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NO MORE ONE AND DONE: THE IMPACT OF A SIX WEEK PROFESSIONAL LEARNING BOOK STUDY ON CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY ON TEACHERS' ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES

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LEARNING BOOK STUDY ON CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY ON

TEACHERS' ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

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Culturally relevant pedagogy is a core value and mindset that involves using students' background knowledge and cultures as tools to propel academic success. CRP entails a curriculum that honors and reflects all students and a variety of perspectives. Students are inspired to become social agents, thus recognizing sociopolitical forces and inequalities within the school system, community, and the world at large. Though researchers have illustrated the positive impact of culturally relevant pedagogy on student outcomes, this practice is not consistently practiced in urban classrooms. The purpose of this study was to explore whether long-term professional development and support influence educators' use of culturally relevant pedagogical practices, as well as the possible impact on their students. Professional development was in the form of a book study using *No More Culturally Irrelevant Teaching* by Souto-Manning et al. (2018). A case study design was employed to explore the phenomenon. The research question was: In what ways does engaging in a professional learning book study on culturally relevant pedagogy influence teachers' attitudes and practices in the classroom and what impact does this have on their students? The study was conducted via Webex over a period of 6 weeks. During this time period, participants were tasked with reading 16 pages per week. At the end of each session, participants debriefed the content of the readings. They were

also asked to fill out surveys and questionnaires to determine whether they were using the information and strategies from the book in their classrooms. Results yielded three main themes: (a) lack of time, (b) the challenge of translating theory into practice, and (c) comradery and connections among educators. Results indicate further development is needed in the area of sociopolitical consciousness. Ultimately, the results of the study will be used to design a professional learning series on culturally relevant teaching.

DEDICATION

First and foremost, I dedicate this dissertation to God who gave me the strength, perseverance, and wisdom to complete this project, which is a testimony that "All things are possible with God" (Matthew 19:26).

In addition, a heartfelt gratitude to my family and friends for their support, love, and patience during this journey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

In the United States, at least 50% of school-age students are identified as students of color (Souto-Manning et al., 2018). Based on the current rate of enrollment in the public-school system, minority students will eventually outnumber White students, with a student body made up of 25% Latinx students, 16% African American students, and 5% Asian students (Kibler & Chapman, 2018). Despite these demographics, the curriculum is often designed to project Anglo-American characters/figures and themes in literacy (Kibler & Chapman, 2018; Souto-Manning et al., 2018). It is well documented there is an achievement gap and issues of inequity between marginalized groups (i.e., minority students and English language learners) and White students (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015; Kibler & Chapman, 2018; Souto-Manning et al., 2018). For instance, 51.2% of White students scored proficient on the 2018 New York English language arts (ELA) state exam compared to 15.9% of African American students and 15.5% of Hispanic students (New York State Education Department, 2019). To add to these ills, minority and linguistically diverse students are often labeled as having academic deficiencies and thus are disproportionately referred for special education services (Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Souto-Manning et al., 2018). Ladson-Billings (2009) stated there is a 35% to 50% high school dropout rate among African American students.

Inequities in the school system among marginalized populations have been an ongoing topic of discussion for decades. Though legislative actions and programs have been sanctioned to address these issues, the results have been slow and inconsistent. Recently, the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which began in 2019, has shed

light on these inequities, not only within the walls of urban schools but society as well. In different school systems, it has been noted that students of color did not have equal access to resources when schools were forced to convert to remote learning (Jones et al., 2021). This included items such as tablets and computers, as well as the internet services needed to participate in online classes (Jones et al., 2021). Other issues included parents who did not have the privilege to work from home because they were front line essential workers (Jones et al., 2021). Some students were left at home without parental supervision and had to manage siblings who were also receiving instruction from home. This placed a burden on students who had to act as surrogate caregivers (Jones et al., 2021). As a result, many students did not have the time and focus to maintain their schoolwork, leading to low attendance rates, which negatively affected their grades (Jones et al., 2021). In addition, a disproportionate amount of Black and Brown parents, who were essential workers, contracted COVID, which added further stressors to urban households (Jones et al., 2021). Not only students were affected by the pandemic. Souto-Manning and Melvin (2022) conducted a qualitative study of early childhood teachers of color working in urban school environments and discovered these educators experienced high incidences of stress, poor mental hygiene, and health challenges. Undoubtedly, these factors affected their personal and professional lives. These and other issues illustrated inequalities in urban environments, also highlighting structural racism in the school system, which is considered a microcosm of larger society. Naturally, these inequities in the school system negatively affect society as a whole. Underserved and under-performing students of color are inadequately prepared to be self-sufficient, productive, and independent members of society, which leads to many social ills (e.g., crime, mental

health issues, unemployment, broken families, substance abuse, etc.). These issues can have long-term implications at the school and community level.

Purpose of the Study

Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) is one construct to employ to address these systemic issues. CRP is a philosophy and practice in which educators integrate students' background knowledge and cultural assets into the curriculum to maximize their performance (curricular items include materials, lessons, and topics that reflect the student population). In classrooms where teachers embrace CRP, students are better able to relate to the curriculum, which can increase engagement and lead to academic gains (Souto-Manning et al., 2018). Through CRP, educators and students identify and reflect upon sociopolitical forces that have historically oppressed people of color and they work to shift this narrative. The purpose of the current study was to determine whether a professional learning book study on CRP helped to influence educators' attitudes and practices. The title of the book was, *No More Culturally Irrelevant Teaching*, by Souto-Manning et al. (2018). The study was conducted with educators who service students of color in Title 1 schools.

Researchers and educators have confirmed the efficacy of CRP. Souto-Manning et al. (2018) noted studies illustrated increased engagement and interest in students exposed to culturally relevant texts during lessons. For example, they highlighted a qualitative study involving middle school students of Hispanic heritage, during which English language learners were exposed to texts that reflected their cultures and home languages. Educators used strategies, such as cognates, translations, vocabulary building, and use of students' prior knowledge. Students who were privy to these culturally

relevant practices exhibited higher comprehension of the texts and academic gains in literacy. Overall, the Souto-Manning research team, which consisted of New York City school teachers, relayed and cited several examples of how educators employing culturally relevant principles positively affected students of color.

Conversely, Souto-Manning et al. (2018) provided several non-examples of culturally relevant teaching in order to emphasize the harm that could be caused to children of color when this practice is not accurately implemented into classroom routines. One example was taken from a Title 1 classroom in New York City with a high population of African American and Hispanic students. The kindergarten teacher, as part of a unit on Queens and Kings, conducted a read aloud of a fairytale in which the royal characters were all Caucasian. The researchers noted some of the minority students showed a lack of focus. In particular, one student of color stated she too could be a princess, and other students stated their boredom with the text. The researchers noted the importance of embedding diverse characters and themes into the curriculum to maximize interest and motivation, which can lead to positive academic outcomes and social emotional well-being. For instance, the educator in this case could have included stories of royal Indigenous characters as part of this mandated standards-based unit on kings and queens.

Based on another anecdote from the Souto-Manning et al. (2018) study, the researchers highlighted a White educator from New York City. The majority of the students in the school were White from middle-class households; however, prior to the study there was a dramatic increase in the Hispanic population. Accordingly, the teacher prepared a unit on Mexican heritage, though many of her Latinx students appeared

disinterested. After investigating the matter, two findings emerged. The first was that not all the students were of Mexican descent. This is a common mishap among educators who sometimes place all Latinx students into one generalized ethnic group. The second wat that the books provided to the students maintained negative stereotypes about Mexican people. A major principle of CRP is to educate oneself about students' diverse backgrounds and not to cause further harm by continuing stereotypical rhetoric.

In addition, New York school district leaders designed a culturally responsive and sustaining framework and have mandated professional development (PD) and the implementation of this practice in New York schools (New York State Education Department, n.d.-a). The current research study reflects an initial step in introducing these principles to educators, thus aiding in the formation of culturally relevant teachers.

My Study

Though CRP has received much attention in the research community and school systems, the practice is not consistently implemented into the curriculum or practiced daily in classrooms (Muhammad & Mosley, 2021; Souto-Manning et al., 2018). According to the literature, there are many obstacles that hamper the implementation of this practice, such as high-stakes testing, the use of prepackaged curricula, time constraints, and lack of culturally relevant materials (Souto-Manning et al., 2018). As such, this study was conducted to explore whether PD in the area of CRP affected the attitudes and practices of the participants. My first goal was to ascertain teachers' attitudes regarding CRP, which began with reflection on their beliefs and pedagogical skills in this area of study. Second, I sought a first-hand account of the barriers preventing CRP from being practiced with fidelity to enable administrators and other

leaders to develop means to navigate these obstacles. Third, long-term training was provided in the form of a 6-week book study. Educators were monitored and surveyed to determine whether the training yielded a shift in their attitudes and practices. Finally, educators were asked to gauge the impact of this training on their classroom practices and student outcomes.

The rationale was that providing educators with long-term training may strengthen pedagogues' practices and encourage teachers to implement CRP into their daily routines, thus benefiting students. CRP may be practiced more consistently if educators are afforded the training, support, and tools to understand the core principles of CRP.

Theoretical Framework

Literacy is a complex concept. In the most basic terms, literacy can be defined as a mode of communication via reading and writing, which involves the deconstruction, decoding, and interpretation of symbols. However, a more encompassing definition entails the communication and expression of ideas as a subjective experience rooted in historical and sociopolitical contexts. Furthermore, past experiences and schemas dictate how people process information (Gee, 2013). For this reason, it is essential for educators to be aware of students' backgrounds and experiences to support students in accessing academic content. It is important for educators to honor and view diverse communication patterns as assets and use and incorporate these assets into the curriculum, even if they do not align with traditional academic standards. This is one of the key components of culturally relevant and culturally responsive teaching.

This view of literacy stems from a relativist and emic positionality, which dictates there are multiple realities and truths (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Reality and truth are subjective experiences based on one's background, values, experiences, and position within formal and informal communities. In this vein, conducting a study is a cooperative experience shared by the researcher and participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Based on this ontological and epistemological stance, the theoretical lens for this study was critical theory, a political philosophy that stems from the Frankfurt School in Germany, a group of scholars in the pre-WWI period, which took their notions of Marxism (political economy) and created social theories centered around the need to understand power and oppression to theorize human interactions and lives. Critical theorists defend the human and civil rights of underserved populations against powerful institutions and predatory groups. This is the foundational underpinning for CRP and critical pedagogy. The latter originates from Brazil, where Paulo Freire (1984) introduced an English version of his book, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, a work that highlighted the ways in which power oppresses citizenry. I used both pedagogies as conceptual frameworks in the current study.

According to Foley et al. (2015), critical pedagogy was created to address the domination and oppression of marginalized populations in the school system and the larger society. The basis of this philosophy is to promote critical skills and collaboration between educators and students. In addition, students are encouraged to use their cultural assets to access academic content, as well as solve real-world problems. Critical pedagogy has several guiding principles wherein pedagogues recognize that meaning is rooted in context; therefore, they seek knowledge from individual experiences rather than

labeling groups within political contexts. Because experiences are context based and related to knowledge acquisition, standardized measures (e.g., national assessments in schools) are frowned upon. Instead of focusing solely on race and ethnicity, critical pedagogy encompasses gender, sexism, sexual orientation, and other "isms" created to form division and caste systems. Followers of critical pedagogy believe in the distribution of wealth and resources and therefore fiercely advocate for underserved populations. Though it applies to all major societal institutions and governance, critical pedagogy has gained more traction within the realm of education due to issues of inequity between social classes and ethnic groups.

Ladson-Billings (2009) was greatly influenced by the work of Paulo Freire. As an offshoot of critical pedagogy, Ladson-Billings developed CRP as an asset-based approach to teaching students of color and coined the term CRP after her seminal 1988–1991 study on the common characteristics of successful teachers of African American students. Based on the findings of the study, Ladson-Billings devised three tenets, including academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical awareness. Ladson-Billings (2014) has consistently used these components over the course of her career; however, after becoming dismayed by the misuse and misconceptions related to her work, she has extended her conceptualization of this framework.

In *Culturally Relevant Pedagogy 2.0: A.K.A the Remix*, Ladson-Billings (2014) shared the evolution of her thinking regarding the principles of CRP. First, she acknowledged that culture encompasses not only race but also social class, gender, sexual orientation, and ability group. Second, Ladson-Billings discussed the fluidity of culture, which due to social influences can morph over time. For example, some well-meaning

teachers include hip-hop (most notably, rap) in their curriculum to connect with their

students of color; however, hip-hop is an important part of youth culture in breaking

through the barriers of race. Furthermore, not all students of color relate to hip-hop. The

key is to build a relationship with students to discover their interests and cultural assets,

which can be used as part of the curriculum. Third, Ladson-Billings (2017) stated the

CRP principle least understood and practiced by educators is the sociopolitical strand.

Educators should be aware of historical power structures that negatively affect students of

color. Equally as important, students need to be made aware of these structural issues and

taught how to enact change through dialogue, critical thinking, and action; thus, breaking

the cycle of oppression. The issues in society are a reflection of those occurring within

the school system; therefore, sustainable change should begin at the root, the place where

students learn about rules, order, ethics, and morality. Practitioners need to fully

understand the foundational concepts of these principles. CRP is a complex ideological

concept that should be adopted as a lifestyle for those seeking social justice and equity

for marginalized populations. This reinforces the need for in-depth and ongoing training

in this area, which was the aim of this research study.

This study entailed exploring whether long-term PD, monitoring, and support in the area

of CRP influenced educators' attitudes, beliefs, and practices in this area. The target

population in the current study was schools in an urban environment with a high

population of minority students. I used critical pedagogy as a lens to determine whether

educators were applying the principles of CRP in their classrooms and the impact of this

application on students. These principles included (a) educators seeking knowledge of

their students' backgrounds, culture, and interests; (b) the use of materials in the

9

classroom that reflect the student population; (c) allowing students different methods/modes to express academic success; (d) the use of collaboration and project-based learning; and (e) presentation of real-world issues and topics based on student interests. In addition, teachers were asked to report whether there was an impact on their classroom practices and students. These parameters were used to answer the research question: In what ways does engaging in a professional learning book study on culturally relevant pedagogy influence teachers' attitudes and practices in the classroom and what impact does this have on their students?

