their teacher education coursework (Wiedeman, 2002). This requires an active effort of the part of teacher educators to advocate for social justice topics as a part of coursework requirements and/or embracing a serious commitment to infusing social justice concepts across the required criteria.

Teacher educators practicing what they preach.

Evidence from this study confirmed the importance of teacher educators' needing to effectively facilitate controversial conversations. Such conversations can often be difficult and ineffective if all the participants are not actively listening and valuing each other's perspectives. Cochran-Smith (2004a) advocates for the, **"**intellectual and organizational contexts that support the ongoing learning of teacher educators" (p. 13). In my own experience, the first time I promoted critical dialogue in the higher education classroom, I felt ineffective and powerless. When future teachers made stereotypical comments that reinforced deficit-based ideologies, I did not know how to redirect the conversation. Over time, as I talked with colleagues and turned to the literature for answers, I became better at redirecting conversations and pointing out contradictions to my students without being accusatory. My teaching evaluations reflected my students' comfort in the classroom regarding controversial conversations.

One thing that I learned as a teacher educator, is that we must be explicit when discussing social justice issues such as race or homosexuality (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Mayo, 2014; Milner, 2007; Tatum, 2007). Not only do teacher educators need to be explicit about these conversations, they also need to model them for their students (Conklin, 2008; Ullucci, 2012). For example, when discussing derogatory language with interns during one CSJFG meeting, I shared an example of how when I was teaching elementary school I reinforced a negative assumption of homosexuality when I scolded a boy student for calling a girl student a "lesbian". I reflected upon how I should have addressed the derogatory use of the word instead of the fact that the boy was calling the girl a "bad name" (B_fg314p19). This example supported the interns' conversation about the power of language and how it is a teacher's job to challenge students on their word choices.

In agreement with Ullucci (2012), "Teachers overlook culturally relevant pedagogies not because they are thoughtless but simply because they have no frame of reference" (p. 401). The implications of this study reveal if we as teacher educators are truly committed to social justice and wish for our students to embrace these concepts, we must model for them what this looks like in practice and be explicit about how we address such issues.

I align myself with Conklin's (2008) notion of critical, justice-oriented teacher education. She argues the role of care and empathy is often present in K-12 teaching, but ignored in teacher education. If teacher educators are serious about espousing beliefs for

social justice, then they must embrace these ideals themselves and model compassion and care to the students whom they teach. One example she gives involves having a complex understanding of prospective teachers' backgrounds. She explains, "rather than blame prospective teachers for the nature of the experiences they have or have not had, teacher educators can honor the experiences prospective teachers bring to the classroom and try to use these experiences as a starting point for helping them learn about and enact justice-oriented teaching" (p. 666). I might model my own progression of understanding White privilege to begin to develop relationships with students and ease them into uncomfortable topics.

Laughter (2011) found in the field of multicultural teacher education, teacher educators often attribute the failure of White pre-service teachers to *get it* on the White teachers themselves. As teacher educators, we must be willing to question our own assumptions and biases that we hold for White teachers before falling prey to the deficit-based frame of mind we often condemn pre-service teachers for having. White teachers need to understand that they can be successful with students of color too while still acknowledging their privilege. If they automatically assume being White makes them *unchangeably* less effective,[58] we are only setting up the majority of our teaching population for failure. Teacher educators equally need to know who their students are so

[58] I use the term "unchangeably" because many White teachers will be less effective working with HUS if they are unaware of larger societal inequalities, embrace colorblindness, and support a myth of meritocracy. However, as the research in this dissertation has highlighted, there are positive examples of teachers' views toward diversity when entering a teacher preparation program with openness, self-reflexivity, and a commitment to social justice (Garmon, 2004/2005).

that they can tailor their instruction to meet their students' developmental needs, such as racial awareness (Laughter, 2011).

For example, each of the participants in my study informed me they had not been exposed to LGBTQ conversations throughout teacher education. This allowed me to plan one of our CSJFG sessions on meeting the needs of LGBTQ students and sparked many conversations as to what Jack and Natalie were dealing with in their classrooms. Because the interns in my study possessed the qualities of openness and self-reflexivity as Garmon (2004, 2005) addressed, our conversations in the CSJFG led to an understanding that teachers practicing social justice need to be advocates for their students. As evidenced from this example, as teacher educators learn who their students are, they can plan instruction that meets their needs and can build off of future teachers' prior experiences.

Implications for Educational Leaders

My final set of implications is geared toward educational leaders such as superintendents, district leaders, principals, and other administrators in schools. Far too often when teacher education ends, so does the education of a teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Twenty percent of all new teachers leave the profession within their first three years and half leave by their fifth year of teaching (Barnett, Hopkins-Thompson, and Hoke, 2002; Carrol & Foster, 2010). These rates of attrition have a severe impact on already underfunded school budgets, especially in communities serving HUS.[59]

[59] The U.S. loses an average of $7.3 billion annually due to the costs of new teacher training attrition (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007). This money could be better served

Many teachers report the top factors influencing attrition include: lack of support from school leadership, lack of empowerment, feelings of isolation or lack of relationships with colleagues, and undesirable teaching assignments (Moir, Barlin, Gless, & Miles, 2009). As evidenced in my study, the intern teachers reported feelings of defeat due to many structural obstacles preventing them from practicing social justice. Specifically, Sarah White discussed the many requirements put on her such as teaching CCS that did not align with the end of the year state examination that would be a part of her teacher evaluation score. It is through these examples that teachers often feel defeated and are the impetus for them leaving teaching all together. Additional support is needed as new teachers navigate their way through not only the demands of being a teacher, but also how a school district and individual school operates.

The participants in my study often shared with me how supported they felt coming to the CSJFG and discussing their challenges and successes. They often listened and shared feedback and resources with one another. Similar types of professional development dialogue circles could be set up in school systems that support new teachers much the same way the CSJFG supported intern teachers in this study. As many of the implications already suggested in this study, this does require time and effort on the part of the teacher, but will ultimately benefit the new teacher by providing additional support. Perhaps having these types of intentional support groups meetings could fulfill a

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put back into already underfunded schools providing additional resources and support for HUS.

portion of the continuing education credits many school districts require of teachers to keep up to date with state certifications making it a worthwhile endeavor.

Sarah White also expressed her gratitude for being a part of my study (although I was also very grateful that she agreed to participate) because she felt it was helping her to maintain herself as a critical practitioner. I believe the support the intern teachers gave one another as well as the support they received from me aided in their efforts to be successful in the classroom. In a non-traditional sense, I served as a mentor for Sarah.[60] When she was challenged with how to support her ELL students, I was able to seek additional resources to provide her with and we discussed new ideas for how to cater to her ELL students' needs. She also came to me many times with questions related to classroom management. We were able to work together to find solutions for other challenging situations she encountered in her classroom. This study offers a new prospective for how veteran teachers can mentor novice teachers through challenging situations that often build up and contribute to the high rates of teacher attrition.

The implications of this study reveal the potential benefits of a school system establishing a teacher mentoring or induction program. Historically, very few school districts provide additional support for new teachers who are expected to take on the same tasks as veteran teachers due to high costs or time-constraints (Ingersoll, 2003;

[60] I say "non-traditional" because my role in mentoring Sarah was specifically guided toward my research objectives. Veteran teachers in more official mentorship roles would most likely guide Sarah in other day-to-day requirements such as data collection and county-school requirements that every new teacher must learn when they are hired.

Johnson & Johnson, 2007).[61] However, teacher induction/mentoring programs are one solution that can aid novice teachers in the transition from teacher education into the classroom preventing teacher attrition and are worth the investment.

It is evident from this study that my involvement in Sarah White's classroom aided in her ability to implement CRE. While she possessed the theoretical knowledge needed to implement CRE, my role as her mentor led to discussions that allowed her to reflect upon the rationale for why she did things a certain way or to provide suggestions for new ways that she could try things based on my past experiences teaching. Our discussions were not just "vent" sessions to complain about the many difficulties she faced, but rather productive and intentional meetings with a particular purpose to enhance her social justice practice, meeting the needs of ALL her students.

My intention is for this research to add to the literature highlighting the positive influence of mentoring while in one's early years of teaching. Included within the aims of a mentoring/induction program should be meeting the diverse needs of students and effective veteran teachers could play a key role in this. As discussed above, cooperating teachers paired with intern teachers matter in the novice teachers' development. Therefore, the same intentional pairing for the teachers participating in a mentoring/induction program should occur. Educational leaders wishing to support new

[61] New teacher mentorship involves an extensive body of research that is beyond the scope of this dissertation. For a more extensive review of the literature see Moir, Barlin, Gless, and Miles (2009).

teachers within their districts, especially those with a commitment to serving HUS needs, should recruit effective mentor teachers with dispositions toward social justice.

Personal Reflections from this Study

My experiences throughout this study taught me the important role of critical dialogue in teacher education. I was still a student as I started this study and I learned from my professors how to dialogue about the challenging issues facing our schools. It was through this dialogue that I began to think about how I might use similar techniques with the pre-service teachers that I taught. As I move into my job as a teacher educator and researcher, I aim to continue understanding how the role of critical dialogue around social justice topics influences pre-service teachers and beginning teachers in their practice.

In the future, when I hold a CSJFG again, I would make them more structured around a particular social justice topic. It has challenging to produce themes from the transcripts because each of the meetings was left open to the participants to lead the conversations. There are pros and cons to such an approach. On the one side, because the meetings were so flexible, I believe the findings represent a more accurate account of what intern teachers understand about social justice and how to implement it in their classrooms. On the other hand, because social justice is such a broad topic, we touched upon everything from student busing, family involvement, LGBTQ students, access to higher education, educational policies, teaching middle class students, and the list goes on. When the time came for analysis, I had to go to so many different resources to

connect the literature (as evidenced by the expansive list of references). I believe in the future if I were to hold a CSJFG on LGBTQ students, we could go more in depth in our meetings because we would only be focusing on one topic (while still expansive, I could hone in on particular aspects more easily). Nevertheless, social justice could be a class that I teach in the future and will consist of these many different topics. Should I do research with the students I am instructing; I will be better prepared for how to handle the analysis of so many topics in one study.

I will end this section by examining some of the strengths and weaknesses of this study. I believe the strength of this study lies in my commitment to social justice and findings ways for teacher educators to promote social justice amongst their pre-service teachers. The commitment that I also have to postcritical ethnography charges me with the responsibility to critically analyze my positionality throughout the research process and to practice reflexivity. To do this, I must be (and believe I have been) willing to critique not only oppressive power structures, but critique myself throughout the research process.

A traditional researcher might identify the relationships that I developed with my participants as a weakness; however, I see this as a strength. As a researcher, I can never truly "represent" a participant or speak for a participant, without including the participant as part of the research process. The relationship I developed with Sarah allowed me to feel comfortable sharing my thought process with her and for her to feel comfortable

letting me know what she agreed with or did not agree with throughout the research process.

A weakness that has become apparent to me throughout my analysis and writing my implications was that I did not address Kayla Smith and my role in the study in depth. Because Kayla was a part of the first focus group that I held, at the time of the meetings, I was not sure exactly how my dissertation would be like or what questions I would be asking. I realize now that as an African American teacher candidate in a PWI, she might have had a different experience that I will never understand because I did not address her positionality from the beginning of the focus groups. The research on African American teachers differs from the focus of this study on White, middle-class, female teachers. This study could have added more to the literature of African American women at PWI's had I been more proactive about understanding Kayla's role in our focus groups.

Future Research

This last section specifically addresses recommendations that I share for teacher educators based from calls to actions presented by Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005), Zeichner (2005), and Sleeter (2012, 2014) in addition to implications found from this study.

In 2005, Cochran-Smith and Zeichner released the most comprehensive exam of pre-service teacher education research in the U.S. to date. The panel concluded that the studies were not intentionally designed around a teaching program that could examine the impact on teachers as well as on their students. Zeichner (2005) also concluded that

researchers have not explicitly built on one another's work and showed how their research connects.

I encountered the very problem these scholars reference when I first began the research for this dissertation study. Throughout my undergraduate teacher preparation program and graduate studies I read theoretical work regarding the importance of connecting curriculum to students and embodying a culturally relevant pedagogy. When the time came to find studies reflecting teachers' use of culturally relevant pedagogies in the classroom and how this impacted their students, the research found was scattered and inconsistent. I took months sorting through journal articles, books, and chapters to find examples of what I was looking for. What I noticed was researchers were using many different terminologies to described teachers' pedagogies and practices, but that many of them had similar goals: employing equitable teaching practices to close achievement gaps for HUS.

I became frustrated because as I tried to make the case for SJTE, it seemed the research had potential to support my claim, but would be difficult to prove. Ultimately, I was able to use the CRE framework as an overarching umbrella for all the great work teacher educators and practitioners are doing using many different terms.

Given the discourse of *teacher quality in a globalized society*, teacher educators are charged with the task of showing how teacher education can enhance student achievement. Currently research connecting teacher education to student achievement is based solely on test scores and is performed by think tanks and other organizations

outside of teacher education (Sleeter, 2014). We must find a way to make the case for teacher education, specifically SJTE by collaborating on larger-scale projects that connect teacher education with student success (not just standardized tests scores) in order for policymakers to take it seriously. Sleeter (2014) explains:

> I do not mean to suggest that all teacher education research should be designed to inform policy … the problem, however is that the weight of the research, being fragmented, often narrowly focused, and usually not directly connected to a shared research agenda on teacher education, does not position teacher educators strongly to craft an evidence-based narrative about teacher education that might counter policies or reports like NCTQ's. (p. 152)

Clearly, my dissertation was not the place for me to embark upon this mission, however, as a teacher educator committed to preparing future teachers in diverse settings, I take Sleeter's call to action seriously and hope in the future to conduct larger-scaled studies that connect to teacher education in collaboration with my colleagues.

My Research Trajectory

As shared in earlier chapters, there were 17 participants in the CSJFG. Because of the depth of my data collection and time-constraints only allowing me to follow one teacher into the classroom, I only reported data from four of the participants in the first focus group I held. My future research agenda will include analyzing the other three

focus groups that I conducted between 2012-2013. I seek to find out if the other interns that participated in this study shared similar understandings and experiences as the first set of interns. This will provide additional support to my claim that participating in a CSJFG could influence intern teachers' social justice understandings.

Furthermore, other participants in the study who are now practicing teachers have invited me into their classrooms. While I do not think the requirements of my future job will allow me to be in the classroom as much as I was in Sarah White's classroom, I intend to do classroom observations and follow-up interviews with these former participants to better understand how they have transitioned from their teacher education programs into the classroom and how successfully they are able to practice social justice in their classrooms.

Finally, in the future, I wish to go back through transcripts and research journals to further reflect upon my role as a facilitator in critical dialogue. At the inception of the study, I did not know as much about facilitating critical conversations among pre-service teachers. My experiences from working with the focus groups influenced how I presented social justice issues in the educational psychology class that I taught and I made changes each semester, as I felt more comfortable. I believe looking more closely into the impact the participants' had on myself as a teacher educator and how it affected my practice is worthy of further analysis.

Trajectory for Educational Researchers

In addition to my extensions of this study, there are a number of other research

projects needed to adhere to Sleeter's (2014) call to action addressed above. First, we need to continue the investigation of how SJTE impacts teachers' ability to enhance student success. While I do not believe student success should be measured only through standardized tests scores, having data that proves teaching for social justice *does not* negatively impact students' scores, or even enhances students' scores by navigating the "culture of power," (Delpit, 2006), could be meaningful for policymakers who often view this as the only measure of achievement. As long as social justice educators are clear about test scores being only one facet of achievement and document other examples of success, making this connection could capture policymakers attention and negate claims that teaching for social justice "dumbs down" the curriculum or is "wishy washy."[62]

Additionally, researchers could expand the definition of "achievement" to include qualitative measures of increased motivation and engagement in the classroom using the positive research outcomes seen in CRE. There can also be connections to high school graduation and job placement for those wanting to enter the workforce out of high school (some students may prefer to work in vocational careers such as cosmetology or mechanics that require specific training rather than college); or college attendance for those who are ready to attend college. Students' increased test scores are often reported as a measure of teachers' improvement. However, this fails to look at other ways students have learned and what this means for them in the long run such as possessing the skills

[62] I realize this does not address the larger issue of relying on test scores as a measure of student achievement. However, I am attempting to make practical suggestions for researchers that could support the case for SJTE.

for a job they desire or attend college. We need more longitudinal research that goes beyond test scores, but also includes all these other factors included in student achievement. Therefore, research that connects SJTE to student achievement *can include* test scores to appease policymakers, but should also include other measures of success to maintain a commitment to social justice.

Secondly, research might move beyond individual teachers' classrooms and look to the cultures of schools. My study presented research on the individual teacher, however school culture might also be something worthy of study. How might schools promote teaching for social justice? How might schools enhance the development of their teaching staff to better prepare them to meet the needs of HUS? For schools that have been effectively meeting the needs of HUS, how do they describe their school culture? To effect change on a larger scale, additional research is needed that understands the kinds of approaches schools use to meet the needs of HUS.

Third, additional research is needed that includes students' voices. The challenge here is working through the institutional barriers that are meant to protect students from being "researched" but in turn "silences" students from the discourse in education. While the conceptual framework for CRE is based on research conducted on effective teaching practices for HUS for over thirty years, I have rarely seen K-12 students' voices included in this research. This study examined intern/teachers' understandings of social justice, but I believe it would be beneficial to include K-12 students' voices to better understand how researchers and practitioners can better meet the needs of HUS as well. Additional

research questions might ask: What qualities do students value in their teachers? What experiences do students have in schools explicitly promoting social justice? What engages or motivates students to want to succeed in the classroom? Future research may seek to interview students assigned to teachers expressing a commitment to social justice. This could provide addition insight to faculty and researchers in SJTE who support including student voices in educational discourse.

Finally, in addition to not including K-12 students' voices in the literature, I also have found families' voices are missing. Researchers examining effective teaching practices for HUS could also interview families and parents across varying communities to better understand their views of effective teachers in their community. Additional research questions might ask parents: What qualities do they feel contribute to their child's learning? What experiences does your child have in schools explicitly promoting social justice? What engages or motivates your child to succeed in school? What kinds of support systems contribute to parent-school partnerships?

Conclusion

I have chosen not to write implications for policymakers because I do not believe that is where I have agency at this moment. I believe that educational change needs to occur in this country, and that it can start from the bottom up, through grassroots movements. This study was not designed to generalize for all pre-service/intern teachers. Rather, it was intended to provide a snapshot of the experiences and understanding of four interns' understandings of social justice. The kinds of conversations and dialogue

seen in the CSJFG are the kinds of examples that provide me hope. Despite instances of defeat, the interns were cognizant about societal inequalities and how this impacted schooling. I believe this is a start. Sarah White's case might have seemed depressing to some given the restrictive barriers she faced in school and her normalized practice of testing, but I choose to be optimistic about her practice.

In the preface of this dissertation, I included the following quote:

> *I know you don't want to hear about the pain and suffering that goes on in 'that' part of the city. I know you don't want to hear about the kids getting shot in 'that' part of the city. But little do you know that 'that' part of the city is your part of the city too. This is our neighborhood, this is our city, and this is our America. And we must somehow find a way to help one another. We must come together- no matter what you believe in, no matter how you look- to find some concrete solutions to the problems of the ghetto. (Jones & Newman, 1997, p. 200)*

I believe that education is everyone's concern but we cannot make change through schooling alone. There are larger systemic inequalities that need to be addressed beyond the scope of this dissertation (Anyon, 2005). In the meantime, in agreement with Duncan-Andrade (2011):

> Educators cannot simply call an end to the conditions of inequality in our society. However, we can develop a pedagogy that is responsive to these conditions *and* academically rigorous, such that we being to rebuild the critical hope that has been worn down in these communities (p. 321).

It is *my* hop*e* that this dissertation provides hope for teacher educators to continue advocating for social justice in teacher education programs. I also hope that we are able to celebrate the small successes that we see as inspiration to move forward and never stop working for change that betters the lives of historically underserved students.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A
SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEWED

Table 7 CRE in Mathematics

Study	Description	Participants and Methods	Findings
Aguirre & Zavala (2013)	As part of a larger teacher professional development study six beginning teachers who recently graduated from a mathematical methods course- participants agreed to be a part of several professional development workshops aiding their CRMT competencies.	Qualitative research design using teacher interviews, professional development sessions, and classroom artifacts. Transcripts were coded using a constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1997) and themes were identified.	Teachers successfully implemented the CRMT tool to aid in creating culturally responsive mathematics lessons while adhering to mandated standards and curricula. Two prominent themes emerged from the data: 1) A critique of math lessons addressing issues such as mathematical thinking, language, culture, and social justice; 2) Fostering of "purposeful pedagogical dialogue" (p. 173) and critical reflection.
Civil & Kahn (2001)	University researchers and teacher collaborated on a gardening project to bring together students' and families' knowledge in connection to mathematics over a five-month span. Researchers connected lessons to 4-5th grade NCTM standards and infused mathematical concepts when applicable.	Interviews were conducted with four students throughout the lessons and the teacher shared her reflections throughout the project.	Students were able to engage in "math talk" to make important connections. In the teacher's own personal reflections, this class of students outperformed students from previous classes on their formal assessments.

Table 7 (continued)

Study	Description	Participants and Methods	Findings
Ensign (2003)	For five years the researcher taught math with elementary teachers in their classrooms to better understand how to teach in culturally relevant ways. The researcher used students' personal out-of-school experiences to create a "culturally connected" math curriculum (p. 415). Teachers modeled the creation of mathematical word problems and students' created their own word problems.	Observations made in 2nd, 3rd, and 5th, grade classroom in town Urban Schools in the Northeast. Student interviews were also conducted.	During the project, the researcher reported that students were more on task and they scored higher on unit tests. Student interviews indicated that students took a higher interest in mathematics when there were able to create problems related to their own lives.
Fulton (2009)	Case study of culturally responsive math teaching of three middle-school teachers in diverse Colorado school.	Case study methodology (used teacher interviews, observations, and study focus groups)	Strong school culture supports development of understandings of math. Students gained a deeper understanding of content and learned to value their own and each other's perspectives.
Gutstein (2003)	The researcher, who was also the teacher, conducted this two-year study with his 7th and 8th grade students in an Urban, predominantly Latina/o classroom in a large Midwestern city. He focused on creating social justice mathematics lessons surveying students about controversial issues in their communities and worldwide.	Qualitative, practitioner research methodology (used semi-ethnographic methods such as participant observation, open-ended surveys, and textual analysis) to ask: *What does it mean to teach and learn math for social justice? What is the relationship to a curriculum based on the NCTM Principles and Standards for School Mathematics (2000)?*	Students began to examine inequalities not only in math but also in other areas of life. They showed evidence of deeper critiques of previously held assumptions.