Significance of the Study

The achievement gap among culturally and linguistically diverse students has led to nationwide government funding, mandates, and policies as an attempt to correct these wrongs (Souto-Manning et al., 2018). According to the New York State Education Department (n.d.-a), within the last 50 years, the federal government has enacted laws to close the achievement gap among school-age children. This campaign began with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965. In 2002, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act was brought into law. Though this law was particularly targeted toward marginalized populations, NCLB failed after school leaders found it difficult to meet the outlined requirements. As a replacement, in 2015, President Obama approved the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). ESSA promotes equity for underserved and high needs students. In addition, penalties were imposed for underperforming schools. This law dictated that students would be measured by specific standards. Also, assessments and other data would be available to all stakeholders, including parents.

The above initiatives were civil rights laws enacted to protect schools' most vulnerable populations. Funding from this legislation was allocated to various programs designed to promote equity and aid underperforming students. As a result of the ESSA, school leaders were tasked to provide PD for educators and staff to support them in meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Equity teams and training programs were formed, and guidelines were drafted to support this initiative. For instance, in New York, educators, administrators, policymakers, and researchers collaborated to produce a document titled the *Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education (CR-S) Framework* (New York State Education Department, n.d.-a). The mission statement for this framework is to train, guide, and support school staff in the area of culturally responsive-sustaining protocols. The guide is in part rooted in the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings, Django Paris, and Mariana Souto-Manning, as well as other experts in this field of study. Three goals of this framework include students who are (a) academically successful; (b) socially, politically, and culturally aware; and (c) critical consumers and social agents regarding structural inequities and injustices. Culture is broadly defined to include race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, linguistic abilities, and special needs status. Based on these goals, educators and administrators created four pillars of a CR-S education (New York State Education Department, n.d.-a, p. 14): (a) welcoming and affirming environment, (b) high expectations and rigorous instruction, (c) inclusive curriculum and assessment, and (d) ongoing professional learning and support.

In short, schools' curricula should reflect the student population and school staff should create, promote, and sustain an environment that honors diversity and respect.

One key to creating such an environment is consistent and ongoing staff training in this area. The creation of this document by the New York State Education Department (n.d.-a) is an indicator that culturally relevant teaching has been deemed a priority in a highly diverse school system. It is time that the framework is put into practice. As such, I designed this research study as a pilot program to provide ongoing professional learning and support in this area for staff members, particularly those servicing students of color.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Critical Pedagogy

According to Foley et al. (2015), critical theory has roots in the social sciences, which can be traced back to the 19th century and Karl Marx's protests during the industrial revolution and capitalism, which he saw as the cause of a great divide between social classes. In the early 20th century, critical theory continued to develop under the auspices of Max Horkheimer (among others) at the Frankfurt School of Critical Social Theory. Critical theory takes a humanistic approach, as opposed to the scientific method's examination of societal issues. The concept acknowledges that phenomena cannot solely be measured via quantitative means and data, instead subjectivity is a key element to understanding the full human experience. The philosophy was adopted in the field of education through people like Paulo Freire in the later part of the 20th century. In this vein, educators are charged with the task of dismantling power structures within the school system by using students' cultural capital within the curricula, helping students to make connections between academic content and historical and political forces outside of school, and molding students into future leaders. Following the Frankfurt School, a distinguished list of critical theorists grew; however, within the last 50 years, a forerunner in this field of study was Paulo Freire.

As mentioned earlier, Paulo Freire was one of the pioneers of critical pedagogy (Giroux, 2010). In 1970, Freire published the English version of his classic work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In this seminal text, Freire described his experience growing up in a Brazilian society fraught with political oppression and poverty (Giroux, 2010). As

a result, he dedicated his life to educating marginalized populations. For instance, he created a technique in which illiterate people were taught to read and write over the course of 1.5 months (Foley et al., 2015). During his lifetime, his roles ranged from university professor to the secretary of education in Brazil (Foley et al., 2015). During his tenure as an educator and activist, he fought imbalances of power in society and the school system, and his political approach to naming power caused his incarceration in a Brazilian jail for several months as a revolutionary; when released, Freire lived in exile for over 5 years. Freire viewed the deeply rooted social issues in Brazil as stemming from the educational system (Giroux, 2010). The educational system was considered a bureaucratic institution that perpetuated the recycling of knowledge, values, and belief systems, which benefited groups in power (Foley et al., 2015). Freire (1984) criticized what he called "the banking model of education," which was analogous to teachers assuming the role of omniscient figures, thus dispensing their wisdom onto students who are considered empty vessels. This militaristic approach to education produces a generation of obedient citizens who comply with powerful authority figures. Instead, Freire held a progressive stance on education, which promoted free will, critical thinking skills, creativity, and collaboration among students and educators. Freire viewed learning as a reciprocal process and an exchange of ideas between educators and pupils (Foley et al., 2015; Hassani, 2020). In fact, Freire preferred to use the title participants rather than students, coordinator instead of teacher, and dialogues rather than lessons (Hassani, 2020). The focal point of curricula entails analysis and discourse of concepts, leading to the sharing of various worldviews and perspectives (Foley et al., 2015). This process

could then be transmitted to the larger society once students entered adulthood and assumed various roles in their respective communities.

Hassani (2020) shared his views of Freire and critical pedagogy as he compared this ideology with that of ancient Asian and Muslim Sufi philosophy. Critical pedagogues see a symbiotic relationship between the school system and society. On the surface, schools are considered benign institutions that teach students the basic skills of reading, writing, and math, thus preparing them for college, technological jobs, or other careers. On a deeper level, schools are bureaucratic systems managed by powerful factions whose aim is to implant/impart the values and belief systems of the Anglican middle class and elite as being superior to those of Indigenous groups. These values and ideas are presented through curricula to manufacture clones who will adopt and exert these ideas as they enter society as adults. In essence, creating a vicious cycle of oppression. This, in turn, allows members of mainstream groups to maintain their power and for marginalized groups to continue to be oppressed.

Hassani (2020) viewed this process as a perpetual grooming technique, during which students are socialized into becoming obedient/compliant members of an oppressive society. Critical pedagogues believe these groups seek to maintain their power in society by suppressing the alternative views, beliefs, and assets of oppressed people. From this viewpoint, teachers/coordinators are tasked to present scholars with real-world lessons, prompting them to collaborate, share their thoughts, and propose resolutions to real life dilemmas/issues. This dialogic model is a key component of critical pedagogy. In this sense, marginalized students are participating in a democratic process, which

historically has silenced their views. This is in contrast to traditional lessons in which students are presented with concepts formulated by mainstream groups.

Giroux (2010) echoed this Freirean concept. A close colleague of Freire, Giroux described the education system as a financial and militaristic institution geared to produce a competitive workforce in our global economy. For a society to maintain high rankings in this system, students are groomed to be compliant with social norms, which do not favor marginalized groups. Conversely, critical pedagogues urge students to be disobedient to these norms by challenging the status quo. Some critical interrogations include:

> What is the role of teachers and academics as public intellectuals? Whose interests do public and higher education serve? How might it be possible to understand and engage the diverse contexts in which education takes place? What is the role of education as a public good? How do we make knowledge meaningful in order to make it critical and transformative? And, how do we democratize governance? (p. 717)

Part of the role of educators is to partner with students to explore these questions through deep analyses, reflection, and discourse. Students are tasked with making connections between community issues and government policies all within historical contexts. The ultimate goal is to mold advocates who are prepared to enact change in their spheres of influence.

Influenced by the work of critical theorists, such as Freire, Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995, 2009) developed the philosophy of CRP. Ladson-Billings used this framework in her seminal study, which is outlined in the text titled, *The Dreamkeepers: Successful*

Teachers of African American Children (Ladson-Billings, 2009). The text is based on the period of 1988 and 1991, during which Ladson-Billings conducted an ethnographic study of eight teachers identified as having successful academic outcomes with African American students in a small North Carolina school district. A non-probability purposive sampling method was used. Specifically, Ladson-Billings used community nomination. This entailed surveying African American parents to identify who they believed were the best teachers of their children. Next, administrators were surveyed about exemplary teachers of African American students. After cross-referencing the findings from both surveys, nine teachers were identified and eight volunteered to participate in the study. Five of the educators were African American and the other three were White. All of the educators were women possessing 12 to 40 years of teaching experience. After observing and interviewing these teachers over a period of 3 years, Ladson-Billings identified several common characteristics of culturally relevant teaching. Based on the study's findings, Ladson-Billings created three tenets, which she believed could help close the achievement gap among minority students.

The first principle is student learning/academic success. In part, this entails incorporating students' culture and background knowledge into the curriculum to build engagement (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Souto-Manning et al., 2018). Students of color are viewed as possessing valuable cultural assets rather than deficits (Souto-Manning et al., 2018). Culturally relevant pedagogues believe students should have a variety of ways to express and demonstrate their knowledge, as opposed to focusing mainly on student scores. The second tenet is cultural competence. Educators immerse students of color in their own culture through the curricula and expose them to various cultural perspectives

and topics. Cultural awareness entails disbanding implicit and explicit biases that have a negative impact on student learning (Hammond, 2015). As such, educators must consistently reflect on their beliefs and upbringing. Educators also need to expose students to multiple cultural and historical perspectives. The third principle is sociopolitical awareness. Sociopolitical consciousness involves both educators and students working as advocates for social justice in the school system and within their communities (Souto-Manning et al., 2018).

During Ladson-Billings's (2009) study, students were tasked to make connections between the curricula, their communities, and the larger society. Scholars were also encouraged to examine how school lessons fit into a larger historical and political scheme. In addition, educators believed it was essential to know their students' cultures and the historical, and political context of marginalized groups, as well as advocate for equity among these populations.

In "Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy," Ladson-Billings (1995) outlined the CRP framework in great detail, including examples of the three tenets taken from the aforementioned study. There were several commonalities among the eight teachers in the study. Three themes emerged from the ethnographic study: (a) self-awareness and awareness of others, (b) high value placed on connectedness and relationships, and (c) beliefs regarding knowledge. Regarding the first theme, the educators expressed the belief that all children can learn. In fact, when children struggled with various concepts, instead of listing possible problems with the child, the teachers took responsibility and sought ways to improve their own pedagogy. They believed teaching is an art form and that it was the educators' duty to use techniques and strategies

to uncover a student's brilliance and strengths. Like Freire, they did not view themselves as depositors of knowledge. Furthermore, they felt privileged to contribute to the school communities of which they considered themselves members. Regarding the second theme, the participants stressed the importance of community, solidarity, and collaboration. This included the student–teacher relationship, as well as student–student relations. This also involved dismantling the typical power structures found in classrooms. For instance, at the beginning of the school year, one teacher surveyed students regarding their specialties. Throughout the year, each student would have the opportunity to showcase their skill while the teacher sat in the student's seat and learned. Similarly, during lessons when students struggled with a particular task, the teachers would refer them to one of their peers who had expert knowledge in that area. The last theme involved beliefs about knowledge. The educators in the study showed excitement when teaching, which was contagious. Teachers used multiple means to assess student knowledge. For instance, one teacher allowed a student to decide the standard in which to be evaluated and the artifact he wanted to present to demonstrate his knowledge. Finally, teachers stressed there was not one answer or view of topics. Instead, they promoted critical discourse. Case in point, during a lesson, a teacher answered a student's inquiry. She then asked the student if he agreed with her answer. When the student said he did agree, she reminded him it was acceptable to disagree with his teachers and to offer his own perspectives on topics.

Ladson-Billings (1995) developed CRP to counter deficit theories regarding students of color and their intellectual abilities, close the achievement gap among marginalized populations, and groom a generation of students who will advocate against

19

structural racism and inequities. These goals can only be realized via teacher education

programs and institutions. This is a gargantuan task because it requires not only training

but reflection and shifts in mindset. As such, Ladson-Billings devised this framework for

members of the education system to answer:

> Several questions . . . to formulate a theoretical model of culturally relevant
>
> pedagogy. What constitutes student success? How can academic success and
>
> cultural success complement each other in settings where student alienation and
>
> hostility characterize the school experience? How can pedagogy promote the kind
>
> of student success that engages larger social structural issues in a critical way?
>
> How do researchers recognize that pedagogy in action? And, what are the
>
> implications for teacher preparation generated by this pedagogy? (p. 469)

Connection Between Framework and Study

As previously mentioned, the achievement gap between mainstream and

marginalized student populations is a major issue in the K–12 school system (Gay, 2018;

Hammond, 2015; Kibler & Chapman, 2018; Souto-Manning et al., 2018). In addition, the

recent COVID-19 pandemic, which began in the United States in 2019, has exposed other

divisions along ethnic lines in society, including in the areas of finance, health care,

law/policing, and housing. Critical pedagogy is an ideology that has existed for decades

alongside these issues, but the current political and social climate lend urgency to the

need to level power structures in the United States. Not only does critical pedagogy

tackle inequities in academia but in other major institutes of power. Critical theorists

believe that within the education system, entities who hold power in society enforce their

views and rules on groups who are not in power (Hassani, 2020). Hence, one goal of

critical pedagogy is to give voice to oppressed groups via critical dialogue and discourse, thus encouraging the marginalized to partake in the democratic process by demanding new rules that will benefit all participants (Hassani, 2020). In fact, based on this ideology, students are labeled as participants and teachers are labeled as critical pedagogues (Hassani, 2020). Unlike culturally responsive teaching, critical pedagogy goes beyond the need to teach culturally relevant lessons that reflect the student population. Though this is important, critical pedagogy prepares students to make changes to historically oppressive systems throughout society. It meets the holistic needs of community members. Students are taught and encouraged to think critically, work collaboratively, and make connections between school lessons and societal issues. These are needed skills that will sustain them throughout their academic careers, as well as prepare them to be changemakers in society. By adopting this philosophy, teachers and students can promote true systemic advancements. However, for this seismic shift to occur, teachers have to be made aware of this ideology. This task requires an adjustment in mindset, deep reflection, and awareness. Such a herculean task requires more than cursory training for educators. Instead, teachers require long-term PD, support, and resources to employ these practices consistently in their classrooms. The current study incorporated all of these elements. In addition, the study was used as a springboard for a personalized PD program covering these ideological principles.

Review of the Literature

Definition of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP)

CRP is a core value and mindset that involves using students' background knowledge and culture as a tool to propel academic success. It entails a curriculum that

honors and reflects all students and a variety of perspectives. Students are inspired to become social agents, thus recognizing sociopolitical forces and inequalities within the school system, community, and the world at large. This practice is particularly essential in urban schools and among marginalized groups that are typically underrepresented (Hammond, 2015).