Table 7 (continued)

Study	Description	Participants and Method	Findings
Hubert (2013)	The researcher taught culturally relevant math lessons in an alternative high school to examine students' perspectives of culturally relevant math and the effect it had on their attitudes and interest.	Case study of 34 participating students in an alternative math classroom set up for students to prepare for state standardized tests. Five students were selected to partake in semi-structured interviews. Interviews were transcribed and coded using preexisting codes from the literature.	Overall, students held positive views of culturally relevant math instruction and experienced improved attitudes and increased interest. On average, students pre and post-test scores increased by one letter grade and students reported being confident to take their state exam assessment.
Langlie (2008)	This study examined the effects of culturally relevant pedagogy on the mathematics achievement of 10^{th} grade black and Hispanic students.	Quantitative study using data from National Educational Longitudinal Study using the 1990 cohort. Data from the Teacher Questionnaire was used to develop an index of culturally relevant pedagogy and through multiple regression analysis determine a relationship between the teachers' use of CRP and student achievement.	Results indicated that teachers who emphasized an awareness and importance of math in every life and encouraged students to become interested achieved better. However, results also indicated socioeconomic status and parental level of education also impacted student achievement.
Tate (1995)	Teachers used community issues as a framework to increase math proficiency with African American students. Students asked to pose problems affecting their community (related to math), research the problem, and pose potential solutions.	Documents used by teacher (newspaper, videos, etc.) were collected and analyzed. Teacher participated in ethnographic interview to discuss background and teaching philosophy.	Students were able to incorporate the problems facing many African American communities to make mathematical learning more relevant to them.

Table 8 CRE in Science

Study	Description	Participants and Methods	Findings
Dimick (2012)	Sought to understand how student empowerment aligned with teaching and learning for social justice in an environmental science classroom.	Qualitative case study conducted at an urban public charter high school with one middle-class White teacher and 24 students (9 of whom participated in the study).	Found students were much more engaged in the science classroom and students' projects included elements of social, political, and academic empowerment.
Johnson (2011)	Study in middle school science classrooms involving teachers who participated in transformative professional development sessions addressing culturally relevant teaching practices to more effectively teach their predominantly Hispanic students.	Qualitative case study of two middle-school science teachers in an urban-centered school district over three-years. Multiple data collection methods employed including six individual interviews, nine focus group sessions, and 24 classroom observations. Data was analyzed concurrently to identify trends across the study.	Teachers were able to effectively use CRP and create opportunities believing all students were capable of academic success.
Laughter & Adams (2012)	Study in middle school science classroom involving a teacher educator and intern teacher seeking to use culturally relevant pedagogy in a lesson on inquiry.	Qualitative study of five sixth-grade classrooms ranging from 25-35 students. Data collection included lesson plans, transcripts of online discussions, field notes, and semi-structured interviews. Data was analyzed using qualitative microanalysis to organize patterns using Ladson-Billings's tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy.	Found students were actively engaged in the classroom and students were able to connect scientific bias to societal bias but did not voice an awareness to engage in social justice issues.
Milner (2011)	White science teacher's experiences in building cultural competence in a urban diverse classroom.	Qualitative study using observations and semi-structured interviews with one White, male science teacher. Thematic analysis was used to analyze data.	The teacher was able to build cultural competence with his students and recognize their multiple identities leading to their success.

Table 9 CRE in History/Social Studies

Study	Description	Participants and Methods	Findings
Choi (2013)	Researcher explores how an exemplary teacher utilized social studies curriculum and pedagogy to engage English language learners (ELLs) using culturally relevant pedagogy.	Qualitative case study of one 8th grade Korean-American social studies teacher. Data was collected using observations, teacher interviews, and student artifacts. Inductive coding (Miles & Huberman, 1987) was used in the beginning and then a constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1994) was used to identify and develop patterns and themes in data.	Newcomer ELL students successfully navigated the mandated social studies curriculum and increased student achievement.
Coughran (2012)	Examine the concept of enacting culturally relevant pedagogy through the use of a multicultural social studies curriculum	Qualitative action research project with the teacher as the researcher. Convenience sample was taken from a kindergarten classroom in an upper-middle classroom. Data was collected from video-taped lessons, reflections, and 8 student interviews.	Found connecting lived experiences of racism to students' personal experiences from students of all background enhanced connection to the curriculum and student-teacher relationships.
Epstein, Mayorga, & Nelson (2011)	Researchers interviewed randomly selected students to understand how culturally responsive teaching practices in one high school history class impacted the urban, low-income African American and Latino students' views of racial groups in U.S. history and society.	Qualitative study taking place in a lower socioeconomic, diverse New York City high school. One teacher and twenty-one African American and Latino/a students in an 11th grade humanities classroom participated in the study. Eight students were randomly selected and interviewed for further elaboration. Responses were coded and analyzed using constant comparative methods (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).	Students changed from not only including one group of people in their responses, to a more diverse group; they also moved from people of color being described as victims to resilient and had agency as well as had issues accepting White allies and struggles from other groups.

Table 9 (continued)

Study	Description	Participants and Method	Findings
Esposito & Swain (2009)	Examined the ways seven urban teachers used culturally relevant pedagogy as a mechanism for social justice and understand challenges teachers face.	Qualitative study of seven African American teachers in urban classrooms. Data was collected using in-depth interviews and focus group sessions. Data was transcribed and coded using constant comparative methods (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to create categories and subcategories ultimately leading to themes.	Despite strict environments, teachers were able to implement culturally relevant pedagogy by taking risk, giving up their personal time, and through self-reflection.
Martell (2013)	White social studies teacher and researcher in an urban high school who used culturally relevant pedagogy as a means to teach history.	Qualitative practitioner research study using survey with 49 students of color to investigate perceptions of course. Other collection methods included teacher journaling, classroom artifacts, and interviews. Data was coded using "in vivo" (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and organized into themes.	Found students of color can be empowered by a curriculum that connects to their cultural and ethnic backgrounds and students positively benefited by such a curriculum.
Stovall (2006)	Used hip-hop to provide a context for a humanities and social sciences lesson in a diverse secondary classroom.	Ethnographic study of the facilitator-researcher's experience in six workshops. Participants included 19 African American and Latina/o students.	Students critically engaged in discussions and made connections between rap music and social inequalities.

Table 10 CRE in English Language Arts

Study	Description	Participants and Methods	Findings
Bui & Fagen (2013)	Study conducted in two fifth-grade classrooms comparing the implementation of a reading comprehension unit with a culturally responsive teaching framework. Students were divided to evenly represent ethnicity, ability, and gender. One group received the Integrated Reading Comprehension Strategy (IRCS) and the other group received the IRCS Plus, adding multicultural education and cooperative learning to instruction	Quasi-experimental study involving 49 participants from one urban elementary school in Northern California. . Pre and post-tests were given to measure students' reading level. Researchers conducted paired-samples *t* tests for each group to determine any statistically significant differences.	Students in both groups made statistically significant means gains (p>.05) from pre-test to post-test for each dependent variable (word recognition, reading comprehension, story retell). Independent sample *t*-tests revealed both groups post-test scores did not reveal any statistically significant gains. The IRCS Plus group was able to move from the frustrational level to just above instructional level.
Caballero (2010)	Study sought to determine if creating a positive relationship, encouraging dispositions, and creating an environment steeped in multiculturalism positively impacts student achievement on the California Standards Test (CST) by assessing 7th and 8th grade students' perception of Language Arts teachers on the constructs of teacher-student relationship, teacher expectations, and use of CRP.	158 students in diverse middle school were given a sixty-item survey called Teacher-Student Relationship Questionnaire (TSRQ) using a Likert scale. Surveys were organized and responses were compared using SPSS (descriptive and correlation statistics) to measure student perceptions with CST student growth.	Descriptive statistics found a significant relationship between student perceptions of the teacher-student relationship and academics, however a statistical analysis did not reveal a statistically significant relationship.
Conrad, Gong, & Sipp (2004)	Culturally responsive teaching in combination with "text talk" was used as a gateway to promote young children's literacy.	Qualitative study with three 2nd teachers in diverse educational settings. Teachers selected a culturally responsive approach and integrated "text talk" to aid with conceptually challenging ideas by using CRT to build on students' language to make connections.	Teachers reported that "overall, the students demonstrated extended, in-depth responses and insightful thinking when teachers set high expectations for all learners" (p. 189) suggesting improvement in student achievement.

Table 10 (continued)

Study	Description	Participants and Methodology	Findings
Duncan-Andrade (2007)	Research drawn from three years of research in four elementary and secondary school classrooms regarding reporting effective practices in urban classrooms.	Formed critical inquiry groups serving two secondary and one primary school teacher for teachers committed to social justice pedagogy. Researcher met with groups regularly and observed classroom practice.	Researcher formulated a framework of five principles of pedagogy witnessed in the classroom that linked to individual student narrative linked to increased achievement. The teachers in the study were at the top of their schools in many ways, including test scores.
Feger (2006)	Descriptive record of a teacher's use of culturally relevant texts high schools Spanish immigrant students.	Teacher's anecdotal account of adding culturally relevant literature and non-fiction texts into her 9th and 10th grade classrooms.	The teacher reported the more culturally relevant literature and non-fiction she integrated into the curriculum, the more her students' engagement in reading had increased. Students were able to identify with the texts selected and "demonstrated their ability to use their experience to make critical statements" (pp. 18-19)
Hefflin (2002)	Describes how two teachers planned a lesson through culturally relevant pedagogy using the story *Cornrows.*	Researcher observed two teachers in a large urban city teaching a reading lesson in a predominantly African American classroom. The researcher and teacher met to discuss how it might be more culturally relevant and made changes as they went using the story *Cornrows* as a culturally appropriate text to read with children.	The researcher reported that "compared to the response to her original approach, students' verbal and written performance indicated that they engaged and performed more fully with the culturally relevant approach" (p. 247).
Hill (2012)	Examined culturally responsive teaching practices in a predominantly African American high school.	Mixed methods study comparing effective practices of two teachers. 20 classroom observations, teacher interviews, survey data, and focus groups were used to collect data.	Students were motivated to complete assigned tasks and were able to connect lessons to their personal lives.

Table 10 (continued)

Study	Description	Participants and Methodology	Findings
Johns (2008)	The purpose of this study was to examine how a professional development group committed to developing culturally relevant pedagogy supported teachers in effectively transforming their practice with emergent bilingual students.	Qualitative case study in predominantly Mexican American school district. Participants included 14 middle and high school teachers who participated in *Abriendo Caminos*, a professional development program for emergent bilingual students. 39 middle school students were also interviewed. Data was collected using semi-structured and informal interviews.	Findings suggest a situated approach to professional development, specifically in relation to the prior knowledge and experiences of students, enhances teachers' abilities to support the literacy learning of emergent bilingual students.
Morrell & Duncan-Andrade (2002)	Used hip-hop music and culture in a traditional senior English poetry class to promote academic literacy and critical consciousness.	Researchers sharing experience working in an northern California high school. The researchers were the teachers of a traditional senior English class	The students were engaged and used critical dialogue to relate to large political and social issues.
Morrison (2002)	White teacher at a predominantly African American high school sought to make reading Shakespeare more culturally relevant.	White teacher's anecdotal account of students' responses to culturally relevant literature unit. The teacher applied for a grant to work on film creating with a ninth grade class to create a version of *Romeo and Juliet* that was more applicable to students.	Students were more engaged in the mandated curriculum and learned alternatives to color-blind approaches.
Ortega (2003)	This study investigates narratives from one teacher and her students as she implemented a culturally relevant pedagogy in an American Literature classroom.	Qualitative narrative study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) in a predominately Hispanic 11th grade classroom for two years. Data was collected through teacher interviews, student interviews, observations, and field notes and then transcribed and coded (Bodgan & Biklen, 1998).	Findings indicated that students experienced a teacher who understands how to connect home and school cultures, build upon students' cultures, creates a safe classroom environments, develops relatable curricular materials, and who models an ethic of caring.
Robbins (2001)	Descriptive record of how a teacher incorporated culturally relevant literature in a diverse classroom to help students understand sociological aspects of language.	White, male teacher's anecdotal account of integrating culturally relevant literature into his predominantly Mexican-American classroom. Using observations and student journal entries, this teacher shared his students' journey in his class.	Students were able to hold critical conversations in mixed-raced groups and begin identity transformation. Students reconfigured their identities in positive ways and branched out to form cross-racial friendships.

Table 11 CRE across Multiple Content Areas

Study	Description	Participants and Methods	Findings
Brown (2003)	Study of schoolteachers' culturally responsive classroom management strategies.	Qualitative study with 13 urban teachers from seven U.S. cites. Teachers were nominated by other colleagues or acquaintances who agreed to be interviewed. Examined teachers' responses to understand effective management strategies used.	Found culturally responsive communication processes aided in the development of positive student/teacher relationships.
Cabrera, Milem, & Marx (2012)	The purpose of this research report was to understand the relationship between the Mexican American Studies (MAS) program on student achievement.	Student achievement data (defined as passing the AIMS test, high school graduation and college attendance) was collected between 2008-2011 (N=1,587). A multivariate analytical strategy was used controlled for student demographics such as gender and SES.	Overall, students who had previously failed at least one part of the AIMS exam was significantly more likely to pass all three tests after participation in the MAS program. Additionally, MAS participation was a significant, positive predictor for graduation. Due to factors outside of the researchers'' control, they were unable to accurately report college attendance data.
Cammarota & Romero (2009)	Developed a program for Chicana/o youth over the course of four semesters aimed at raising critical awareness.	Anecdotal account of Mexican American Studies Program (MAS) comparing performance on AIMS Test, student surveys, and student testimonials regarding participating in the program.	Evidence from the students' surveys and test scores suggested a strong correlation between participation in the program and student achievement.

Table 11 (continued)

Study	Description	Participants and Methods	Findings
Hastie, Martin, & Buchanan (2006)	Two White teachers presented a culturally relevant P.E. lesson to a class of African American 6th grade students. The purpose was to examine and understand teachers' praxis as they implemented a culturally-relevant P.E. program using step.	Ethnographic study with teacher-as-researcher using Schon's (1987) reflective scholarship at a predominantly African American elementary school in the South. Reflection notes and field notes taken by each researcher. An outside observer asked prompted questions from the field notes.	They first found teacher apprehension (concern about lack of content knowledge and how children would respond to a different class structure) and concerns about legitimacy (teachers outside the cultural group they were teaching). However, over time, resolution of apprehension when there were no acts of defiance and students responded positively
Howard (2010)	Examined teachers' use of cultural knowledge to better understand ways to increase student achievement.	Observed one teacher's fifth grade classroom.	Focus was not on the success of the students specifically, but rather on one teacher's ability to implement culturally relevant instruction in light of a highly standardized environment.
Johns (2008)	The purpose of this study was to examine how a professional development group committed to developing culturally relevant pedagogy supported teachers in effectively transforming their practice with emergent bilingual students.	Qualitative case study in predominantly Mexican American school district. Participants included 14 middle and high school teachers who participated in *Abriendo Caminos*, a professional development program for emergent bilingual students. 39 middle school students were also interviewed. Data was collected using semi-structured and informal interviews.	Findings suggest a situated approach to professional development, specifically in relation to the prior knowledge and experiences of students, enhances teachers' abilities to support the literacy learning of emergent bilingual students.

Table 12 CRE in Gender

Study	Content Area	Description (&Methodology if included)	Findings
Bell & Gilbert (1996)	Science	Three-year project conducted in New Zealand sought to understand teacher development and constructivist view of teacher learning	Schools had a stronger interest in learning science when schools attempted to be equitable and include women in the curriculum.
Ennis (1999)	Physical Education	Year-long ethnographic study in six urban, diverse high schools. Teachers participated in "Sports for Peace" training and implementing the curricula while researchers observed and interviewed students at the conclusion of the unit. Data was collected, transcribed, and organized into themes.	Improved girls' engagement in physical education as well as boys perceptions of girls
Gilman (1996)	Science	Eight week in-service on gender equity for 22 elementary school teachers in a rural community	Teachers responded positively to the training thus impacting their female students
Kawai & Taylor (2011)	Interdisciplinary	One teacher's fourth grade classroom used community meetings as spaces to dialogue gender issues in the classroom	Students reflected on the consequences of their actions and created community of learners among peers
MacNaughton (2006)	Early Childhood Education	Compared two programs in early childhood education regarding gender roles in the classroom	Found in both programs, the use of gender-neutral language was not enough; teachers needed to resocialize children and model nonsexist behaviors
Spencer, Porsche, & Tolman (2003)	7th Grade Middle School	Examined relationships between school-wide gender equity efforts to better understand students' perspectives of gender equity.	While teachers and students thought the school to be gender-equitable and fair, classroom observations and interviews demonstrated revealed a discrepancy.

Table 13 CRE in Sexual Orientation

Study	Description (&Methodology if included)	Findings
Athanases (1996)	Two-year study in a multiethnic high school of a teacher and her 10th grade students on a lesson discussing gay and lesbian experiences.	Students' understandings of identities and oppression deepened throughout the lesson and stereotypes were broken down.
Clark (2010)	One teacher's accounts of incorporation queer-inclusive curriculum in her 9th grade classroom.	Found the classroom was a legitimate space to discuss LGBTQ issues and that it did not negatively affect student achievement.
Crosier (2009)	Narrative vignette from experiences in two pubic alternative schools created for students who did not "fit the rigid social structures of traditional schools (p. 292)	Students positively benefited from teachers who took the time to listen and include their voices in school decisions and curriculum.
Schall & Kauffmann (2003)	Teacher had students select LBGT-related children's literature and discuss in literature circles	Students responded positively believing homosexuality was different rather than wrong and wondered why they didn't have access to such resources.

Table 14 CRE in Religion

Study	Description (&Methodology if included)	Findings
Aown (2011)	Case study examining the learning of Islam from a non-Muslim teacher in a high school world religion class.	Teacher educated herself to accurately teach about Islam.
Nasir (2004)	Ethnographic study in an urban, predominantly African American Muslin school focused on one child, Karim, and his resistant behavior.	Through teacher persistence and collaboration with parents, Karim began succeeding academically.

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear Participant,

Thank you so much for agreeing to work with me on this research project. Your commitment to the field of education is admirable and your passion for teaching and learning is greatly appreciated.

I am seeking to understand what pre-service and intern teachers' preconceptions are about education and how they might be influenced and possibly change throughout discussions centered on social justice issues in the classroom. I realize that each of you has a heavy workload, so I seek to work with you in regards to your schedule. I have a list of responsibilities that I will ask of each participant. You may choice to do as much or as little as your time permits. You are under no obligation to complete all these tasks or to stay a part of the project. Of course, I will do everything I can to keep you involved and accommodate you however I can.

The responsibilities I ask of you are the following:

- Complete the teacher questionnaire (upon acceptance)
- Read one article regarding a social justice issue each month beginning in September 2011 (I will provide a couple of options)
- Journal your reflections periodically (whenever you feel you have something to say- this is on your own time; write as much or as little as you'd like; keep an electronic copy and either email or print out for me to read)
- Meet once at the end of the month beginning September 2011 to have a conversation with other intern teachers and myself

Beginning this Fall I aim to set up monthly meetings for the participants to discuss the article that you have read as well as anything that is going on in your current college classrooms and future school classrooms. We can also think of this as a time to "vent" about issues or just to support each other. I will be audio recording our conversations for my own reflective purposes. However, these recordings will only be heard by me and locked in a secure location. Everything in the project will remain confidential and you can choose your own pseudonym. At each meeting, I will provide snacks and resources for you if needed (You can ask me in advance) Think of me as an additional teaching tool for you. You do not have to prepare anything in advance, just simply be ready to have a conversation and bring any journals you may have written.

Once again, I truly appreciate your involvement in this project. I really encourage you to begin your teaching journey as a reflective practitioner and aim to be there are as a support mechanism for you. Additionally, if you find yourself engaged in the project and seek to write academically, I am always interested in collaborating in the future. Please email me at [redacted] or call me at [redacted] if you have any questions.

Warmest Regards,
Brittany Aronson

APPENDIX C

CRITICAL SOCIAL JUSTICE FOCUS GROUP READINGS

Teacher Group 1

September 2011	October 2011	November 2011	February 2012	March 2012	April 2012
"Youth and Social Justice in Education" by Jeffrey Duncan-Andrade *This introductory chapter introduces and defines social justice in education. Duncan-Andrade explains urban reform movements and how they have failed to provide quality education to poor and minority students.*	"Critical Race Theory, Multicultural Education, and the Hidden Curriculum of Hegemony" by Michelle Jay *This article explains the concept of hegemony and the hidden curriculum that continues to perpetuate inequalities in schools.*	"The Social Justice Education Project: A Critically Compassionate Intellectualism for Chicano/a Students" by Julio Cammarota and Augustine F. Romero. *This article explained how one group of educators created the The Social Justice Education Project in one school district as part of a participatory action research project. They successfully increased students achievement through a program focused on empowerment.* "The 5 E's of Emancipatory Pedagogy: The Rehumanizing Approach to Teaching and Learning with Inner-City Youth" by Laurence Tan *This article modeled the ways one teacher negotiated teaching for social justice while having to use a mandated scripted curricula.*	Introduction and Conclusion from *Radical Possibilities* by Jean Anyon *Anyon highlights the ways in which historical inequalities continue to affect the inequalities we see today. She gives recommendations for educators as ways to combat some of these inequalities but ultimately believes schools alone cannot fix the problems.*	"Creating Safe Schools for Queer Youth" by Kimberly Crosier *This article discusses LGBT students who are at risk and how educators might advocate on their behalf and be aware of different types of sexual identification.*	"Social justice, democratic education and the silencing words that wound" by Barbara Applebaum *This article addresses dominant voices that might supersede in classroom conversations. Applebaum also addresses the power of discourse to perpetuate ideological subordination and the conflation of culture and the meaning of oppression.*

APPENDIX D

LETTER TO PARENTS ABOUT "LOOPING"

July 14, 2013

Dear Parents and Families,

I hope you and your children are having wonderful, relaxing summer breaks- I know I am! I wanted to share with you all that **I will be teaching 3rd grade at Magnolia** next year, and because of this change, I have the opportunity to be your child's teacher again!