The Three Tenets of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Academic Success. Based on Ladson-Billings's study ending in 1991, the first principle she developed was academic success. The evolution of this tenet is noteworthy. Followers of CRP have mistakenly equated academic success with top percentiles of standardized tests, assessments, and grades (Ladson-Billings, 1995). As a result, Ladson-Billings altered the terminology, which is presently called student learning instead of academic success (Ladson-Billings, 1995). An integral part of this framework challenges the definition of academic success (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Ladson-Billings (1995) has provided examples of traditional modes of academic gain of students exposed to CRP and was mindful to describe success in both qualitative and quantitative ways. Regarding the latter measure, Ladson-Billings recorded that the African American students in her 1991 study who were privy to culturally relevant teaching scored lower on standardized tests compared to White middle income students, but higher than their peers of African American heritage and comparable socioeconomic status in the same school district. Furthermore, the culturally relevant teachers in the study used various means to assess their students' knowledge. Aside from the basic measurements involving reading, writing, and speaking, scholars also excelled in critical thinking skills, questioning techniques, and the ability to critique and evaluate their peers.

One theme in the literature around this tenet is a relationship between academic gain and teachers who have high expectations for their students (Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Souto-Manning et al., 2018). Some educators operate via a deficit model regarding students of color. This is exhibited by assuming a student cannot accomplish a task, and therefore withholding rigorous work and doling out compliments for menial tasks (Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2014). Students internalize this, which can lead to low self-efficacy and low performance (Hammond, 2015). A second theme found in the literature regarding student learning is that educators must use students' backgrounds and cultures to help them connect with the academic content (Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Students of color have a bank of knowledge related to their home, community, and culture that may not align with mainstream academia (Souto-Manning et al., 2018). The goal of CRP is to build a bridge between academic knowledge, background knowledge, and cultural elements (Gay, 2013; Souto-Manning et al., 2018).

Byrd (2016) conducted a quantitative study of 315 middle school and high school students. The study was unique in that it measured students' perceptions of culturally relevant teaching using survey methodology. Several instruments were used to detect students' perceptions of culturally relevant teaching in their schools and their sense of racial/ethnic identities. Students also reported their academic grades and levels of enjoyment regarding school lessons. The results showed a positive association between students' perceptions of culturally responsive teaching, cultural competence, and overall academic outcomes.

Hammond (2015) stated teachers need to learn the communication patterns, learning styles, and backgrounds of their students of color. Hammond noted this is a critical key to closing the achievement gap. Hammond described three levels of culture, including surface, shallow, and deep cultural structures. One such structure is the concept of collectivism versus individualism. The former entails generations of people who believe in banding together as a community to reach common goals. This attitude stems from those growing up in isolated areas in which people had to rely on one another. Conversely, individualistic societies are those in which people exert a more independent spirit. Hammond listed cultures that typically fall in one category or another. Being aware of these differences, teachers can use this background information to their benefit, such as the best way to group students in the classroom. Hammond also discussed the idea of cultural communication patterns. For example, there is a tradition of passing information from one generation to another that can be traced back to slavery in African American culture. Though this was more than 300 years ago, this practice is still witnessed in barber shops, hair salons, and on the stoops of tenements in the inner city. Knowledge of this can help educators incorporate some of these practices into the curriculum, such as offering students opportunities to express their reading comprehension verbally through presentations, speeches, spoken word poetry, hip-hop, or debate forums.

In addition, Hammond (2015) created a unique niche in this field by discussing the brain-based science behind culturally relevant teaching. Specifically, Hammond made the connection between CRP and neuroscience in relation to student success. Hammond explained the intricacies of brain-based learning. The brain is made up of billions of neurons that form information exchange pathways. The gray matter in our brains is

formed by this intricate system of neurons, which grow exponentially as we learn new information. This is called neuroplasticity, which allows for complex and higher order thinking. As we learn, schemas are formed and stored as background knowledge. Learning acquisition is a product of incorporating new information in relation to our background knowledge. Hence, neuroplasticity is a result of using students' funds of knowledge, cultural assets, and schemas. Furthermore, learning is fueled by attention; therefore, if students can relate to the content, this can lead to increased engagement. This could explain the disconnect between traditional mainstream lessons and learning strategies among students of color, which have resulted in an achievement gap. Rather than viewing students of color as having intellectual deficits, culturally relevant pedagogues are aware of this brain-based science and the strategies needed to connect students' backgrounds to new content.

Cultural Competence. In "Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy," Ladson-Billings (1995) outlined the tenet of cultural competence, which entails developing students' cultural identities. Traditionally, students of color have been exposed to European culture via the curriculum. This may be illustrated through fictional characters and themes. It can also be revealed through nonfiction texts regarding great innovators and founders of European descent. However, students need to be exposed to complete historical accounts, including atrocities committed against people of color and the contributions and sacrifices made by Indigenous people. One way to accomplish this task is via the curriculum. The principle also requires educators to learn about the cultural backgrounds of their students. Cultural competence can be facilitated through building

relationships with scholars and their families, attending students' events/activities, and studying various cultures.

Ladson-Billings (1995) discussed a study involving a common stereotype centered around the topic of cultural competence, during which academically successful students of color were labeled as "acting White." As a result, these students self-sabotaged their studies to avoid being singled out and labeled. In response to this phenomenon, the researchers explored the benefits of cultural competence among Black males. In the study, educators provided an Afro-centric curriculum and created a safe space in which African American males were encouraged to freely express their culture through various lessons and projects. In this case, there was a positive relationship between cultural competence, social emotional health, and academic outcomes for African American males. Additionally, in Ladson-Billings's 1991 study (2009), the eight participants used creative ways to support the cultural competence of their students. For example, one educator embedded improvisation and rap during a unit on poetry. The students in this study illustrated higher academic success and higher self-awareness compared to their district counterparts who were exposed to traditional curriculum.

Curricula are an excellent means to grow students' cultural identities. One of the main platforms of critical pedagogues is the need for educators to devise lessons that reflect their student population (Souto-Manning et al., 2018). One way to employ this is through literature. In short, students of color should be exposed to fiction and non-fiction texts reflecting their experiences and backgrounds. However, in urban classrooms, it is common for Black and Brown scholars to be exposed to classic Anglo centric fictional texts, as well as historical accounts illustrating the dominance and contributions of White

groups (Christ & Sharma, 2018; Souto-Manning et al., 2018). This can have a negative impact on students' identities and reduce engagement.

Christ and Sharma (2018) conducted a qualitative study of 17 student teachers enrolled in an education methodology course. The aim of the study was to explore how teachers with Black and Brown students selected texts. The setting was an after-school program in an urban community, which included 28 children of color, in kindergarten through eighth grade. In addition, the research team sought to determine whether mentoring and supporting novice teachers would increase their selection and use of culturally relevant texts in the classroom. Teachers were assigned three main tasks. First, they were asked to read articles involving the benefits of culturally relevant texts. Second, educators interviewed students to determine their backgrounds and interests. Third, based on the experience during this study and course, teachers chose culturally relevant texts they determined appropriate for their student populations. They were then guided to use the texts through classroom instruction and collaborative activities with the students. Last, teachers were asked to reflect on this entire process. The study illustrated three main obstacles to culturally relevant teaching, including teacher resistance, teachers' limited knowledge of diverse cultures, and lack of student engagement in the area of sociopolitical awareness and social consciousness. There were some instances of success during the study. In general, the selection of appropriate culturally relevant texts led to increased student engagement. In part, students were able to make deep connections to the curricula materials.

Text selection was also at the center of Capper's (2022) qualitative study of 28 high school students. The majority of the sample were students of color enrolled in an

alternative program for at-risk students. Data collection involved student surveys, teacher observations, and student interviews. The researcher explored whether the use of culturally relevant texts within an English language arts class affected student engagement and motivation. During the study, the Harlem Renaissance was the unit of study. Within this unit, students were allowed to choose their own texts from a list of culturally relevant texts related to the unit. The results illustrated students spent more time reading in and outside of the classroom. Furthermore, during student–teacher interviews, scholars expressed strong interests in the selected books. Finally, teachers observed that students were on task and engaged with their texts. Overall, the researcher recorded an increase in student motivation and engagement.

Some may argue it is important for all students to have knowledge of the canon of literature as these are classic texts read by the masses. In fact, a common reason teachers give for not employing CRP in their classrooms is that it is difficult to find culturally relevant texts. Usually, they have to use traditional texts mandated by administrators (Souto-Manning et al., 2018). Borsheim-Black et al.'s (2014) critical literary pedagogy (CLP) provides a framework allowing students of color to be exposed to the traditional literary canon while at the same time acquiring cultural competence. The five pillars of CLP are canonicity, contexts, literary elements, reader, and assessments. Teachers introduce students to traditional texts while employing typical literacy strategies and objectives, such as reading comprehension, point of view, perspective, figurative language, symbolism, and other common core standards required by state authorities. Simultaneously, a deeper dive is taken, allowing students to critically interrogate these texts. As such, students are encouraged to discuss issues regarding power, oppression,

racism, gender, and historical contexts. Students can also make connections between the texts and issues occurring in modern day society. As an extension, students are tasked to answer questions, such as: Whose perspective is presented in the text? Who are the dominant groups holding power and what groups are oppressed? Why are these classic texts held in high esteem? And, what alternative texts, written and including characters of color, could be used to explore similar themes? Borsheim-Black et al. (2014) devised a method to promote cultural competence among students of color while still maintaining curricula demands and state mandates. Students can be exposed to traditional texts while strengthening their cultural identities.

Sociopolitical Competence. The sociopolitical elements of CRP entail interrupting the explicit and implicit biases found in society (Hammond, 2015; Zion et al., 2015). This is particularly important in urban classrooms where often students of color are led by White educators. Though it is important for minority students to be able to see professionals and leaders who reflect their own ethnicities and backgrounds, Zion et al. (2015) noted White educators can become partners with students of color, which often requires a process of self-development. Conflicts and issues can arise when trying to educate White teachers in this area. Zion et al. noted White educators who do not consider themselves racist fail to acknowledge or comprehend the pervasiveness and detriments of institutional racism. Therefore, they may become defensive when asked to engage in reflective practices and education regarding self-identity and sociopolitical awareness. This process is the cornerstone to combating structural racism and oppression. Educators must be cognizant and fight against imbalances of power exhibited in the learning environment and community. Furthermore, students must be taught to become

advocates against social injustices in the classroom, school system, and society (Zion et al., 2015).

Another way to promote sociopolitical competence is by using the curriculum to highlight historical events illustrating the oppression and domination of marginalized groups. Ladson-Billings (2014) discussed a program she developed titled Pedagogy, Performance, & Culture (PPC). Part of the PPC program involved a culminating project during which students were tasked to perform items they learned in class. Through poems and rapping, students expressed social issues, such as domestic abuse, classism, violence, and sexuality (Ladson-Billings, 2014). In short, the belief is students will flourish academically when they are engaged in a curriculum that is meaningful to their everyday existence.

Zion et al. (2015) designed a program titled Critical Civic Inquiry (CCI). The program entailed engaging minority students in participatory action research around issues that affected them and their communities. In line with the sociopolitical tenet of CRP and critical pedagogy, students were tasked with identifying various issues in their school and communities, as opposed to being given a topic deemed important by their teachers. In addition, students were given a variety of choices to explore and present the issues, such as through digital media. This also ties in with the academic tenet of CRP, which indicates students can be successful if engaged in meaningful tasks and allowed to display their knowledge via a variety of means best fitting their learning styles and strengths. One key indicator of the sociopolitical tenet is that scholars not only identified issues but were supported in taking action and solving said problems. Zion et al. conducted an exploratory study during which five educators were taught this method and

then expected to employ the practice in their classrooms in urban Title 1 schools. In this year-long exploratory design, educators enrolled in a CCI graduate-level college course for two semesters to learn the methods of the practice. They also had to engage in reflective practices centered on their upbringing and belief systems. Throughout the study, educators documented their experiences through notes, student work, interviews, and reflection entries. It is essential to note that the sociopolitical tenet is two-fold. Students are taught to be social agents in their environment. However, middle-class teachers, especially of White persuasion, are tasked to understand the political and historical forces that stymie marginalized students. They must question their position and possible contributions within this system. Once enlightened, these educators become partners with their students in disrupting traditional forces and ideas. The results of the CCI study yielded that participants illustrated increased self-awareness and stronger culturally responsive practices in the classroom. An unexpected benefit was the positive influence the participants had on other teachers in their schools.

Pioneers in the Field of CRP

Aronson and Laughter (2016) conducted a meta-analysis of 40 studies illustrating a connection between culturally relevant teaching and academic gain. This endeavor was in response to a journal article in which the authors acknowledged the benefits of CRP but stated the need for more research in this area, particularly studies that illustrated connections between this practice and academic gain. Taking this as their cue, the researchers used academic databases (e.g., ERIC, ProQuest, etc.) and Google Scholar to search for journal articles covering the topic of CRP. Aronson and Laughter used the frameworks of Geneva Gay and Gloria Ladson Billings as signposts during their search.

Based on the work of these pioneers, some indicators of culturally relevant teaching included empowering students, cultural competence, validating marginalized cultural groups, social and political activism, deconstruction of power/political systems, and closing the academic achievement gap. Most of the articles were informational pieces but the researchers were able to narrow the search down to 40 empirical studies that illustrated increased academic outcomes and success for students of color who were exposed to culturally relevant teaching practices and philosophies. Though most studies on this topic typically involve English language arts or English as a second language, it is notable that the researchers' analyses included culturally relevant teaching across content areas, including math, science, and social studies. It should also be mentioned that in the spirit of CRP, the researchers expanded their definition of success to include increases in engagement, motivation, content interest, confidence, and self-esteem among students of color. Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods studies were part of the meta-analyses and included small scale studies to longitudinal research. The spectrum of studies included public and charter schools covering the gamut of ages and grades, from kindergarteners to high school. All of the studies yielded positive results based on CRP principles. Using the work of Geneva Gay and Gloria Ladson-Billings as a framework for their research, the principles included academic rigor, asset based versus deficit approach, holistic learning, implementation of students' cultures into the curriculum, challenging structural norms (e.g., standards-based lessons, assessments, etc.), the involvement of parents/guardians, cultural competence for teachers and students, and sociohistorical awareness.