The practice of moving from one grade to another and keeping the same group of students is formally called looping. **There are many researched benefits of looping, including improved academic achievement, stronger teacher-student relationships, and more positive relationships among students**. I am already aware of your child's learning styles, needs, and interests, and we will be able to spend more time at the beginning of the school year focused on learning and less on rules and procedures. I feel your child will greatly benefit from being part of a looping classroom.

I am extremely excited to continue the learning that your child and I began last year! 3rd grade is a HUGE milestone in your child's education, and I am committed to ensuring that each of my students meets his or her goals this year.

If you have any questions or concerns about your child looping, please feel free to contact me. You can email me at [redacted], or call me at [redacted] (please, no calls after 9 p.m. ☺).

In order to get a jump-start on 3rd grade (and because I want to see what your children have been up to), I'm going to host a small get-together for us on **Friday, July 26th, at 2:30 at Rainbow Park** (I'll be at one of the shelters). I know that schedules are hectic, but if you and your child can drop by, I'll have some information about what to expect in 3rd grade, and I'll have some fun summer activities that your child can take home to keep his/her brain active during the last few weeks of summer. Snacks and drinks will be provided.

I am so looking forward to the coming school year, and I can't wait to see each of my former (and now future) students!!

Love,
Ms. White

APPENDIX E

FOCUS GROUPS IRB APPROVAL LETTER

August 3, 2011

IRB#: 8615 B

TITLE: Critical Teacher Pedagogy: How do Teacher Interns' Ideologies Fluctuate throughout a Social Justice Discourse?

Aronson, Brittany
Educational Psychology & Counseling
[redacted]

Thayer-Bacon, Barbara
Educational Psychology & Counseling
[redacted]

Your project listed above has been reviewed and granted IRB approval under expedited review.

This approval is for a period ending one year from the date of this letter. Please make timely submission of renewal or prompt notification of project termination (see item #3 below).

Responsibilities of the investigator during the conduct of this project include the following:

1. To obtain prior approval from the Committee before instituting any changes in the project.
2. If signed consent forms are being obtained from subjects, they must be stored for at least three years following completion of the project
3. To submit a Form D to report changes in the project or to report termination at 12-month or less intervals.

The Committee wishes you every success in your research endeavor. This office will send you a renewal notice (Form R) on the anniversary of your approval date.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

Compliances

Enclosure

APPENDIX F

FORM B APPLICATION

All applicants are encouraged to read the Form B guidelines. If you have any questions as you develop your Form B, contact your Departmental Review Committee (DRC) or Research Compliance Services at the Office of Research.

FORM B

IRB # _____

Date Received in OR _____

[redacted]

Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects

I. IDENTIFICATION OF PROJECT

1. **Principal Investigator**
   Complete name and address including telephone number and e-mail address
   Brittany Aronson
   [redacted]

   Faculty Advisor:
   Complete name and address including telephone number and e-mail address
   Dr. Barbara Thayer-Bacon
   [redacted]

2. Project Classification: *Enter one of the following terms as appropriate:* **Dissertation, Thesis, Class Project, Research Project**, or **Other** (Please specify)
Class Project

3. Title of Project: Critical Teacher Pedagogy: How do Teacher Interns' Ideologies Fluctuate throughout a Social Justice Discourse?

4. Starting Date: *Specify the intended starting date or insert* "**Upon IRB Approval**"**:**
Upon IRB Approval

5. Estimated Completion Date: August 30, 2012

6. External Funding *(if any):* N/A

- **Grant/Contract Submission Deadline:**
- **Funding Agency:**
- **Sponsor ID Number *(if known)*:**
- **UT Proposal Number *(if known):***

II. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this research project is to determine how teacher interns' ideologies and preconceptions are influenced throughout a social justice discourse. Many teacher education programs are lacking social foundations courses that address issues such as racism, equity, and access (Butin, 2005). How does exposing intern teachers to these types of discussions alter their perceptions of teaching while in the classroom? Butin (2009) argues that SFE (social foundations in education) is necessary for pre-service teachers to be able to think critically about their practice and make the necessary changes in our educational system. Teachers need to understand the role of reflective practice with an aim to empower their students. This is something that *teacher educators* need to integrate into their own practice. Butin states, " . . today's soft, safe code- words"- multiculturalism, diversity, and urban education- may alleviate white guilt and meet program requirements, but do little to truly help prospective teachers grapple with the very real issues of white privilege, power, and racism" (p. 224). Barnett, Hopkins-Thompson, & Hoke (2002) report that up to 50% of new teachers leave high-poverty, diverse schools within three years. Clearly, there is a strong need to address the issue of teacher preparedness. While it is true that no matter how well executed a teacher education program is, teachers will never know everything they need to the first day they enter the classroom, it does not mean we should stop trying to find ways for teachers to always be informed. SFE courses are not always available to undergraduate students, but there is an abundance of untapped resources waiting to be explored. Those who wish to engage in a social justice dialogue can do so through professional development and independent research.

Background questions to understand intern teachers' background:

Please tell me about your background. Where did you grow up? What were your family dynamics? What kind of school did you attend? Please share as much information about yourself as you feel relevant.

What brought you into the field of education?

Do you have expectations for what type of students you'd like to teach (grade/subject/location)? Be as specific as possible.

What education courses have you taken? Give the name and a brief description of each course.

What professional development have you done outside of your required course work? List any organizations you are a member of, conferences you've attended, or readings you have done outside of class.

III. DESCRIPTION AND SOURCE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Participants will be intern teachers during the 2011-2012 school year. Upon IRB approval, the researcher will recruit previous students in Educational Psychology 401, a course emphasizing the connection of theory to practice. Their participation will be voluntary and they will be informed in writing regarding the purpose and procedures of the study. The instructor will only approach them once they have completed the course and all grades are final. All participants will be over the age of 18. The participant group will not exclude participants based on race, social class and location. If they agree with the informed consent, they will be asked to sign the form and then begin the research project.

IV. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

In order to collect the necessary data for this study, there will be a monthly article assigned addressing one tenet of social justice (i.e. race, immigration, gender, disability, etc.). While the researcher has a set list of topics in mind, the participants may also choose issues that may be relevant to their classrooms. Participants will read the article over the course of the month and write journal reflections from both the article and any experiences in their classroom. This will be at their leisure and they can write as much or little as they wish. There will be monthly meetings from September 2011 (upon IRB approval)-May 2012. During these meetings, the researcher will gather with the participants to discuss the article and any other experiences they share from their classrooms. Meetings should run between 1-2 hours.

The discussions will be held in a private room at the [redacted] (reserved in the [redacted] Library- this will vary upon room availability). Meetings will be set up as a professional learning community in which everyone can speak when they feel inclined. The researcher will facilitate the conversation and keep participants focused on the article using a *constructivist approach* (Ormrod, 2011). When the discussion on the article has concluded, participants may share any experiences in their classroom if they wish. Using a *narrative approach* (Hatch, 2002, p. 28) to make meaning, the researcher will listen for participants to make sense of their experiences through story. Other methods of collecting narrative data will be through journals and conversations between the researcher and the participants.

All discussions will be audio recorded and these recordings will be locked in Dr. Thayer-Bacon's office-[redacted]. No participant will be referred to by name, rather they will have the opportunity to choose a pseudonym that they will be referred to in the transcription as well as the final paper. Once each conversation is completed, it will be transcribed by the researcher and saved as a word document on a password-protected computer as well as on a USB flash-drive that will be kept in a locked office (Claxton Rm. 420). The researcher will use personal and peer

reflexivity; defined as “the process of personally and academically reflecting on lived experiences in ways that reveal deep connections between the writer and his or her subject” (Goodall, 2000, p. 137); while reading the transcripts. Additionally, the researcher will look for *thematic analysis* (“a process that involves coding and then segregating the data by codes into data clumps for further analysis and description” (Glesne, 2006, p. 147) to code and analyze the data collected.

V. SPECIFIC RISKS AND PROTECTION MEASURES

Due to students being recruiting by a former instructor, participation is completely optional. Students will only be approached at the completion of the course after their grades are final. They will be fully informed of their rights and that they may quit the study at any time with no consequences. There are no known physical risks to the participants. There is always a possibility that through self-reflection during the conversations, the participant may begin discussing previous events that had been emotionally hurtful to them in the past. If necessary, the participant will be provided with information on counseling.

VI. BENEFITS

Information obtained from the participants will be added to the body of knowledge regarding the use of social justice readings and discussion in teacher education and professional development.

VII. METHODS FOR OBTAINING "INFORMED CONSENT" FROM PARTICIPANTS

The participants will be informed of the requirements of the study and advised of their rights as a participant. They will also be notified that they may discontinue participation at any time. Participation will be voluntary and there will be no reward for participating. Informed consent will be obtained prior to the start of the first conversation**.** Signed informed consent documents will be kept for the duration of the project in a locked file in Dr. Thayer-Bacon’s office- [redacted] Notes will be kept in a separate file cabinet in Dr. Thayer-Bacon’s office- [redacted] They will be destroyed in three years.

VIII. QUALIFICATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATOR(S) TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

The principal investigator, Brittany Aronson, is a 2nd year doctoral student at the [redacted]. The student’s faculty advisor, Dr. Barbara Thayer-Bacon, will counsel the investigator through the research project.

IX. FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT TO BE USED IN THE RESEARCH

Conversations will be conducted in a space where the participants feel comfortable. All conversations will be recorded with a digital audio recording device.

X. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PRINCIPAL/CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S):

By compliance with the policies established by the Institutional Review Board of The University of Tennessee the principal investigator(s) subscribe to the principles stated in "The Belmont Report" and standards of professional ethics in all research, development, and related activities involving human subjects under the auspices of [redacted]. The principal investigator(s) further agree that:

1. **Approval will be obtained from the Institutional Review Board prior to instituting any change in this research project.**

2. **Development of any unexpected risks will be immediately reported to Research Compliance Services.**

3. **An annual review and progress report (Form R) will be completed and submitted when requested by the Institutional Review Board.**

4. **Signed informed consent documents will be kept for the duration of the project and for at least three years thereafter at a location approved by the Institutional Review Board.**

XI. SIGNATURES

ALL SIGNATURES MUST BE ORIGINAL. The Principal Investigator should keep the original copy of the Form B and submit a copy with original signatures for review. Type the name of each individual above the appropriate signature line. Add signature lines for all Co-Principal Investigators, collaborating and student investigators, faculty advisor(s), department head of the Principal Investigator, and the Chair of the Departmental Review Committee. The following information should be typed verbatim, with added categories where needed:

Principal Investigator: _____Brittany Aronson_____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Advisor (if any): _____ Dr. Barbara Thayer-Bacon_____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

XII. DEPARTMENT REVIEW AND APPROVAL

The application described above has been reviewed by the IRB departmental review committee and has been approved. The DRC further recommends that this application be reviewed as:

[ ] Expedited Review -- Category(s): _____

OR

[ ] Full IRB Review

Chair, DRC: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Department Head: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Protocol sent to Research Compliance Services for final approval on (Date) : _____

Approved:
Research Compliance Services
Office of Research
1534 White Avenue

Signature: _____ Date: _____

For additional information on Form B, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer or by phone at (865) 974-3466.

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT
"Critical Teacher Pedagogy: How do Teacher Interns' Ideologies Fluctuate throughout a Social Justice Discourse? "

INTRODUCTION
You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to understand what intern teachers' preconceptions are about education and how they might be influenced and possibly change throughout a social justice discourse.

PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY
You will be participating in conversations with the researcher. This is not meant to be a formal interview, but rather a discussion in which you can share reflections from selected social justice readings and your experiences in the classroom.

RISKS
Due to students being recruiting by a former instructor, participation is completely optional. Students will only be approached at the completion of the course and their grades are final. They will be fully informed of their rights and that they may quit the study at any time with no consequences. There are no known physical risks to the participants. There is always a possibility that through self-reflection during the conversations, the participant may begin discussing previous events that had been emotionally hurtful to them in the past. If necessary, the participant will be provided with information on counseling.

BENEFITS
The benefit of participating in this research study is to help contribute to the body of knowledge regarding social justice and teacher education.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The information in the study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to the researcher conducting the study and her advisor. No reference will be made in oral or written reports, which could link you to the study. You will be asked to select a pseudonym of your choice, which will be used to refer to you throughout the study.

CONTACT INFORMATION
If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study,) you may contact the researcher, Brittany Aronson, at [redacted], and ([redacted] or [redacted] .If you have questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at [redacted]

PARTICIPATION
Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT
I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.
Participant's signature _____ Date _____
Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX G

FIRST YEAR TEACHER IRB APPROVAL LETTER

[redacted]

October 11, 2012

IRB#: 8966 B

TITLE: First Year Teachers' Pedagogy and Practice in the Classroom

Aronson, Brittany
Education Psychology & Counseling
[redacted]

Thayer-Bacon, Barbara
Educational Psychology & Counseling
[redacted]

Your project listed above has been reviewed and granted IRB approval under expedited review.

This approval is for a period ending one year from the date of this letter. Please make timely submission of renewal or prompt notification of project termination (see item #3 below).

Responsibilities of the investigator during the conduct of this project include the following:

1. To obtain prior approval from the Committee before instituting any changes in the project.
2. If signed consent forms are being obtained from subjects, they must be stored for at least three years following completion of the project
3. To submit a Form D to report changes in the project or to report termination at 12-month or less intervals.

The Committee wishes you every success in your research endeavor. This office will send you a renewal notice (Form R) on the anniversary of your approval date.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

Compliances

Enclosure

APPENDIX H

FORM B APPLICATION

All applicants are encouraged to read the Form B guidelines. If you have any questions as you develop your Form B, contact your Departmental Review Committee (DRC) or Research Compliance Services at the Office of Research.

FORM B

IRB # _____

Date Received in OR _____

[redacted]

Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects

I. IDENTIFICATION OF PROJECT

1. **Principal Investigator:**
   Brittany Aronson
   [redacted]

   Faculty Advisor:
   Dr. Barbara Thayer-Bacon
   [redacted]

2. Project Classification: *Enter one of the following terms as appropriate:* **Dissertation, Thesis, Class Project, Research Project**, or **Other** (Please specify)
Research Project (Dissertation data)

3. Title of Project:
First Year Teachers' Pedagogy and Practice in the Classroom

4. Starting Date: *Specify the intended starting date or insert* "**Upon IRB Approval**"**:**
Upon IRB Approval

5. Estimated Completion Date: August 30, 2013

6. External Funding *(if any):* N/A

- **Grant/Contract Submission Deadline:**
- **Funding Agency:**
- **Sponsor ID Number *(if known)*:**
- **UT Proposal Number *(if known):***

II. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this research project is to determine how first year teachers' ideologies and preconceptions are influenced by previous social justice discourses from a former study. A group of intern teachers participated in monthly meetings after reading social justice literature. We discussed the issues at hand in an open format. This continued study seeks to determine if such discussions influence first year teachers in their practice (i.e. praxis). Butin (2009) argues that SFE (social foundations in education) is necessary for pre-service teachers to be able to think critically about their practice and make the necessary changes in our educational system. Teachers need to understand the role of reflective practice with an aim to empower their students. This is something that *teacher educators* need to integrate into their own practice. Butin states, " . . today's soft, safe code- words"- multiculturalism, diversity, and urban education- may alleviate white guilt and meet program requirements, but do little to truly help prospective teachers grapple with the very real issues of white privilege, power, and racism" (p. 224). Furthermore, this research is necessary because scholars such as Barnett, Hopkins-Thompson, & Hoke (2002) report that up to 50% of new teachers leave high-poverty, diverse schools within three years. Clearly, there is a strong need to address the issue of teacher preparedness. This research projects seeks to determine if social justice discourse is meaningful for teacher preparation.

III. DESCRIPTION AND SOURCE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Participants will be first year teachers during the 2012-2013 school year in the [redacted] School System. Upon IRB approval, the researcher will recruit previous students in Educational Psychology 401, a course emphasizing the connection of theory to practice and who also participated in former professional development sessions related to social justice. Their participation will be voluntary and they will be informed in writing regarding the purpose and procedures of the study. All participants will be over the age

of 18. The participant group will not exclude participants based on race, social class and location. If they agree with the informed consent, they will be asked to sign the form and then begin the research project.

IV. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Participants will voluntarily participate in this study. Upon IRB approval, participating teachers will be asked to journal their experiences and reflections from their classrooms in regards to their own teaching methods. Additionally, as the researcher I will visit the classroom once a week to observe the teacher in his/her practice. While students may be present in the classroom, *no data will be collected on the students*. The purpose of this research project is solely on the teacher's practice. There will be no video/audio recordings while in the classroom. Rather, the researcher will take field notes documenting the teachers' interactions. There will be monthly interviews held outside of the classroom which will be transcribed and coded. The researcher will facilitate the interviews by asking the teacher about the challenges, difficulties, and successes teacher's had in the classroom using a *constructivist approach* (Ormrod, 2011). Using a *narrative approach* (Hatch, 2002, p. 28) to make meaning, the researcher will listen for participants to make sense of their experiences through story. Other methods of collecting narrative data will be through journals and conversations between the researcher and the participants.

All interviews held outside of the classroom will be audio recorded and these recordings will be locked in **Dr. Thayer-Bacon's office-** [redacted]**.** No participant will be referred to by name, rather they will have the opportunity to choose a pseudonym that they will be referred to in the transcription as well as the final paper**.** Once each conversation is completed, it will be transcribed by the researcher and saved as a word document on a password-protected computer as well as on a USB flash-drive that will be kept in a locked office ([redacted]). The researcher will use personal and peer reflexivity; defined as "the process of personally and academically reflecting on lived experiences in ways that reveal deep connections between the writer and his or her subject" (Goodall, 2000, p. 137); while reading the transcripts. Additionally, the researcher will look for *thematic analysis* ("a process that involves coding and then segregating the data by codes into data clumps for further analysis and description" (Glesne, 2006, p. 147) to code and analyze the data collected.

V. SPECIFIC RISKS AND PROTECTION MEASURES

Due to participants being recruiting by a former instructor, participation is completely optional. They will be fully informed of their rights and that they may quit the study at any time with no consequences. There are no known physical risks to the participants. There is always a possibility that through self-reflection during the conversations, the participant may begin discussing previous events that had been emotionally hurtful to them in the past. If necessary, the participant will be provided with information on counseling.

VI. BENEFITS

Information obtained from the participants will be added to the body of knowledge regarding the content used in teacher education programs and professional development.

VII. METHODS FOR OBTAINING "INFORMED CONSENT" FROM PARTICIPANTS

The participants will be informed of the requirements of the study and advised of their rights as a participant. They will also be notified that they may discontinue participation at any time. Participation will be voluntary and there will be no reward for participating. Informed consent will be obtained prior to the start of the first conversation**.** Signed informed consent documents will be kept for the duration of the project in a locked file in Dr. Thayer-Bacon's office- [redacted]

[redacted] Notes will be kept in a separate file cabinet in Dr. Thayer-Bacon's office- [redacted]. They will be destroyed in three years.

VIII. QUALIFICATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATOR(S) TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

The principal investigator, Brittany Aronson, is a 3rd year doctoral student at the [redacted] The student's faculty advisor, Dr. Barbara Thayer-Bacon, will counsel the investigator through the research project.

IX. FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT TO BE USED IN THE RESEARCH
Interviews will be conducted in a space where the participants feel comfortable. All interviews will be recorded with a digital audio recording device.

X. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PRINCIPAL/CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S):

By compliance with the policies established by the Institutional Review Board of [redacted] the principal investigator(s) subscribe to the principles stated in "The Belmont Report" and standards of professional ethics in all research, development, and related activities involving human subjects under the auspices of The University of Tennessee. The principal investigator(s) further agree that:

5. **Approval will be obtained from the Institutional Review Board prior to instituting any change in this research project.**

6. **Development of any unexpected risks will be immediately reported to Research Compliance Services.**

7. **An annual review and progress report (Form R) will be completed and submitted when requested by the Institutional Review Board.**

8. **Signed informed consent documents will be kept for the duration of the project and for at least three years thereafter at a location approved by the Institutional Review Board.**

XI. SIGNATURES

ALL SIGNATURES MUST BE ORIGINAL. The Principal Investigator should keep the original copy of the Form B and submit a copy with original signatures for review. Type the name of each individual above the appropriate signature line. Add signature lines for all Co-Principal Investigators, collaborating and student investigators, faculty advisor(s), department head of the Principal Investigator, and the Chair of the Departmental Review Committee. The following information should be typed verbatim, with added categories where needed:

Principal Investigator: _____Brittany Aronson_____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Advisor (if any): _____ Dr. Barbara Thayer-Bacon_____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

XII. DEPARTMENT REVIEW AND APPROVAL

The application described above has been reviewed by the IRB departmental review committee and has been approved. The DRC further recommends that this application be reviewed as:

[ ] Expedited Review -- Category(s): _____

OR

[ ] Full IRB Review

Chair, DRC: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Department Head: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Protocol sent to Research Compliance Services for final approval on (Date) : _____

Approved:
Research Compliance Services
Office of Research
1534 White Avenue

Signature: _____ Date: _____

For additional information on Form B, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer or by phone at (865) 974-3466.

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

First Year Teachers' Pedagogy and Practice in the Classroom

INTRODUCTION
You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to observe first year teachers' pedagogy put in to practice (praxis) and determine how social justice discussions have influenced teacher's praxis.

PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY
You will allow the researcher to come observe you in the classroom. You will also undergo monthly interviews to discussion your challenges, obstacles, and successes in the classroom.

RISKS
Participation in this study is completely optional. You will be fully informed of your rights and that you may quit the study at any time with no consequences. There are no known physical risks to the participants. There is always a possibility that through self-reflection during the conversations, you may begin discussing previous events that had been emotionally hurtful to you in the past. If necessary, the you will be provided with information on counseling.