Hammond (2015) added there is a science-based connection between culturally relevant teaching and the brain. Increased interest and engagement support information processing, which can lead to academic gains (Hammond, 2015; Souto-Manning et al., 2018). The author described in detail the multifaceted degrees of culture, neural pathways, and the connection to how students form schemas, which can be used as a metacognitive device to maximize learning. This is one reason it is essential to tap into students' background knowledge when introducing new information. Hammond also noted culturally relevant strategies that have been proven beneficial for students of color. One example is allowing students to express their knowledge orally as opposed to traditional written assignments and assessments. This has been especially useful for African American students and can be traced back to oral traditions used during slavery. Hammond also discussed how microaggressions can have cultural roots. Teachers need to be aware of these historical factors that can trigger behavioral issues and trust issues, which in turn can have negative academic outcomes. Based on the above factors and the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings, Hammond (2015) created a Ready for Rigor framework that includes four strands: awareness, learning partnerships, information processing, and community of learners and learning environment (p. 17). This is a complex framework requiring teacher reflection, shifts in mindset, and in-depth training.

Richard Milner is a critical pedagogue who has closely followed the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings. Milner (2011) conducted a case study at Bridge Middle School, an urban institution located in the Eastern section of the United States that housed 354 students. Though diverse, the Title 1 school had an African American population of 60% and a ratio of 55% White to 45% African American educators. For more than a year and a

half, Milner shadowed Mr. Hall, a 3-year science teacher. The school and teacher were nominated by school district members, administrators, and community members as being one of the better middle schools in the area. Milner honed-in on the cultural competence tenet of CRP. Ladson-Billings defined cultural competence as the need for students to be aware of their cultural identities and how these profiles are socially, politically, and historically situated in society. However, Milner took this definition a step further, indicating the need for educators to examine their backgrounds, beliefs, and possible privileges as well as to be aware of sociopolitical and historical factors that create barriers for marginalized populations. Using observations and interviews, Milner devised three themes during this study. The first included building rapport with students. The second involved acknowledging the complexity of identity, race, and ethnicity among students. The third encompassed collaborating with other educators and knowing all students in the school community, not just those on one's class roster. In general, Mr. Hall was able to build relationships by sharing personal stories from his own life, especially those involving common struggles experienced by his students. For instance, Mr. Hall told the students that growing up in rural Tennessee, he did not have indoor plumbing and that his family received government funding, such as food stamps. This showed the students they had commonalities despite ethnic/racial differences. Another way Mr. Hall built relationships was by inserting himself into the lives and community of his students. This included attending local events and sporting events. Mr. Hall was also able to achieve a balance between strict discipline, care, and grace. The teacher held students accountable, and he would not accept subpar work and disruptive behavior, but he also allowed students opportunities to make up work and readjust behavior without being expelled.

Finally, Mr. Hall welcomed and engaged in discussions about race, culture, and identity. As a result, students were able to accept Mr. Hall as an ally, which led to lower incidents of behavioral issues and improved academic achievement. One example involved a male student named Paul, who was notoriously engaging in inappropriate behavior and receiving failing grades. Mr. Hall was able to connect with the student by attending basketball practice, playing ball with the student, and getting to know him on a personal level. As a result, the student went from being a C student to an A student. This example also shows how cultural competence is intertwined with academic success/student learning. In a follow-up study at the same school, Milner (2014) found similar results with a social studies teacher of 35 years named Ms. Shaw. CRP is much more than choosing culturally relevant texts. It is a holistic approach and mindset.

Geneva Gay is another proponent of CRP. Gay (2013) called attention to the cultural disparities between educators and students, stating, "In the United States teachers are predominately middle class, female, monolingual, and of European ancestry while students are increasingly poor and linguistically, ethnically, racially, and culturally diverse" (p. 64). Though her work stemmed from that of Gloria Ladson-Billings, Gay used the term culturally responsive teaching (CRT). Gay's (2013) scholarship included addressing inequities of a wide variety of minority groups, including Native American, Latinx, ability groups, and students living in poverty. Gay's (2018) body of work focused on translating theory to practice. Accordingly, in her text, Gay (2018) provided exemplars of culturally relevant teaching across content areas. Building on Ladson-Billing's three tenets, Gay created eight qualifying attributes of CRT. She stated CRT is validating, comprehensive/inclusive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative,

emancipatory, humanistic, and ethical. Gay offered several examples of these qualifiers based on her research study. Gay is also a champion for improving teacher education programs. Gay's prescription for her educators includes acquisition of knowledge, deep self-reflection, and engaging in discussions about cultural diversity. In her college courses, Gay provides theory along with examples, and then employs her graduate students to use the methods while in the field.

Souto-Manning is a protege of Paolo Freire. The researcher is a prolific writer and staunch supporter of teachers, thus preparing and developing educators in the field of CRP. As such, Souto-Manning (2022) stated it is imperative to begin this work with teacher-education preparation programs. The author wrote extensively about the methodology of self-study within these programs. This framework evolves from critical race theory, which involves the dismantling of power, oppression, and capitalistic principles in society (Souto-Manning, 2022). Proponents of teacher self-studies believe educators of color enter college preparation programs with immense cultural assets, which can be turnkeyed into their classroom practices, especially while working with Black and Brown students. This disrupts the practices often found in traditional university programs, which promote Eurocentric educational theories.

New Trailblazers in the Field of CRP

Pioneers in the field of CRP, such as Freire, Ladson-Billings, and Gay, led the way for new trailblazers in this field of study. Though these newcomers may use slightly different terminologies, their theories and frameworks are an extension of the core foundational principles of CRP. Forerunners in the evolution of CRP include Django Paris and Gholnecsar (Gholdy) Muhammad.

Paris (2012) respectfully acknowledged the work of Ladson-Billings while simultaneously pushing back on the theory of CRP. The author's critique of CRP and CRT is that some educators have become stagnant in their views of these approaches and use them as quick fixes to the systemic issues perpetuated against marginalized students in the school system. Case in point, Paris and Alim (2017) noted educators have used hip-hop pedagogies as part of their curricula as a means of engaging African American scholars in the area of English language arts. Teachers must be cognizant of their population because hip-hop may exclude female students and African Americans who do not identify with that expression of culture. Paris's iteration of CRP and CRT is called culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP). Though CSP is in line with promoting the cultural assets of marginalized populations, the vision is to continually disrupt colonial educational practices and stay abreast of the cultural shifts and pluralism among diverse populations (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). Furthermore, this approach highlights injustices toward all marginalized groups, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and ability groups. The term "sustaining" denotes the need to constantly evaluate the fluid cultural expressions of these groups over time.

Another breakthrough researcher in CRP is Gholnecsar (Gholdy) Muhammad. Muhammad (Sari, 2021) is the author of *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy*. In the text, Muhammad informs the reader that in the 1800s, Black communities in the United States had rich literary societies, including a Black-owned newspaper (Sari, 2021). The purpose of the literary societies was to shine a light on racism and discrimination within their communities,

promote activism, and display Black excellence and intellect particularly in the area of literacy (Sari, 2021).

Sari (2021) provided an overview of Muhammad's four-tier framework. Muhammad's text and research in critical literacies led to the development of the historically responsive literacy (HRL) model, which entails four founding domains. The first is identity, which recommends incorporating students' cultures and backgrounds into the curriculum.

The second domain is skills. Muhammad recommended using writing as a vehicle of self-expression for youth, especially writing that reflects their cultures. The third segment is intellect, which aims to tie lessons to real-world events, thus increasing students' knowledge of events transpiring in their communities and society. The previous domains build on the last area, which is criticality. Students draw upon their identity, skills, and intellect to use their voices and writing to disrupt historical injustices of underrepresented groups.

The HRL framework is rooted in CRP and works in tandem with its three main tenets; however, there are a few distinctions between the work of Ladson-Billings and Muhammad. The first is the inclusion of lesson plans, which support educators in translating theory into practice (Sari, 2021). Second, Muhammad included soft skills into her framework. Specifically, the researcher emphasizes the need to incorporate joy into the curriculum and classroom (Muhammad, 2018; Muhammad & Mosley, 2021). Enjoyment increases engagement. Last, though Muhammad has focused her body of work on literacy, she also illustrates how her principles can be incorporated into other

content areas, such as math and critical media (Muhammad & McArthur, 2015; Muhammad et al., 2021).

Muhammad heavily promotes using writing as a means for students to express their thoughts and feelings regarding oppression, power, and equity. This *power of the pen* philosophy extends beyond race and ethnicity, thus encompassing other aspects of culture, such as gender inequality. Muhammad et al. (2017) conducted a qualitative study involving 15 Black students, ranging between the ages of 11 and 18 years old. The researchers used a technique titled Kinship Writing. During this process, students take ideas from mentor texts that have sociopolitical themes and create their own original writing on similar topics. Emerging themes taken from discussions and student work included topics such as (a) the appropriation of Black beauty, (b) gun violence in underserved communities, (c) misrepresentation of people of color in the media, and (d) the suppression of freedom.

Similar findings resulted in a qualitative study conducted by Muhammad and McArthur (2015) of eight Black girls ranging in age from 12 to 17 years. The young women took part in a summer writing workshop involving the topic of identity. Interviews and other data revealed the youth perceived negative stereotypes via the media with regard to hair, violence/anger, and sexualization/objectification. The youth also expressed the challenges stemming from the intersectionality of being Black and female.

The findings from both of these studies show that academic skills, such as writing, can be developed alongside culturally relevant teaching practices. In fact, CRP supports engagement and academic success. Students who may not typically be inclined or participate in lessons may be inspired when they are able to relate to the content.

Research on CRP extends beyond the United States. Lim et al. (2019) conducted a qualitative case study involving five Singapore teachers from different content areas, such as science, technology, and art. The teachers were selected via a nomination process, including school principals, members of teacher educator programs, and the department of education, leading to snowball sampling. The selected teachers all had at least 6 years of experience and worked with diverse student populations and their beliefs aligned with the tenets of CRP. Lim et al. noted the diverse ethnic groups in Singapore, including 74% Chinese, 14% Malays, and 9% people of South Asian descent. Students in the study came from a variety of backgrounds, including single-parent households, different religions, and low socioeconomic status. Similar to the United States, the education system in Singapore is driven by standardized tests and scripted curricula packages despite a diverse student population. The researchers observed classroom lessons and followed up with semi-structured interviews during the study. After data analysis and coding, the researchers determined three categories representative of relevant teaching, along with several excerpts and examples of what they called cultural work. For instance, the teachers devised lessons meaningful to students' real-life experiences. This included storytelling sessions, presentations, and art projects depicting their backgrounds, cultures, and communities. This included choosing texts with characters who experienced similar backgrounds and struggles. The teachers also welcomed the students speaking in their native tongues during class and sharing other expressions of their cultures. Teachers also sought to form relationships with their scholars by acting as mentors. Finally, students were encouraged to discuss and interrogate social issues and power differentials within their communities, such as

immigration. This research added valuable data to the body of work for CRP because the researchers offered several exemplars of culturally relevant teaching, which can be emulated by teachers working with marginalized populations. Furthermore, as mentioned by Lim et al., most research in this area involves homogeneous groups, such as Black and Brown students in urban districts in the United States. The Lim et al. study illustrated how to employ culturally relevant teaching with a heterogenous population.

CRP Misconceptions

Over time, CRP has been given several different labels. The concept is constantly being morphed into different frameworks. As a result, there are several misconceptions regarding this practice. One issue is that CRP has been relegated to a series of superficial practices. Irvine (2010) offered several examples, such as celebrating a few ethnic holidays, providing a few books in the library that have characters of color, mimicking the communication patterns of minority students, or implementing popular culture into the classroom. Instead, CRP must permeate all aspects of school culture and be used consistently throughout the school day. Ladson-Billings (2014) has also expressed concerns that her original tenets are not practiced with fidelity and that the original principles are often misunderstood.

Benefits of CRP

One reason CRP is essential is because of the changing landscape of the American school system. Researchers (Howard, 2003) have projected that minority groups will be the majority by the middle of the 21st century. Howard (2003) stated African American students make up the largest portion of ethnic minorities in our school system. Based on U.S. Census data, Howard projected that African Americans, Latinx,

and Asians will make up 57% of the school population by the year 2050. Based on this trend, there needs to be a shift in the educational system to meet the needs of all learners. Second, research indicates CRP leads to academic success (Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Milner, 2011). Many students coming from families with limited resources and those who belong to minority groups are below grade level in literacy and other content areas (Hammond, 2015). When students relate to content material, this can increase engagement and motivation, in turn having a positive impact on learning. For example, Aronson and Laughter (2016) conducted a meta-analysis of 40 studies on CRP. They found students exposed to CRP practices made academic gain across content areas. Students also experienced higher self-esteem, interest in school, and motivation. This finding was consistent across content areas.

Culturally Relevant Texts

One cornerstone of CRP is the use of texts that reflect characters, themes, and topics that relate directly with the student population (Souto-Manning et al., 2018). Tatum (2013) defined a culturally relevant text as one that meets the cultural, sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and psychological needs of marginalized youth. Research indicates African American males find texts meaningful and significant if they can relate to the character's conflicts and obstacles, and if the text is realistic (Tatum, 2013). Tatum conducted a case study of a 16-year-old African American male named Quincy. The youth was failing English language arts and considered dropping out of high school. The study began with a student interest survey. The researcher determined that the student was interested in strong Afro American figures, such as Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., and Tupac Shakur. Tatum used this information to compile a text-set including books,

poems, and speeches. Over the course of the study, the youth was highly engaged with the texts, exhibited critical thinking skills, and held deep conversations regarding the work. This was in stark contrast to his behavior before being introduced to the culturally relevant texts.

Professional Development and Book Studies

One way to grow educators in the area of CRP is via PD. Peters et al. (2018) conducted a quantitative study involving 110 undergraduate and graduate education majors in an urban school district in Georgia. The educators were administered two scales, including the 26-item Siwatu Culturally Responsive Teaching Outcome Expectancy Scale (CRTOE) and the 40-item Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale (CRTSE). Both instruments measure a teacher's ability to apply culturally responsive practices in the classroom. Using a pre- and post-measure design, the overall findings revealed a positive increase in teachers' pedagogical practices after receiving PD in this specialty area. Similar positive results have been illustrated in relation to PD delivered in the form of book studies (Amador et al., 2015).