BENEFITS
The benefit of participating in this research study is to help contribute to the body of knowledge regarding teacher education programs.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The information in the study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to the researcher conducting the study and her advisor. No reference will be made in oral or written reports, which could link you to the study. You will be asked to select a pseudonym of your choice, which will be used to refer to you throughout the study.

CONTACT INFORMATION
If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study,) you may contact the researcher, Brittany Aronson, at [redacted], and [redacted] or [redacted] .If you have questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at [redacted].

PARTICIPATION
Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT
I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.
Participant's signature _____ Date _____
Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX I

SCHOOL COUNTY APPROVAL LETTER

2012-2013 School Year

September 10, 2012

Brittany Aronson
[redacted]

Ms. Aronson:

You are granted permission to contact appropriate building-level administrators concerning the conduct of your proposed research study: *First Year Teachers' Pedagogy and Practice in the Classroom.* Final approval of any research study taking place within the [redacted] County School system is contingent upon acceptance by the principal(s) at the site(s) where the study will be conducted. Include a copy of this permission form when seeking approval from the principal(s).

In all research studies names of individuals, groups, or schools may not appear in the text of the study unless specific permission has been granted through this office. The principal researcher is required to furnish this office with one copy of the completed research document.

Good luck with your studies. Do not hesitate to contact me at [redacted] if you need further assistance or clarification of the research policies of [redacted] County Schools.

Yours truly,

[redacted]
John Beckett
Supervisor
Research and Evaluation

Project Number: 1213008

/pl

2013-2014 School Year

July 11, 2013

Brittany Aronson
[redacted]

Ms. Aronson:

You are granted permission to contact appropriate building-level administrators concerning the conduct of your proposed research study: *Beginning Teachers' Pedagogy and Practice in the Classroom.* Final approval of any research study taking place within the [redacted] County School system is contingent upon acceptance by the principal(s) at the site(s) where the study will be conducted. Include a copy of this permission form when seeking approval from the principal(s).

In all research studies names of individuals, groups, or schools may not appear in the text of the study unless specific permission has been granted through this office. The principal researcher is required to furnish this office with one copy of the completed research document.

Good luck with your studies. Do not hesitate to contact me at [redacted] if you need further assistance or clarification of the research policies of [redacted] County Schools.

Yours truly,

[redacted]
Supervisor
Research and Evaluation

Project Number: 1314002

/pl

APPENDIX J

SARAH WHITE OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

2012-2013 School Year **Second Grade**[63]	**2013-2014 School Year** **Third Grade**
October 5th 2012 7:30am-2:30pm	September 12th 2013 7:30am-2:30pm
October 10th 2012 7:30am-2:30pm	September 16th 2013 7:30am-2:30pm
October 18th 2012 7:30am-2:30pm	September 19th 2013 7:30am-2:30pm
October 25th 2012 7:30am-2:30pm	September 25th 2013 7:30am-2:30pm
November 8th 2012 8:00am-11:30am	October 1st 2013 8:00am-11:30am
November 20th 2012 12:40pm- 2:00pm	October 9th 2013 12:40pm- 2:00pm
December 5th 2012 12:40pm- 2:00pm	October 10th 2013 12:40pm- 2:00pm
January 15th 2013 12:40pm- 2:00pm	October 25th 2013 8:00am-11:30am
January 29th 2013 12:40pm- 2:00pm	October 31st 2013 8:00am- 10:00am
January 30th 2013 8:00am-11:30am	November 13th 2013 12:40pm- 2:00pm
February 12th 12:40pm- 2:00pm	November 19th 2013 8:00am-11:30am
February 14th 2013 8:00am-11:30am	November 26th 2013 8:00am-11:00am
February 21st 2013 8:00am-11:30am	December 9th 2013 12:40pm- 2:00pm
February 27th 2013 12:40pm- 2:00pm	December 12th 2013 8:00am-11:00am
March 11th 2013 12:40pm- 2:00pm	December 18th 2013 12:40pm- 2:00pm
March 19th 2013 8:00am-11:30am	January 21st 2014 8:00am- 10:00am
April 4th 2013 8:00am-11:30am	May 1st 2014[64] 12:40pm- 2:00pm
April 8th -April 12th 2013 12:40pm- 2:00pm	
April 18th 2013 8:00-11:30am	

[63] I was only in Sarah's classroom for two visits during the month of November 2012 because I was away one week at the American Educational Studies Conference in Seattle

APPENDIX K

SEMI-STRUCTRED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview # 1

1. Tell me about yourself: short life story; self-definitions of yourself; why you became a teacher
2. Tell me how you became involved with the [type of Program] at [your university].
3. What do you believe is the purpose of education? The school?
4. Tell me about the role you feel teachers play in society.
5. What kinds of things do you believe you need to know to teach?
6. What stands out for you in your teacher preparation in that program?
7. How do you define diversity?
8. Describe the preparation you had to teach diverse students.
9. Do you believe multicultural awareness is a necessary part of teacher preparation? Explain why or why not.
10. Describe the diversity in your current classroom. (*Potential follow-up questions)*
    a. How does this influence your impact on students?
    b. How do your students affect you?
    c. How do you address diversity in the classroom?
    d. What role do you see diversity playing in students' academic success?
11. As teacher, how do you feel *you* are perceived in your school? (by students, faculty, parents, the community, etc.)
12. Do you see your *Whiteness* playing a part in your teaching pedagogy/praxis? (If not a White teacher, how does your race impact your own teaching?)
13. Do you, and if so how, adapt methods to meet diverse student needs?
14. How do you become aware and informed of your students' backgrounds? What does it look like in your classroom?
15. How you learned from your students?
16. When discussing diverse issues in the classroom, or a topic becomes controversial, how do you handle that situation? (*Potential follow-up question)*
    a. Has there ever been an instance where you've had to address such an issue?
17. When you hear *teaching for social justice* or *culturally relevant pedagogy*, what does this mean to you?

---

and another week at the National Association of Multicultural Educators Conference in Philadelphia. Additionally, my time was limited in December due to benchmark testing and the holiday break between December 21, 2012-January 8, 2013. My observations ended in April 2013 the first year when the university semester ended.

[64] This last visit was to collect additional demographic information from Sarah.

a. How does this affect your thinking? Your beliefs? Your actions?
b. What does it mean to be a change agent?

Interview #2 (Suggested questions regarding CRE)

High Expectations

1. How do you model, scaffold, and provide clarification for your students?
2. Do you feel you use your students' strengths as instructional starting points? If so, how?
3. How do you communicate your determination to help students succeed?
4. Do you consider yourself going above and beyond your traditional required assignments? If so, explain.
5. How do you create nurturing and cooperative environments?
    a. Have any classroom inequities occurred? If so, how have you addressed them?
    b. Have do you foster sense of belonging in the classroom?
6. How do you communicate you expectations for student behavior and structured routines?

Cultural Competence

7. How do you help students to develop positive ethnic and cultural identities?
8. Do you reshape the prescribed curriculum to meet your students' needs? (i.e. using work of authors of color or created or brought in materials to teach about other subjects)
9. How do you include families and the community to enhance your instruction? (i.e. invite families into your classroom)
10. Do you display pictures depicting people of color in the classroom? How do you celebrate diversity throughout the year?
11. How do you connect to students' "funds of knowledge?" (notion that school learning must be connected to children's prior knowledge)
    a. How have you learned about your students? (i.e. home visits, stories about themselves, extracurricular activities, using examples from the children's lives to teach about concepts)
    b. How have you developed relationships with your students?
12. Do you have students who use language(s) other than Standard English?
    a. If so, how do you address this in the classroom?
    b. Do you try to build bridges between students' home discourses and school learning?
13. Do you cater to students' specific learning styles (i.e. cooperative learning vs. independent work)

Critical Consciousness

14. How do you encourage students to question, examine, or even dispute power relations in your lessons?
15. How do you model attitudes of equity and compassion towards others?
16. Do you include students in the decision making aspects of the classroom? If so, how? How do you encourage student autonomy?

APPENDIX L

QUESTIONNAIRE

Teacher Questionnaire

Please tell me about your background. Where did you grow up? What were your family dynamics? What kind of school did you attend? Please share as much information about yourself as you feel relevant.

What brought you into the field of education?

Do you have expectations for what type of students you'd like to teach (grade/subject/location)? Be as specific as possible.

What education courses have you taken? Give the name and a brief description of each course.

How would you define cultural competence? (or culturally relevant pedagogy?)

How would you define social justice?

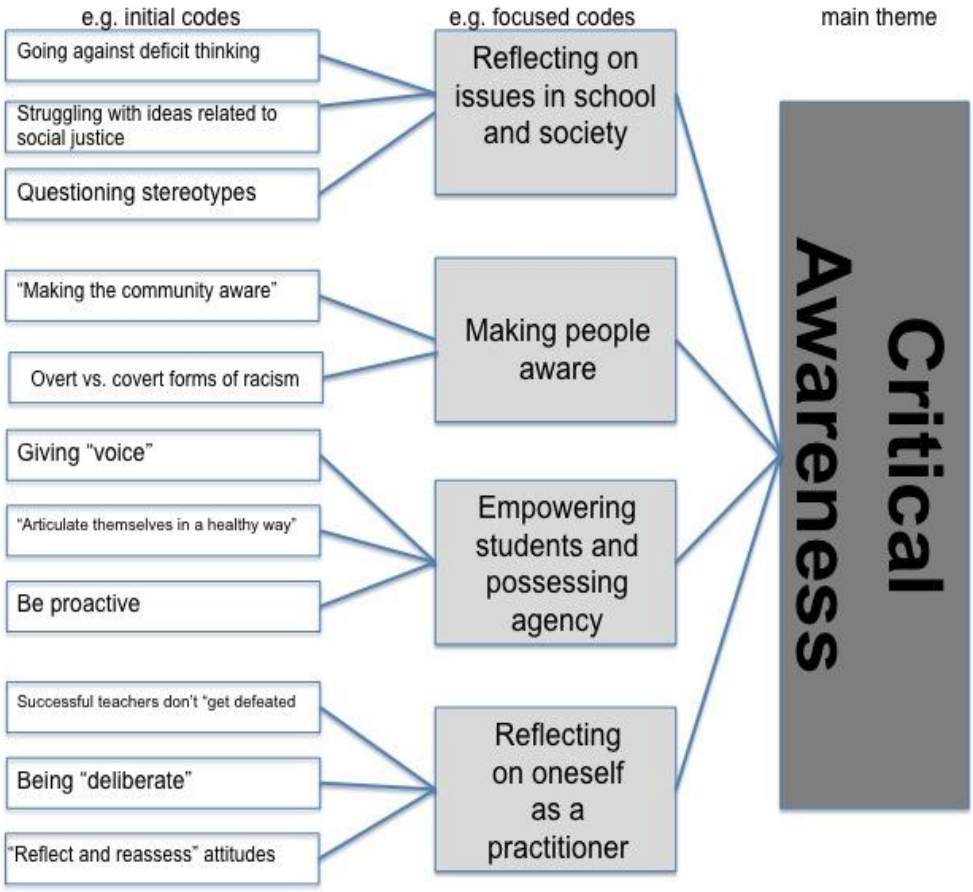
What professional development have you done outside of your required course work? List any organizations you are a member of, conferences you've attended, or readings you have done outside of class.