For the current study, a book study of *No More Culturally Irrelevant Teaching* by Souto-Manning et al. (2018) was used to provide PD to teachers in the area of CRP. Professional development is a key factor in growing educators (Blanton et al. 2020). However, a major flaw in traditional professional learning sessions is the tactic of one and done, during which a topic is introduced in a few hours or less in one sitting (Amador et al., 2015; Blanton et al., 2020). The literature indicates one barrier to implementing CRP with fidelity is a lack of understanding among educators. CRP is a complex concept and ideology that requires long-term training and reflective practices. Some schools

provide CRP training during a few PD sessions; however, there is often a lack of follow up and support after training has been completed (Blanton et al., 2020). Blanton et al. (2020) stated the traditional methods of one-way discourse and short-term sessions during PD have been proven as ineffective on teachers' pedagogy. Instead, professionals in this field of study suggest PD should be interactive, in line with the school/district mission, personalized, collaborative, and provide tools that can be used in the classroom (Amador et al., 2015; Blanton et al., 2020). True pedagogical change occurs when training is consistently reinforced via refresher sessions, coaching, monitoring, and staff support (Amador et al., 2015; Blanton et al., 2020). Furthermore, book studies are trending as powerful vehicles leading to truly transformative experiences.

Studies indicate professional book studies yield many benefits. During professional book studies, educators are not fed information nor told the correct way to perform their duties. Instead, they are presented with a topic or issue, provided guidance via the book's author, and then encouraged to share personal experiences among themselves during discussions. This format creates reciprocal relationships, which increases critical thinking skills and leads to true change in instructional approaches. Amador et al. (2015) conducted a case study involving 29 math teachers who engaged in a book study for 4 months. Analysis of semi-structured interviews revealed teachers felt a sense of community, built relationships among professionals, engaged in deep reflection, and were exposed to different ideas and practices. Educators also appreciated the relaxed informal structure of book studies. Similar benefits were found in a case study conducted by Blanton et al. (2020) who followed 12 participants over a 4-year period as they engaged in book studies involving topics in literacy. Data analysis included open-ended

interviews, blogs, and reflective summaries/journaling. The major themes revealed included elements of the book study, perceptions during the process, and evolution of a community. Within these themes, 92% of the participants indicated the greatest benefit from the book studies was the depth of discussions between colleagues. Seventy-five percent felt this provided companionship and a supportive network, which reduced the isolation sometimes experienced by classroom teachers. One hundred percent of the teachers noted collaboration as the biggest benefit of these training sessions. Ninety-two percent of the participants stated they used information from the sessions in their classrooms during the book study, and 75% continued to use learned strategies long after the training ended. Interestingly, 92% of the subjects stated they sought out additional information relating to the book study topics at the completion of the sessions. In both studies, participants noted a change to their pedagogical practices and long-term collaboration with book study members after the sessions had ended.

In the current study, participants explored these CRP principles through a book study and group discussions. As part of the process, they were challenged to reflect on their belief systems, backgrounds, and classroom practices. The ultimate goal was for positive shifts to take place, leading to a positive impact on their pedagogy, students, and colleagues. Additionally, this current study was a pilot for a year-long professional learning series on CRP. The data from the surveys and interviews will be used to design personalized PD for staff members. This includes additional book studies along with other deliverables, such as videos and articles based on the teachers' needs, learning styles, and interests in this area. Moreover, teachers will be provided coaching, modeling,

and monitoring throughout the school year to strengthen their everyday classroom

practice.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Culturally relevant/responsive teaching has become an elusive phenomenon in the school system. The roots of this philosophical stance date back more than 50 years (Foley et al., 2015). Several studies have been conducted in this field of study, which have yielded the utility of this ideology. Yet, after the countless studies, journal articles and books, issues of applicability remain, especially in urban classrooms (Christ & Sharma, 2018). Currently, the population of students of color in urban classrooms is rising, yet this statistic is not consistently reflected in the curricula (Souto-Manning et al., 2018). Culturally relevant pedagogues believe this is interrelated with the achievement gap between mainstream populations and students of color (Souto-Manning et al., 2018). In addition, incidents of racism, discrimination, inequity, and social injustice are evident in academia and society in general. The sociopolitical tenet of CRP illustrates how these spheres are interrelated. The purpose of this study was to determine whether extended and consistent professional learning will strengthen educators' pedagogy in this area, thus leading to more consistent use of these practices in the classroom.

Research Question

The aim of this study was to identify teachers' attitudes and practices regarding CRP and determine whether professional learning in this area influenced their pedagogy. Additionally, participants were asked to gauge whether the training affected their students. Educators were provided training in this area via a professional book study. Their attitudes and practices were monitored to determine possible shifts. The research question was: In what ways does engaging in a professional learning book study on

47

culturally relevant pedagogy influence teachers' attitudes and practices in the classroom and what impact does this have on their students?

Methods and Procedure Overview

Each week, during a 6-week period, participants met asynchronously and synchronously to discuss content from the book study text, *No More Culturally Irrelevant Teaching* by Souto-Manning et al. (2018). The content included preassigned pages from the book. The teachers had 1 week to read an average of 16 pages. Synchronous meetings were conducted via Webex and lasted 1.5 hours, during which educators discussed content from the previous week's readings. During asynchronous meetings, participants read assigned pages and responded to each other's prompts via Padlet. At the end of each meeting, educators were asked to fill out a short Google Form (see Appendix A) that had the same five questions each week:

1. Based on the reading and/or discussions, what did you learn last week or what concept was a refresher?

2. How did you apply information from last week's reading and discussions to your teaching practices? If you did not apply anything last week, what obstacle prevented you from implementation?

3. What differences have you noticed in yourself that may be attributed to your participation in this professional book study on CRP?

4. What differences in your students have you noticed that may be attributed to your participation in this professional book study on CRP?

5. What quote or section of the book resonated with you? Why? Please note the page number.

At the end of the study, responses from each week were compared to gauge what segments of the text or discussions were found to be the most useful, as well as the overall efficacy of the book study and the impact on their pedagogy. Based on the information gleaned from the questionnaires, semi-structured interviews (see Appendix A) were conducted to gather additional information and used to make needed clarifications. Information from the interviews was transcribed via the Otter program. The works of Lichtman (2017) and Saldaña (2021) were used as a guidepost for data collection and analysis for this case study design.

Research Design

I employed a case study to explore the possible impact of a professional learning book study on culturally relevant pedagogy on the attitudes and practices of educators who teach students of color. Yin (2018), a prominent expert in case study research, provided five distinct characteristics that set case studies apart from other methods:

- A case study explores a contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control.

- A case study investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

- A case study copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result.

- A case study relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result.

- A case study benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (pp. 13–19)

Based on the above parameters, a case study was the best fit for the current study. The first criterion for case study research is the exploration of a contemporary issue. Currently, there is major interest in CRP within the school system and beyond. This topic has become even more timely within the last 2 years as the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted inequities within the school system and urban community (Paris, 2021). CRP is a multifaceted ideology reaching beyond the classroom. The overarching principle is to promote equity within the school walls and beyond. Within the school system, the aim is to provide students with a well-balanced curriculum, exposing them to lessons, topics, and figures reflecting their cultures. In urban school districts with a high population of minority students, the curriculum must reflect the backgrounds of the student population as well as expose them to a variety of cultures, genres, and perspectives. However, a critical segment of CRP involves encouraging student voice and advocacy regarding real-world issues that affect the community and world. In this vein, students and teachers are taught to disrupt power imbalances in the school system and communities. The pandemic revealed the imbalance of resources in many urban school districts (Jones et al., 2021). Many students did not have adequate access to digital and other materials needed to engage in remote learning (Jones et al., 2021). Many parents in these urban areas were essential workers who were not afforded the opportunity to stay home with their kids and monitor their online schoolwork. Also, there were higher incidents of the virus in Black and Brown communities (Jones et al., 2021). In addition, during this period, social injustice in the form of police brutality, racism, and discrimination in minority

communities was at the forefront of the daily newsfeed. These elements make CRP a civil rights issue requiring timely exploration via case study research.

A second criterion for case studies is the use of a bounded system. For the current study, the distinct parameter was teachers who served a majority of African American and Latinx students in urban school districts in New York City.

A third prerequisite for case study methodology is the use of multiple forms of data. In this case, surveys, interviews, observations, questionnaires, and artifacts were collected, analyzed, and triangulated in an effort to obtain the most in-depth view of the participants and the topic at hand.

According to Yin (2018), another requirement for this methodology is to use a theoretical framework as a foundational lens to explore the phenomena. This factor and the short length of the study differentiates it from other qualitative methods, such as ethnographic studies, which normally take place over an extended period of time. In the current study, critical pedagogy and CRP acted as a frame to explore the impact of professional learning on educators' perspectives and practices.

Overall, a case study methodology was appropriate due to my positionality and belief system as an emerging researcher. This orientation aligns with transformative research. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), transformative research is a collaborative project between the researcher and participants, thus honoring historically oppressed groups by including their voices and seeking a systemic change. As such, the current study was examined through the lens of critical pedagogy and CRP, which calls upon an action agenda. This type of work requires the deconstruction of colonial forces,

which have been traditionally explored via ethnographic and case study research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Participants

Sampling Method: Snowball Method

I used a purposeful sampling method to secure subjects for this study, specifically, a network sampling method, also known as snowballing. This works as a relay system in which the researcher recruits one or more participants who possess characteristics beneficial to the topic of the study; those initially selected then recommend other subjects who have similar attributes (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). In this case, the primary criterion was educators working in urban Title 1 schools with a high population of minority students. Title 1 programs cater to students who have a low socioeconomic status (SES). Historically, those from low SES backgrounds are not afforded the same access to a quality education and other benefits granted to affluent members of society. Title 1 programs were designed to provide marginalized populations funding and resources for a quality education (New York State Education Department, n.d.-b). This criterion aligns with the founding philosophy of critical pedagogy and CRP, which aims to emancipate marginalized groups.

I chose five participants for the study. The demographic makeup of the group included one male and four female teachers ranging from their 20s to 50 years of age. Their teaching experience ranged from less than 2 years to more than 10 years in the field of education. The participants' ethnic backgrounds were White, Afro-Caribbean, and Latinx. The educators worked in three different schools in the Northeastern sphere of the United States, including PreK, middle school, and high school positions. Educators held

licenses in the areas of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), English language arts Grades 7–12, Early Childhood Education-Birth through 2 years of age, and Science Grades 7–12.

Description of Instruments

Teachers were administered a pretest and posttest questionnaire to assess their culturally relevant teaching practices as well as reflect on their attitudes toward CRP (see Appendix A). I designed the questionnaire, and it was peer reviewed by a doctoral candidate in the field of literacy in an effort to establish metrics (see Appendix B). The book club members met once a week to discuss assigned chapters of the book and their implementation of strategies from the text into their classroom. Once a week, a short survey (see Appendix A), constructed by me as the researcher, was administered to monitor and track teachers' practices. The survey, which was also peer reviewed, served as a discussion protocol to ensure consistency throughout the study. A host of digital tools were used, including Webex, Otter, Google Docs, Google Forms, and Padlet.

The questionnaire and survey were peer reviewed by a doctoral candidate (see Appendix B). A copy of the questionnaire and survey was shared with the peer reviewer. On the document, the reviewer was prompted with a series of questions regarding the efficacy of the instruments. The reviewer was also invited to add any additional comments deemed necessary. I used the feedback from the reviewer to make adjustments to the respective instruments/tools.

The text used for the study was *No More Culturally Irrelevant Teaching* by Souto-Manning et al. (2018). Participating teachers read this 79-page text over a period of 6 weeks. Prior to beginning the text, the educators were administered a questionnaire

(see Appendix A) to gauge (a) their views and knowledge regarding CRP, (b) reflective questions regarding their background and upbringing, (c) if and how they used this practice in their classrooms, and (d) any possible obstacles/barriers to executing this practice.

At the end of the book study, the participants received a similar questionnaire to use as a comparative measure. In addition, each week participants completed a short Google Form with five questions (see Appendix A). At the end of the book study, each respondent took part in a semi-structured interview, which was used to follow up additional information and to gauge their overall experiences. Finally, educators were asked to note possible impacts on their students during the study. The data were collected, analyzed, and coded for noticeable patterns. This information was then categorized into themes and synthesized for the final report.

Digital Tools

Padlet is a digital tool that allows users to post prompts, tasks, and responses and engage in a dialogue with other participants. Other features include the ability to post videos, audio tracks, images, and informational materials. In order to encourage a rich discussion, educators were given prompts to answer, and they were asked to respond to at least two of their peers. The goal was to simulate the synchronous, face-to-face discussions. One benefit of Padlet was it allowed participants more time to process their thoughts and possibly make deeper responses as opposed to a live dialogue during which they may have felt pressure to answer and respond to questions on the spot.

Google Forms was another digital resource I used to collect data during the study. Google Forms is a web-based platform that is part of the Google Suite programs. I used

this tool for the questionnaires and surveys. The participants were tasked to complete a pre and post study questionnaire (see Appendix A) to assess possible shifts in mindset and perspectives regarding CRP over the course of the study. The educators also received a 5-question survey at the end of each week. The surveys were purposely designed for brevity and convenience, which is particularly important for educators who are often overwhelmed by the demands of their profession. To maintain continuity, the questions were the same each week and included information regarding the weekly readings and whether teachers implemented culturally relevant practices in their classrooms. The information from the questionnaires and surveys helped inform the semi-structured interviews by gathering additional information to make clarifying inquiries.

Otter was also used for this study. Otter is an artificial intelligence application used for interviews, meeting notes, and lectures. Otter was used in conjunction with Webex to record content presented during the virtual meetings and generate transcripts.

During the COVID pandemic, school leaders and teachers were forced to find creative ways to provide educational services to their students. Though there are pros and cons to any program, many of these tools, such as the ones previously mentioned, have more positive than negative benefits. First, many of these tools provided easy accessibility to the book study content. Second, because teachers had to use a variety of these tools during the pandemic and the course of the school year, this provided a level of familiarity and comfortability for the users during the study. Third, this study will be used as a prototype for a future professional learning series. The use of these tools and devices can serve as a model for future sessions within the proposed program. As part of the survey, participants were asked to assess these programs. Possible negative factors to take

into consideration are the use of digital tools for individuals who are not technologically adept, the need for internet/Wi-Fi, and digital hardware, such as computers or smartphones. A question was embedded in the pre questionnaire (see Appendix A) to avoid these issues. Accordingly, appropriate accommodations and alternatives were available, such as supplying paper copies of the surveys and questionnaires.

Book Club Text

No More Culturally Irrelevant Teaching (Souto-Manning et al., 2018) was co-authored by researchers and classroom teachers from the New York City public school system. In the first section of the text, the authors offer reasons educators do not use culturally relevant teaching (CRT) with fidelity, such as time constraints, state/district mandates, and a lack of culturally relevant materials. They also discuss common misconceptions found in classrooms regarding CRT. For example, many teachers believe engaging in periodic celebrations of ethnic groups or reading a few multicultural texts suffice as CRT. In the second section of the text, the authors provide the tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy and offer examples based on the real-life experiences of the authors, who were classroom teachers. The authors provide cross content exemplars of strong CRT in ELA, social studies, science, and math. This interdisciplinary approach is unique in that CRP is usually aligned with ELA. The mention of different content areas in the text afforded me the opportunity to invite teachers from different disciplines to engage in the study. The authors also offered several additional resources, including website links and book recommendations on this topic. These resources will allow research participants to explore additional sources during and after the study is complete.

Mariana Souto-Manning (Book's Author) Interview

Marina Souto-Manning, one of the authors of the book study text, granted me an interview regarding her work. Paraphrasing our conversation, Souto-Manning (personal communication, March 31, 2021) noted the authors intentionally avoided writing a dense text on this topic. They wanted to make the content manageable to all educators, because teachers are often overwhelmed with the demands of their profession. The design and length of the book were one reason I chose to use it in my study. A wealth of information is provided in the most succinct manner, which I thought would increase the chances of the participants reading the text from cover to cover. Souto-Manning desired to work with classroom teachers on this project because she believes in honoring the voices and experiences of novice researchers and educators. This shows the lead author not only conducts research in CRP but also lives the tenets that challenge authoritative power structures and promotes the voice of all stakeholders. In this case, even though Souto-Manning is a seasoned professional in her field, she acknowledges the reciprocal nature of knowledge and the benefits of exchanging information. This collaborative effort is another reason I chose the text for this study. Because the participants of the study were educators, they may have found it appealing and inspiring that teachers took part in this research. As a result, it was likely the participants would be able to relate to the struggles, needs, and anecdotes presented in the text. Souto-Manning also addressed why the book was fashioned in a way to report what should and should not be done in CRP. She stated the authors purposely offered non-examples because they bore witness to colleagues who thought they were providing culturally relevant teaching but instead were harming their students. The second and third sections of the book provide balance by outlining the CRP

tenets and concrete examples of how to execute these principles. During the study, I constructed group discussion prompts (see Appendix A) based on the different sections of the book to help generate critical thinking.

During the interview, Souto-Manning (personal communication, March 31, 2021) described two types of teachers. The first group included those with good intentions who thought they were providing culturally relevant lessons but were not. The second group of teachers included those who did not practice CRP with fidelity. This led to poor outcomes and the belief that culturally relevant teaching was not a useful practice. As a result, the latter group resumed their traditional teaching methods. The researcher was adamant that both scenarios lead to harm for students of color. Based on this conversation, I was ever more mindful of my responsibility to provide educators with the authentic principles of CRP during this study, my future research, and as a teacher-educator.

Souto-Manning (personal communication, March 31, 2021) shared her motivation for entering this field of study. Growing up in Brazil, she attended a Freirean school and participated in PD in the area of critical pedagogy. She had the honor of working directly with Paulo Freire. She has also followed the work of other pioneers in this field, such as Gloria Ladson-Billings and Geneva Gay. In short, her interests extend beyond students of color, including injustices against women, immigrants, and voting rights. She also expressed concerns involving police brutality, particularly targeted against men of color. In short, she has dedicated her life to ethnic and multicultural studies, as well as civil rights issues. This circles back to the sociopolitical segment of CRP, which sets it apart from culturally responsive teaching. CRP encapsulates exposing students of color to their

cultures via the curriculum; however, it also involves changing historic and bureaucratic systems that stifle and oppress marginalized groups. This complexity is one reason this ideology is difficult to grasp and execute, calling for a need for ongoing PD.

Souto-Manning (personal communication, March 31, 2021) also stated one of the biggest barriers to implementing CRP is the misunderstanding of this ideology. She noted the second major obstacle is teacher training programs. These programs churn out clone-like reproductions of educators who are taught the basic pedagogical skills but not the deeper qualities that are required to work with human subjects. Instead, teachers are taught to be tacticians, which is hollow of human sentiment. Furthermore, she mentioned the lack of support and edification of teachers once they receive their degrees and certifications. One of the key elements missing in these educational programs is the art of inquiry, which lends itself to critical thinking. Another missing factor is creating a learning environment rooted in diversity, culture, and experiential learning. One of the most profound statements she made is the need to "establish life-long professional development communities so that it is about teacher development and not curriculum implementation" (M. Souto-Manning, personal communication, March 31, 2021). This powerful statement suggests PD is centered around a ready-made agenda and often pre-packaged curriculum that does not engage nor meet the needs of all learners. Teachers are not well prepared by teacher educator programs nor the schools in which they are employed. Educators also need to learn more about the socio-historical contexts of the educational system and political forces that affect their students.

During her closing remarks, Souto-Manning (personal communication, March 31, 2021) offered advice to novice researchers and teachers, similar to me. Her advice was to

take a deep dive into the literature centered around this concept. This is a perpetual endeavor. Reading a few books and articles on this topic does not make one an expert in this area of study. CRP is a life-long process and a way of living, as opposed to a mere way of teaching. This philosophy requires frequent study, deep analysis, reflection, and practice. Consequently, Souto-Manning highlighted the need for teacher support in this area and noted that change comes from the bottom-up. It is difficult to change large bureaucratic systems, such as educational institutions. This requires a grassroots movement. Her views closely align with Freire's conceptualization of critical pedagogy, in which he viewed societal problems and acts of oppression as civil rights issues that require revolutionary action.

I left the interview feeling exhilarated but also with the heavy weight of responsibility. This is a massive cause that will require great energy and perseverance. I view the current study as a preliminary step to a pilot program leading to a year-round professional learning series on CRP. The series will involve constant reflection, education, and support for educators. It will also require periodic reevaluation and revamping to ensure the needs of the teachers and their students are being met. This process was part of the questionnaires constructed for this study, which will help me design the next segment of this series.

Trustworthiness: Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability

To legitimize the use of these instruments and the overall findings, attention is needed in the areas of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, as well as ethical considerations. Similar to internal validity in quantitative works, credibility is the alignment of perspectives between researcher and subjects and assurance

that the researcher accurately honors the participants' views (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Terrell, 2016). Journaling, thick descriptions, triangulation, reporting of negative findings, and peer debriefings are a few methods that can be used to increase credibility (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Throughout the course of the study, I maintained field notes with questions, needed clarifications, and personal reflections. This was used to share my thoughts, questions, and concerns with my dissertation chair who is a veteran researcher and expert in the field of CRP. For instance, my passion for culturally relevant teaching and social justice could have had a negative impact on my partiality during the study. Peer debriefings assisted me in working through this issue. I was committed to making any necessary adjustments based on peer feedback and to reporting any findings that could have been antithetical to my expectations. Member checks were also conducted. This was a means of checking-in with participants to make sure their experiences are accurately recorded (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). For example, I used interviews to clarify any possible misconceptions based on my observations and the surveys. Finally, Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) recommend the use of thick descriptions or reporting precise details to achieve credibility. I implemented this by meticulous record keeping, noting the research process step-by-step, and by relaying exact excerpts from the participants' accounts.

Similar to external validity in quantitative studies, transferability denotes the applicability of the results to similar situations (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Terrell, 2016). According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2019), this can be accomplished via purposive sampling and the use of detailed thick descriptions, both of which I built into the research plan.

Analogous to reliability in quantitative research, dependability assures that the research process can be used by other professionals in the field of study, thus leading to similar outcomes (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Terrell, 2016). This requires methodical tracking and recording of each step of the research process, peer examination, and triangulation (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). As previously mentioned, I maintained a detailed account of the research process during and after the study.

Finally, though qualitative research may be considered a subjective experience, confirmability was needed to combat researcher bias (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The same methods used to maintain credibility, dependability, and confirmability were applicable here, such as maintaining an audit trail, triangulation, and reflective practices (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). In particular, triangulation assisted with all areas of trustworthiness. Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) described this process as cross-referencing multiple sources of data and using diverse strategies to confirm and increase the integrity of the results. To reiterate, participants received check-ins to ensure their sentiments were precisely echoed. In part, these clarifications took place during group discussions and one-on-one encounters. Peer check-ins and introspection aid in preventing personal bias. These methods were not only necessary to report accurate results, but also to build trust between the researcher, participants, and the professional community. Lack of trust can negatively affect the results because participants may withhold pertinent information thus skewing the overall findings. This can also lead to ethical issues.

Ethics are a major concern and objective of research projects. It is of utmost importance not to cause physical or mental harm to the participants. Considerations in this realm include anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent. To begin, from the

outset of the study, participants received an information flyer briefly outlining the particulars of the study (see Appendix C). Once participants were selected for the study, they were required to sign a consent form (see Appendix D), which was a detailed account of the research and notification of possible risks. Case in point, one possible risk was vulnerability. The reflective and sensitive nature of the study and topics, such as racism and beliefs, had the potential to lead to psychological distress.

CRP issues of racism and discrimination transpired over the course of the study. Participants were advised to share as much or as little information as they deemed appropriate. Protocols were also set in place regarding group discussions during the book study. It was also important to ensure participants did not feel judged or attacked. In addition, participants were assured of confidentiality, including how information would be stored, secured, and shared. Regarding storage, the information collected throughout the study was retrieved and stored digitally and is password protected. Participants were informed that the final report would be uploaded to the ProQuest server and therefore accessible to view by the public. In order to preserve anonymity, participants were given options regarding how they would be identified in the final report. Participants were extended the courtesy of choosing their own pseudonyms. Also, vague workplace identifiers were used as opposed to naming specific work locations, names of supervisors and colleagues, and identification of students.

The aforementioned instruments and procedures were used to extract data, which were organized, collated, and analyzed. The data were used to create codes and themes. The information was then synthesized and used to report the findings.

Data Collection and Analyses Overview

Due to the lingering uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic, I purposely designed this study to take place virtually through the use of several digital platforms and tools, including Webex, Google Forms, and Padlet. I used Webex to host the book study meetings. In addition, I gave participants the choice to interview via Webex or telephone. Webex was the selected platform due its high level of security. This modality afforded subjects to participate from any location, including the comfort and privacy of their own homes without being concerned about health threats, as well as the convenience of not having to travel. Webex also allowed the flexibility of providing synchronous and asynchronous meetings. Participants met four times synchronously and two times asynchronously. During the latter, educators were still required to read a segment of the book study text; however, the discussion was conducted via Padlet.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

During the study, I maintained notes/research journal. In particular, I highlighted items I wanted to later address or clarify. I used multiple methods to triangulate the data, including the use of an extended 35-item questionnaire, a shorter 5-item weekly survey, Padlet, interviews, and the book study discussions.

Questionnaire. The goal of the 35-item questionnaire (see Appendix A) was two-fold. The first aim was to collect demographic information from the participants, such as pseudonyms, teaching experience, and general information about their school populations. The second aim was to ascertain the participants' level of knowledge, attitudes, and practices in the area of CRP. The questions were adapted from an existing instrument titled the Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy (CRTS-E) scale (Cruz

et al., 2020), which was developed based on the founding principles of Gloria Ladson-Billings. Cruz et al. (2020) conducted a study including 275 in-service teachers in an effort to assess the reliability of this instrument. The original instrument contains 40 items. Using a scale from 0 to 100, respondents rate their level of confidence in applying culturally relevant principles and practices. Studies have yielded a reliability of .96 for this instrument. For the current study, 13 questions were adapted from the original tool. The questions were changed, while maintaining the general concept of CRP principles. In addition, rather than using the 100 scale rating system, participants were given four choices for responses: Yes, No, I prefer not to answer, and Other. The participants were asked to answer the CRP designed questions before and after the study. The inquiries required mainly yes and no responses. At the end of the study, during the interview process, participants were asked to answer the questions again without being able to view their initial answers. The purpose of this was to measure possible growth or changes in attitudes, which relates to the research question. Furthermore, they were asked to explain their responses in a detailed manner and give examples if the question was about teaching practices.

Weekly-5 Question Survey. The weekly 5-item survey was administered after each study session. The questions were the same each week in order to track possible changes in attitude and practice. The five questions were as follows:

1. Based on the reading and/or discussions, what did you learn last week or what concept was a refresher?

2. How did you apply information from last week's reading and discussions to your teaching practices? If you did not apply anything last week, what obstacle prevented you from implementation?

3. What differences have you noticed in yourself that may be attributed to your participation in this professional book study on CRP?

4. What differences in your students have you noticed that may be attributed to your participation in this professional book study on CRP?

5. What quote or section of the book resonated with you? Why? Please note the page number.

Book Study Padlet Discussions. Padlet was used during asynchronous meetings in addition to the short 5-item survey. Participants were asked to answer three questions related to that week's reading assignment, and then respond to their peers. The questions were:

1. What is one commitment from page 53 (choose one from the list of 5), that you would like to strengthen? What are some next steps you can take to improve in this area?

2. What is one strategy you can take from Pages 52-66, that you can implement this school year or next school year? Brainstorm what this would look like in your classroom/school.

3. Based on what you know about the three main principles of culturally relevant pedagogy, celebrate yourself by giving a brief example of a time you practiced this philosophy in the classroom. It does not have to be recent.

The Padlet was designed to mimic the discussions held during virtual face-to-face meetings. The purpose of the asynchronous meetings was to allow flexibility during the study. Meeting once a week can be taxing on participants who are extremely busy due to the nature of the teaching profession, as well as other obligations. Asynchronous meetings were a flexible means to allow the educators to still engage with the text and each other at their own pace. This time could also act as a respite for participants if they needed to catch up on reading the book study text.