Location of Fall Placement: _____

APPENDIX M

CODE REPRESENTATION

Saldaña's (2009) description of initial and focused coding techniques and Grbich's (2007) method of *conceptual mapping* guided the data analysis process. Below is an example of extracting initial codes taken from the focus group transcripts conceptualizing them into larger focused codes, and forming a larger core theme. This example is one of main themes *critical awareness* discussed in chapter four.



APPENDIX M

JOURNAL ENTRY

March 2007

We'll call her the Optimistic teacher. It seemed like just yesterday she made the decision that would define her life. Little did she know the decision made, that ordinarily affected people's everyday lives- what they would do from 9 to 5, how they would pay their bills, how they would support their families- would be something far more powerful to her than she could ever explain.

She grew up in a white middle class neighborhood with very little exposure to suffering and the everyday obstacles that existed in this world. Sure she had her own problems- a father who was disabled, and a mother struggling to continue the role of superwomen while becoming a lifelong caretaker, but she never thought to herself, How will I feed myself tonight or I hope I live today. She just continued living her normal everyday live and was granted many opportunities that opened her eyes to all the changes she wanted to make in this world.

She began writing this memoir this evening to record the growth as a teacher and to hold on to for those moments when she knows she will face. Those moments when she feels like she's given her all and has nothing to show for it. She was inspired tonight by the motion picture "Freedom Writers." She saw how one teacher can make a difference in children's lives and believe that it is far too soon for us to give up on this youth that will one day be leading this world. But how? How can we reach young America and show them how important they are to us? In this movie- everyone labeled these children as failures. They never believed they would make it past 10th grade- the year that they are legally allowed to drop out. But this teacher made a difference. The teacher believed in them with such passion that she had to work 3 jobs to pay for resources since the school didn't think the children would capable of using the resources they had for the "smarter" children. How will our children ever believe in themselves if we don't take a risk to believe in them first?

The optimistic teacher thinks the largest problem with our underprivileged youth is the lack of support they have from adults and the examples that have previously been set for them. They are taught that they must put up "barriers" to protect themselves and that the only way to make it through and to "stick" with their own kind. This limits them to learning tolerance and respect for human beings. We shut down the possibility to mold human rights leaders and promoters for peace. We instead further promote violence between one another and hatred for people we don't know. The optimistic teacher came home tonight from watching this movie and when she turned on the television, there was a movie about South Africa. Sure enough, race has once again caused conflict among people. Her eyes started to swell and within minutes tears were dripping down her face. Her heart ached. She thinks to herself- wow, she has been cursed with a burden to care so much for the future generations. She thinks, how can people hate each other so much just because of the amount of pigment in his skin is different. It seems so frivolous. So ridiculous. But what does she know? She is merely another white know it all teacher who wants to "save" the youth. No. She won't accept that. She won't let anyone tell her she can't make a difference, she can't help those who already think they have no chance. She now knows without a doubt in her mind that passion is what drives success- not experience. And if the passion she feels in her heart is worth anything- one day there will be a student who knows how much she cares. She has always had more than she could ever need in her life- she knows its time for me to give back. She doesn't want anything else. She doesn't want a new car, She doesn't want new clothes, She doesn't want fancy jewelry or purses. She just wants to be somewhere where students truly need someone to believe in them. She wants to give them the support they have always wanted but never received.

This is the story of one teacher who had a dream to make a difference in the world. How exactly she went about that is yet to be determined. Who was affected by her presence is soon to be discovered But one thing is for certain. She will make her presence known. She will put every last bit of energy into her calling (for it is not just a job). And for that one child (or hopefully many) lives will be better.

APPENDIX O

LESSON PLAN EXAMPLE

Social Justice Interdisciplinary Lesson Plan

Standards

Science:

1. Embedded inquiry: Ask questions, make logical predictions, plan investigations, and represent data.
2. Interdependence: Investigate the habitats of different kinds of local plants and animals.

Math:

Operations in Algebraic thinking

1. Work with equal groups of objects to gain foundations for multiplication.
2. Determine whether a group of objects (up to 20) has an odd or even number of members, e.g., by pairing objects or counting them by 2s;
3. Write an equation to express an even number as a sum of two equal addends.
4. Use addition to find the total number of objects arranged in rectangular arrays with up to 5 rows and up to 5 columns; write an equation to express the total as a sum of equal addends.

Writing:

Research

1. Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., read a number of books on a single topic to produce a report; record science observations).
2. Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

Reading:

Use active comprehension strategies

1. Check for understanding after reading by drawing conclusions based on evidence gained while reading.
2. Recognize the main idea in picture books and texts.

Social Studies:

1. Understand how groups can cause change at the local, state national and world levels.
2. Recognize individuals have a role in each group in which they participate.

Procedures

Pre-Assessment (April 12):
11:15-11:40 Writing Block

- Use children's literature to discuss socially justice/environmentally friendly
    - Talk about the meaning of social justice and what that means to them

1:30-2:30 Math and Science/Social Studies

- **Introductory Activity- Hook the students into the activity**
    - **Pre-student survey**
        - **Individual student free-write**
        - **Think, pair, share**
    - Empowerment and social justice and how math ties in (video about power of multiplication)
    - Explain what we are going to do next week and getting them to collect cans
    - Do you think there are any connections between math and social justice?
- Ask students are what issues they are concerned with in the school or community?

Day 1:
11:15-11:40 Writing Block
- Begin with photos from around neighborhood
- Go around school (community) and document liter and pollution (using I-pads)

12:30-2:00 Math

- Using repeated addition to do multiplication (Topic 19; Lesson 1;Workmat)

2:00-2:30 Science/Social Studies

- Share pictures and get into discussion groups and talk about implications
- The big picture- of the *why?* How does collecting trash help? What can you do to help?
- Establish purpose for why we are doing what we are doing- talk about the letter
- Animals (pollution)

Day 2:
11:15-11:30 Writing Block
- Research on how litter/pollution affects the larger community

12:30-2:30 Math and Science/Social Studies

- Arrays
    - Using cans and counters to helps visualize counting
    - Writing multiplication sentences from arrays

2:00-2:30 Science/Social Studies
- Brainstorm solutions to improve litter in the community

Day 3:
11:15-11:30 Writing Block
- Use research and photos to begin writing letters to ___

12:30-2:30 Math and Science/Social Studies
- Writing multiplication problems
    - Using students' own problems to reflect an work with one another

Homework: Write multiplication word problem
2:00-2:30 Science/Social Studies
- Continue writing letters

Day 4:
11:15-11:30 Writing Block
- Refining word problems

12:30-2:30 Math
- Multiply using commutative property
    - Use the manipulative to demonstrate how you can multiply in any order
    - Use their word problems and change the order

2:00-2:30 Science/Social Studies
- Continue writing letters
- Presenting letters

Day 5:
11:15-11:30 Writing Block
- Presenting Letters
- Literature about global environment

12:30-2:30 Math and Science/Social Studies
- Review day (work on each other's' math problems)
- Draw pictures to solve each other problems

APPENDIX P

LETTER TO PARENTS ABOUT INTERDISCIPLINARY UNIT

Dear Parents and Families,

In order to make math more relatable to students, I am going to try to increase the connections between "school math" and "real-world math" over the next few weeks.

As a first step in this process, I'd like to ask for your help with an extra homework assignment this week. Students are starting a unit on telling time, and I'd like to help them see how they use time at home.

Their assignment for the week is to come up with a word problem (addition or subtraction) that uses time and that relates to their life. They do not need to have solved the problem, just write it out in question form.

> Example: I go to bed at 8:30. I want to watch a 30-minute show that starts at 8:15. Do I have enough time to watch the show before bed?

Your child may not need any help creating this problem, but if you have time and would like to work with them, I'd love that. I'm hoping that the more students see real-life uses for math, the more they will see its importance.

Please let me know if you have any ideas on how to connect math to home; I'd LOVE your input. Thank you SO much, parents, for always supporting your children (and me)!

Ms. White

APPENDIX Q
CHILDREN'S LITERATURE, NOVELS, AND FILM INCLUDED IN DISSERTATION

The following is a list of the children's literature, novels, and film referred to in this study:

Children's Books

Cherry, L (1990). *The Great Kapok Tree: A Tale of the Amazon Rain Forest.* Orlando, FL: Voyager Books.
Yolan, J. (1996). *Encounter.* Orlando, FL: Voyager Books.

Youth/Adult Literature

Alexie, S. (1993). *The lone ranger tonto fist fight in heaven*. New York, NY: Harper Perennial.
Bell, D. (1992). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism* (*Space Traders).* New York, NY: Basic Books.
Cisneros, S. (1984). *The house on mango street*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
Hinton, S. E. (1967). *The outsiders.* New York, NY: Viking Press.
Kerouac, J. (1957). *On the Road.* Viking Press.
McNaught, B. (1988). Dear Anita: Late night thoughts of an Irish Catholic homosexual. *On being gay: Thoughts on family, faith, and love*, 5-14.
Newman, L. (2013). *A Letter to Harvey: short stories*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
Remarque, E. M. (1929). *All Quiet on the Western Front*. New York, NY: Little, Brown, and Company.
Zinn, H. (1995). *A people's history of the United States.*

Film/Documentaries

Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Movement 1954-1985. PBS Documentary Series.
Howard, R. (Director). (2005). *Cinderella Man* [Motion picture]. Imagine Entertainment.
LaGravenese, R. (Director). (2007). *Freedom Writers* [Motion picture]. MTV Films.

Smith, J. N. (Director). (1995). *Dangerous Minds* [Motion picture]. Hollywood Pictures.

Spielberg, S. (Director). (1998). *Saving Private Ryan* [Motion picture]. Amblin Entertainment.
Yakin, B. (Director). (2000). *Remember the Titans* [Motion picture]. Walt Disney Pictures.

Music

Nas. *It Was Written (Affirmative Action).* New York, NY: Colombia Records, 1996.
Smart Shorties (http://www.smartshorties.com)

VITA

Brittany Aronson was born November 5, 1984 in Hollywood, Florida. She has one older sister, Jessica Jackson and brother-in-law, Patrick Jackson who are both lawyers living in Washington D.C. She grew up in South Florida where she attended public school from K-12. When she was in eighth grade, she was presented with the opportunity to attend a new high school- The College Academy at Broward Community College- allowing her to graduate high school with an Associate's degree on full scholarship. Brittany graduated from her dual college high school with a 5.0 GPA and as salutatorian of her class.

Graduating high school with an Associate's degree at the age of 18, Brittany transferred into the University of Florida's College of Education ProTeach program. It took Brittany two years to complete her Bachelors degree in Elementary Education and at the age of 20, she was not quite ready to enter the workforce. She left the five-year teaching degree program to pursue a Masters degree at Vanderbilt University. She knew she always wanted to pursue a PhD, so she opted to take the longer route and complete a Masters thesis.

After graduating from Vanderbilt in 2007, Brittany taught third and fifth grade in South Florida. She later moved to Atlanta, Georgia to move in with her sister and taught fifth grade there as well. Shortly after, she relocated to Northern Virginia and taught fourth grade outside of Washington D.C. During this time, she began planning where she

might attend graduate school and an opportunity presented itself to her at the University of Tennessee. Brittany began to pursue her Doctor of Philosophy in Education degree at the University of Tennessee in Fall 2010.