I used the above methods to collect data. Based on Lichtman's (2017) recommendations, throughout the study, I sketched a broad outline of possible themes occurring during the sessions. After the completion of the study, I began the formal process of coding and analysis. I used the Otter program to transcribe the conversations during the virtual meetings and the interviews. The Otter program also provided some preliminary key words that were useful in creating possible codes and themes. Once transcription was complete, I analyzed the transcripts for pertinent information related to CRP. In addition, analysis included the pre and post questionnaire, the weekly 5-question Google Forms survey, 1-hour individual interviews, and the Padlet used during asynchronous meetings. I used all of the above means of data collection to triangulate the information, thus strengthening the findings.

Data Collection Method

The use of the above programs and applications allowed me to manually collect, store, collate, and analyze the data from the study. This process was manageable due to the small sample size of five teachers. Some professionals argue that manual maintenance of information is preferable because researchers are able to create and view visual

displays of the data throughout the analytical process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Manual administration allows researchers to form an intimate relationship with their data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Personally mining through the data can lead to higher engagement and attention to the details of the study, as opposed to relegating this process to computerized programs (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). One rebuttal is that manual handling of data can increase errors (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Data Analysis and Coding

I conducted data analysis and coding throughout the study in stages. Saldaña (2021) offers several guidelines for this process. Borrowing from this protocol, the beginning step is to take notes throughout the study and to highlight items, such as commonalities, patterns, questions, and points of interest. Saldaña called these analytical memos. In addition, I used both an inductive approach to creating codes, which entails developing codes as patterns emerge, as well as a deductive approach, which entails beginning with a set number of pre-made codes based on expectations drawn from the chosen theoretical approach. I analyzed and coded data garnered from the pre- and post-study surveys/questionnaires, which included demographic information about the participants. I did the same with the shorter weekly surveys. The next source for analysis and coding were the interviews. I extracted information from this source from the Otter program. Finally, I applied analysis and coding to observations made during the book study sessions, which were recorded via Webex.

This coding process involved different stages. Stage 1 was an initial capturing of information. Using Google Docs, as I noticed patterns and interesting phenomena, I highlighted those sections and created comments. The second stage was to analyze the

information gathered from the study and to make labels and codes. Stage 3 involved amending and revising the codes based on a more thorough and deeper analysis of the data. Stage 4 entailed comparing data and codes from the different instruments and sources, which involved further refinement of the codes. Once all sources were analyzed and cross referenced, themes were determined and reported.

Based on Saldaña's (2021) guide, I included several items in the analytical memos. First, I summarized information taken from the different data points/sources. Second, I recorded my reflections as a researcher-participant, including questions, concerns, and unexpected outcomes. Third, I noted observations made during the book study sessions including discussions and written correspondence from the surveys. This included what Saldaña called the four Rs, which are routines, rituals, rules, and relationships that take place over the course of the study. It also included direct quotes from the participants, which is called in vivo codes. Fourth, I made notes to myself regarding the codes I chose. Fifth, based on my noticings, I began to document patterns and possible themes. Moreover, I noted links between the different data sources and how this related to the overall theoretical framework and research question. In the final stages, I devised a list of themes. Finally, I synthesized this information in order to write a coherent report of the findings.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

I conducted a qualitative case study to determine the possible impact of a culturally relevant pedagogy book study on teachers' attitudes and practices, and whether there was an impact on their students. The book study was conducted over a period of 6 weeks. Participants were recruited via a snowballing method. I distributed a flyer (see Appendix C) containing basic study information to individuals affiliated with teaching programs and K–12 schools. Recipients were asked to share the flyer with other eligible participants. Eligibility requirements included teachers working in schools with a high population of students of color. Once participants were recruited, they were tasked to complete a consent form (see Appendix D). The first session involved collecting demographic data from participants via a 35-item questionnaire (see Appendix A). This included basic questions such as number of years teaching, population of students, and inquiries regarding culturally relevant teaching. The latter was adapted from the CRTS-E scale, which was developed based on the founding principles of Gloria Ladson-Billings. Sessions were a hybrid of synchronous and asynchronous meetings. Synchronous meetings were conducted via the Webex digital conference platform. During asynchronous meetings, participants answered and responded to each other via Padlet. The text used for the book study was *No More Culturally Irrelevant Teaching* by Souto-Manning et al. (2018). Each week participants were preassigned approximately 16 pages of the text. They were also asked to fill out a 5- question survey. The questions were the same from week to week in an effort to gauge possible growth and to maintain accountability of the reading passages.

After the sessions were completed, the last week of the study involved a 1-hour interview, individually with each participant, to further delve into topics covered during the sessions. The semi-structured interviews included some preformulated questions regarding culturally relevant practices. I included additional inquiries based on the sessions and responses to the questionnaire and weekly surveys. This involved clarifications and an overall account of the participants' views on CRP and the book study process.

Descriptive Findings

The participants were a diverse group of five teachers (see Table 1). There were four female and one male teachers. Two teachers taught Pre-K students, two taught at the high school level, and one teacher taught middle school. Teacher certification areas included general education, science, English language arts, and English as a new language. The teachers worked in different states in the Northeastern section of the United States. The demographic makeup of the schools included a majority of students of color, which mainly included African American, African, and Latinx students. The participants chose their own preferred pseudonyms during the study.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant number	Pseudonym	Gender	Ethnicity	Years teaching	License
1	B.S.	Male	White	10+	TESOL MS
2	C.N.	Female	Latinx	10+	B–2/PReK
3	Grace	Female	Afro-Caribbean	10+	B–2/PReK
4	R.I.	Female	Latinx	< 2	7-10/HS ELA
5	Maria	Female	Latinx	2–3	7–10/HS science

I used Saldaña's (2021) and Lichtman's (2017) work as a guide throughout the data analysis process. Though there are no definitive steps associated with coding qualitative data, Lichtman (2017) created the 3Cs strategy in an effort to provide structure to the analysis and coding process. Lichtman described an inductive process during which the researcher derives general themes. These themes are categorized and reevaluated. There is constant refinement until the researcher narrows down a succinct number of codes, which are then categorized into themes. A narrative approach can also be used by using quotes from the study to align with the chosen codes/themes, thus providing a rich account of the participants' experiences.

Lichtman (2017) outlined the 3Cs of data analysis, which include coding, categorizing, and concepts. During the coding process, data from interviews, research notes, and observations are analyzed for general patterns. To begin, a word or phrase is used to represent general ideas and concepts found during the first sweep of data analysis. Next, involves reevaluating and refining the initial codes formulated in phase one, which leads to a general list of categories, which again undergoes reevaluation and refinement.

This leads to the creation of subcategories. During the final step, these subcategories evolve into more meaningful concepts, thus presenting a fuller illustration of the participants' experiences.

As I searched for themes, I consistently referred to the research question and ultimate goal of the study. Lichtman (2017) noted researchers can either begin analysis with preformulated codes and then use the data to find evidence or organically create codes based on the data. I combined both approaches. Before analyzing the data, I used the three tenets of CRP as possible codes. As analysis began, additional codes began to emerge. As a result, I devised 11 initial themes:

- Student learning

- Cultural competence

- Sociopolitical/critical consciousness

- Lack of time needed to implement CRP

- Lack of needed materials and curriculum

- Lack of models and examples

- Participants ability to relate to each other and the topics in the text

- Reflection of practices

- Using acquired knowledge for future planning

- Refreshers and reminders of practices

- Misalignment of administrators' and teachers' goals

Results

Lichtman (2017) advised limiting the number of themes by either eliminating the less prevalent concepts or combining ideas. Consequently, further exploration of the data

helped me narrow down the themes to six main items. I created a chart (see Appendix E) with a vertical list of the participants' pseudonyms and a horizontal list of the above 11 initial themes. Using a side-by-side analysis, I sifted through the data while physically checking off how many times the initial themes were mentioned. This process proved beneficial because it allowed me to visualize which concepts yielded the most repetition. As recommended by Lichtman, for the themes that had the least repetition, I either eliminated those items or combined them with other similar concepts.

The results are presented in four segments. The first segment relates to the three main tenets (see Appendix G) of CRP (i.e., student learning, cultural competence, and sociopolitical/critical consciousness). The second segment of results involves general themes (see Appendix G) extracted from the book study: (a) lack of time among educators, (b) a need to translate theory to practice, and (c) comradery among educators. The third and fourth segments are directly tied to the research question regarding the impact of the book study on teachers' attitudes and practices, as well as the impact on their students.

The first theme relates directly to the research question regarding the possible impact on the educators' attitudes and practices. I identified instances during which the participants expressed that they gained information or applied the three tenets of CRP within their professional practices. The remaining three themes indicated barriers to successfully implementing CRP.

Results Segment 1: Overall Understanding of CRP Principles

The basis of this study was centered around the foundational principles of CRP. Of interest was participants' general knowledge in this area throughout the book study.

One goal was to assess the educators' basic understanding of the CRP principles and to monitor whether they gained knowledge in a particular area. Overall, the majority of the participants stated they either learned something new from their participation in the study or that segments of the book study and discussions served as an important refresher of CRP concepts they wanted to implement into their classroom practices. The three main tenets of CRP (i.e., student learning, cultural competence, and sociopolitical/critical consciousness) were mentioned at least 191 times throughout the course of the study. Tracking how often the three tenets of CRP were addressed allowed me to determine which tenet had the biggest impact on the teachers' attitudes and practices. This included areas in which the educators practiced CRP principles with fidelity and other areas in which the educators may need additional PD.

Using the pre and post questionnaire, respondents were asked to provide a definition of CRP in their own words before the study began and at the conclusion of the study. The purpose was to assess possible growth in the area of CRP concepts. The educators provided general definitions of CRP principles before and after the study. For instance, the participants noted the importance of being sensitive to students' backgrounds; imbedding multicultural content into the curriculum, thus helping students to make personal connections; being aware of cultural differences in individuals, families, and society; representation of marginalized communities; improving broken systems in the educational system; facilitating lessons in order for students to make self-to-world connections; and creating inclusive and welcoming environments. Though these definitions illustrate a basic understanding of CRP concepts, discussions throughout the study indicated some areas of strength and other areas in need of further education.

Cultural Competence. Cultural competence requires educators to reflect on their upbringings and beliefs regarding race and ethnicity as well as to acquire knowledge about the diverse cultures of the students in their charge (Souto-Manning et al., 2018). In addition, students' cultures are honored and embedded into the curriculum in an effort to provide multiple perspectives as opposed to traditional Eurocentric views (Souto-Manning et al., 2018). Cultural competence was the main concept addressed throughout the study, being noted 95 times. Throughout the study, there were several examples of the participants acquiring knowledge in this area, including shifting their mindsets, and desiring to improve their practices.

B.S. provided examples of practices in this area. He stated he uses texts that offer diverse perspectives and include a broad range of cultures, such as Native Americans and adolescents from various cultural backgrounds. Aside from working with middle schoolers at a charter school, B.S. has a second part-time job working in the field of adult education. In this domain, he works with a high population of Haitian students whose dialect is Creole. Accordingly, B.S. incorporates this culture into his lessons.

C.N. practices cultural competence by using a variety of resources reflecting diverse cultures, including texts, posters, and pictures in the classroom. Her goal is to utilize materials which help the students connect to their cultural backgrounds, such as food from their countries of origin. In addition, she talked about the importance of getting to know the cultural backgrounds of her students' parents and guardians. For example, she said over the years she noticed some of her African parents/guardians avoided eye contact during meetings. She learned this was a sign of respect. She took her knowledge one step further by sharing this cultural norm with other teachers in her school building.

Grace practices cultural competence by incorporating students' home languages into lessons and the classroom environment. She also displays pictures of various cultures in the classroom. Grace uses teachable moments to remind her students of color of their assets. For example, she stated that during dramatic play and dress up activities, if the children want to be a firefighter, doctor, and so forth, she reminds them that all people can hold these positions regardless of gender or race/ethnicity.

R.I. stated that she first gets to know her students' backgrounds and then incorporates that information into the curriculum. R.I. provided an example involving a unit on poetry. She was cognizant and adamant about including poetry from ethnic minorities, such as Sandra Cisneros. In addition, R.I. added, "I also take into account my own differences as a person and how that may influence my teaching as well." R.I. reminded the group that it is important to teach students about a variety of cultures, not just their own. This can be done by having them find commonalities among different ethnicities. Providing knowledge of other groups can build tolerance.

Maria expressed her cultural competence by using Dr. Gholdy Mohammad's (2018) HRL model. This entails incorporating four main objectives into the curriculum, including skills, student identity, intellect, and criticality (Muhammad, 2018). Maria stated it can be challenging to show students how science connects to their cultures, but it increases engagement in this content area. She stated,

> I implement CRP in my classroom by first getting to understand my students, where they come from, and what matters to them. I then apply CRP in different lessons by adding culturally relevant activities. I add videos, images, and conversations, which help my students better understand science.

For example, Maria teaches students about Black and Brown scientists and chemists, such as Charles Drew and his involvement with blood banks, and Gabrielle Union who creates Black hair products. She includes Eastern Pacific Islanders and their contribution to constellation stick charts. Maria also taught her students about a Black woman scientist, Henrietta Lack, who was not given credit for her work in the area of human cells.

Maria added an interesting component to cultural competence. In an effort to better relate to the high school population, she also learned about her students' social media culture. As a result, she incorporates Tik Tok and slang into her lessons to increase student interest. This is a reminder that culture is much broader than race and ethnicity, it also includes generational practices, gender, and religion.

There is an interrelationship between cultural competence and student learning. Specifically, when students are able to see their reflection in the curriculum, this leads to engagement, which can lead to academic success (Souto-Manning et al., 2018).

Student Learning. According to Souto-Manning et al. (2018), student learning is characterized by accessing student assets, scaffolding/modeling, collaborative learning, academic rigor, and student accountability. This tenet also involves alternate means of assessing students' knowledge, as opposed to traditional pen, paper, and computer assessments. The concept of student learning was addressed at least 70 times throughout the study.

In particular, there was one activity mentioned by the participants as part of their practice in this area. The educators shared similar stories in which they incorporated hip-hop into their lessons. B.S. shared a time during a social studies lesson when he tasked

students to create a rap song illustrating the differences between pharaohs. R.I. also incorporated music into her curriculum. For instance, she said,

> Knowing my students' interests gives me a concrete example of what I want to do with my lessons. Some students said they wanted to use poetry and music lyrics. So, I implemented this into the curriculum and showed how this connects to poetry.

Maria reminded us that this technique can be implemented in the science classroom. In Living Environment, during a lesson on Darwin, Maria played a rap video by Mobb Deep titled *Survival of the Fittest*. The students were tasked to analyze the lyrics in relation to the topic.

One way C.N. engaged in student learning was by using alternate means of assessment, such as through role-playing and art. She also enlisted her students to be co-creators of the lessons by inquiring about their interests. Engaging students in the lesson planning process is a key component of CRP and Critical Pedagogy (Foley et al., 2015; Kibler & Chapman, 2018; Souto-Manning et al., 2018). In addition, C.N. finds ways to access and showcase her students' hidden talents. Furthermore, part of a student's success entails educators taking responsibility for their scholars' learning; this contrasts with blaming a lack of success on student deficits, parents/guardians, or other factors (Souto-Manning et al., 2018). In this vein, C.N. stated that she engages in professional development outside of school requirements by buying materials and borrowing books from the library, which focus on pedagogical practices.

One way Grace engages in student learning is by asking the students about their interests and building the classroom dramatic play area around those recommendations.

Building student relationships is paramount to Grace's teaching philosophy. As such, she uses her playful personality and humor in the classroom. This helps create a comfortable and inviting learning environment. Grace also ensures the classroom materials are engaging and appropriate for her age group.

One strategy R.I. uses as a catalyst for student learning is to engage students in meaningful conversations similar to Socratic Seminars. She shared an example from an ELA lesson,

> During a poetry lesson, I wanted them to know the weight of their words. I showed a video titled, *Sticks and Stones Break My Bones But Words Can Never Hurt Me*. Students discussed how words do hurt and how they impact others.

In addition, R.I. spoke about the detriments of teachers who possess a savior complex. She said tracking is common in urban schools that have a high population of marginalized students. This can lead teachers to pity students who are not doing well academically in their classes. It is essential for educators to advocate against using deficit lenses with students of color (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Souto-Manning et al., 2018).

Sociopolitical/Critical Consciousness. Based on the data, sociopolitical consciousness was addressed the least throughout the study. Participants addressed this tenet 26 times, possibly suggesting the need for further education in this area. According to Souto-Manning et al. (2018), sociopolitical and critical consciousness entails helping students connect their academic studies to real-world events. These lessons highlight issues affecting their communities, especially those related to institutional racism, equity, social justice, and advocacy. Students are also given a share of the power dynamics in the classroom and offered multiple perspectives on various topics.

The participants exhibited a few examples of sociopolitical awareness. B.S. discussed encouraging his Haitian adult students to advocate for themselves. Specifically, he made them aware of employment and educational opportunities that would be available to them once they reached the target proficiency level in English.

C.N. advocates for her students' parents/guardians by supporting them through the Individual Education Plan (IEP) process. She stated many parents/guardians feel shame and stigmatized about their children's need for services. C.N. tries to reassure them by informing them of their rights and the students' needs and educating them regarding the various types of services. In addition, it is never too early to instill a sense of social justice in students. For instance, C.N. teaches her preschoolers to advocate for themselves by creating a safe space for them to express their feelings. She also encourages them to speak up if someone is bullying them.

Grace showed the most growth in the area of sociopolitical consciousness. She began the study expressing doubts that preschoolers were too young to comprehend and participate in social justice matters. Grace believed only administrators, teachers, and parents/guardians could advocate for young students. By the end of the study, she was more open to the idea of students being able to advocate for themselves.

It is essential to teach our scholars that social justice and advocacy may look different depending on the population and specific goals. When students hear social justice, they sometimes envision the rallies that took place in the 1960s, and more recently after the murder of George Floyd. R.I. offered a profound statement in this regard. She stated, "Personally, I don't go out on protests, but I post information on social media about social issues. I also donate to particular causes." She also believes social

justice involves allowing students to freely share their feelings and concerns in the classroom setting. In addition, R.I. adamantly believes in sharing power in the classroom. She stated students are capable of teaching and they offer valuable insights during discussions. Inthis vein, R.I. stated, "I can learn just as much from them as they can from me. And sometimes the things that I learned from them are so much more important than what I could ever teach them." Critical pedagogues firmly believe in student-centered classrooms and reciprocity of knowledge between teachers and students (Foley et al., 2015; Freire, 1984; Giroux, 2010).

R.I. disagreed with the authors of the book study text that teaching should be apolitical. She viewed education as highly politicized. She believed it was her duty as an educator to share her views with her students and prepare them for real-world events involving institutional racism and discrimination.

Maria also uses social media as a platform for advocacy. This is especially important because she works with high school students who use this as their main means of communication with their peers. Maria has a teacher's social media account that she shares with parents and students. Via this account, she discusses how culture and science converge in the real world. She also promotes science, technology, engineering, and math programs because there is a lack of involvement in these fields among people of color. Maria is also a proponent of student voice. Evidence of this is that her students feel unencumbered to question how her lessons apply to their lives. She joked that sometimes her students voice their concerns a little too much. This shows she has created a culture of reciprocity and trust in the classroom. Taking this one step further, for the next school

year, Maria plans to create a dedicated space in the classroom in which her students can identify and question injustices they discover throughout a topic or unit.

Results Segment 2: Themes/Concepts

Theme 1: Lack of Time. Lack of time was the main obstacle addressed during the study. Participants repeatedly discussed not having enough time to implement CRP into their classroom practices. Over the 6-week period, participants noted they were unable to implement culturally relevant lessons because of proctoring duties, graduation exercises, and other obligations.

Souto-Manning et al. (2018) stated, "For most teachers, one of the main reasons culturally irrelevant teaching persists is a lack of time to prepare" (p. 13). In this regard, CRP is considered a burden because some teachers believe they have to find additional resources and materials to add to their curriculum (Souto-Manning et al., 2018). The authors stated it is easier to use a scripted, packaged curriculum. However, optimally, lessons need to be constructed based on the specific needs of the students in the class. RI, a high school ELA teacher, confirmed this sentiment. R.I. called out teachers who recycle their lessons each school year.

Souto-Manning et al. (2018) advised that CRP must be viewed as a mindset as opposed to a supplement to an existing curriculum. CRP requires continual education, support, reflection, and adopting the principles on a deep internal level. In turn, educators will naturally live out the principles in everything they do throughout the school year. For example, Maria, a high school science teacher, stated CRP is something we should already be doing unconsciously. She continued by saying it does not necessarily require materials but instead a knowledge about different cultures and a sharing of experiences,

which can help students connect school content to their lives. These connections can lead to rich conversations among the students. She shared a science lesson she conducted that centered on the layers of the sun. During the lesson, she included information about how the Aztecs scheduled harvesting time according to their sun calendar. Many students in the class were able to make connections either because they had learned about this topic in social studies or because of their cultural backgrounds and ties to Mexico, hence this created an environment of engagement and conversation among the scholars. This is a pertinent example because incorporating this concept did not require extra materials or planning but instead required the teacher's knowledge of her students' backgrounds, prior knowledge, and lineages. Maria remembered the story of the Aztecs and mentioned it during the lesson, which helped the students make connections.

As mentioned, lack of time was the main obstacle addressed during the study. Even though the educators taught different grade levels (from Pre-Kindergarten to high school), in different states, and different school systems, they all shared this common thread. Participants repeatedly discussed not having enough time to implement CRP into their classroom practices. Over the 6-week period, participants noted they were unable to implement culturally relevant lessons because of proctoring duties, graduation exercises, IEP reports, school visits, Regents preparation, and other obligations.

There were many references made among the participants regarding lack of time. Grace admitted she was unable to practice the content that she learned during the book study because of her exhaustive teaching duties; however, she planned to implement the practices during the next school year. On a similar note, R.I. stated that Regents preparation and unrealistic administrative goals, supplanted her ability to employ the

culturally relevant practices learned during the study. However, for future lessons, she planned to execute the story acting activity, described by the authors of the book study text.

C.N. agreed with R.I.'s statement regarding the demands of administrators. C.N. also connected with a section of the text in which the authors discussed the negative impact of time constraints on educators, which negatively influences culturally relevant practices. At one point, after reading the section on time constraints, C.N. said she felt as though she had written the book. She passionately stated, "After reading about time consumption, like it really hit hard, like we don't have enough time to finish everything! . . . It's like we wrote the book because this is what we are going through right now." C.N. added that the main goal for administrators is academic outcomes and student gain because this is tied to school funding and ratings, whereas the focus should be a more holistic approach on students' overall needs.

Grace participated in this discussion by adding that school graduation preparation and exercises consumed her days, thus preventing her from fully utilizing the culturally relevant practices learned during the study

Theme 2: Need to Translate Theory Into Practice/Lack of Exemplars/Models. During the book study, participants discussed the need for exemplars in culturally relevant teaching. Upon closer inspection of the data, it was determined the overarching theme was the need to transform theory into practice. The need to take lessons obtained in teacher education programs and PD and transform this knowledge into actionable steps in the classroom is a common issue mentioned in the field of education.

One of the participants named B.S. constantly expressed frustration over this dissonance. He offered two main reasons it is difficult to implement CRP in the classroom. First, he talked about the need for practical demonstrations of the principles. He stated,

> Application is always the most difficult aspect of teaching. I find all the theories surrounding education very interesting, but it is very difficult to find out how to put the theories into practice. Educational literature is a sub-genre of great interest for me and within these books there is almost always a gap between the theory and application.

During the same session, he added that the authors of the book study text did not go far enough in demonstrating how to employ culturally relevant teaching.

Continuing with this theme of translating theory to practice, a second issue broached by B.S. was that CRP is challenging to implement because it is controversial, thus making it difficult to please everyone regarding this philosophy. Grace agreed with B.S. and simply added, "I just wanted to know, how can I do that, implement that." Similarly, C.N. stated that as she read the book, she was able to relate to the educators' struggles. She added, "I think about this all the time . . . but how can we put that into action for ourselves, in our settings, in our classroom?"

Theme 3: Comradery Among Educators/Connections With Peers and Authors. Throughout the study, participants made connections in distinct ways. To begin, they were able to relate to the topics in the text, including the struggles educators endure in the area of CRP. Next, the participants talked about commonalities between themselves and the authors of the text. The book study text was unique in that the authors

held the dual roles of educators and researchers. All of the authors had several years of experience in the field of education, particularly in the New York City public school system where there is a high population of students of color. The participants drew from the wisdom of the teacher-researchers, including the strategies, tips, and resources provided throughout the text. During one of the discussion sessions, C.N. noted,

> This is a powerful book all teachers should read, especially teachers from groups in power. It is filled with research, strategies, and stories to ensure that our language and teaching decisions honor all students, raising our consciousness, empathy, and practice.

R.I. added that while reading the book, she felt she was not alone in her everyday struggles as a teacher. In addition, the participants were able to bond with each other once they discovered they all shared similar experiences, including general commonalities found in the field of teaching. They particularly shared similar challenges in the area of executing culturally relevant lessons in their classrooms. During the final interview, C.N. stated, "The interaction with peers, even though we are at different levels, we are all going through the same thing. It was good to say that I am not alone."

Even though C.N. and Grace worked in different schools, they made connections because they both worked with Pre-K students. They cheered each other on, highlighted common practices, and offered each other advice and emotional support. Also, the participants gave R.I. encouragement, as it was her first year in the teaching field. The concept of making connections with other educators aligns with findings in the literature review regarding book studies. In particular, Amador et al. (2015) framed this as building

community and relationships. In turn, this provided a sense of safety, thus allowing participants to share their ideas and fears (Amador et al., 2015).

Results Segment 3: Impact on Educators' Attitudes and Practices

Impact on Attitude. In general, the participants expressed that they gained a lot of knowledge during the book study. On the pre questionnaire, the educators were asked to rate their level of knowledge in the area of CRP, from limited to advanced. For the post questionnaire, two participants noted markedly increased knowledge in the area of CRP. In particular, Maria critiqued herself by stating that while she gained knowledge over the course of the study, she still has a lot of learning to do in this field. R.I. stated her newfound wisdom was a combination of the book study, discussions, and her classroom experiences. She echoed Maria's sentiments in stating she still had more to learn.

There were two major impacts on the participants' attitudes. The first involved the concept of privilege. Based on the pre and post questionnaire, it was evident that none of the educators had a clear understanding of privilege as it applies to CRP. White privilege is an elusive concept, which can be described as assets provided or assigned to a person not because of merit, but simply based on belonging to a group of European descent (Hall & Jones, 2019). White privilege can lead to biases, microaggressions, and systemic racism (Hall & Jones, 2019). Though this is a topic that deserves awareness in general, it is of particular interest in the school system, especially involving cases in which there are racial and linguistic differences between educators and students.

One of the questionnaire statements was: "I recognize the privilege afforded me due to my race/ethnicity, cultural background, socioeconomic status and/or belief

system." The possible responses were: Yes, No, I prefer not to answer, and Other. At the beginning of the study, one participant responded no to this prompt and another responded that she preferred not to answer the question. I used the post questionnaire and interview to further investigate these responses. I simply asked participants if they understood the statement regarding the concept of privilege in CRP. The participants responded that they did not fully understand the concept, they were not sure, or they expressed uncertainty and confusion. I proceeded by offering a technical definition and example of this concept. This led to rich discussions on the topic of privilege and its possible negative impact on students of color. This also spurred the educators to reflect on what privileges they bring into the classroom and how this affects their students.

As mentioned, the traditional concept of White privilege entails assets ascribed to a group of people simply based on being born into this group (Hall & Jones, 2019). However, it is worth noting that this phenomenon also extends to differences in socioeconomic status and social class between educators and students. In short, educators of color can be detached from the realities and circumstances of students within their own ethnic group. For instance, after giving examples of how privilege can lead to prejudgments, which can negatively affect teacher–student relationships, Grace had a better grasp of the concept, which led to a mind shift. Grace shared that she has a student who had inconsistent attendance. When this student is in school, he has an odor, is not dressed appropriately, smells of marijuana, and brings junk food for lunch. He also has an older brother who picks him up from school. Grace said she assumes the older sibling was once in jail and perhaps the family lived in a shelter. In this case, it was important for the teacher to examine how her privilege or differences in values and lifestyle may have

led to assumptions and possible stereotyping of this child and his family. The issue of privilege could lead to a teacher's inability to relate to their students, which in turn could cause issues, such as lowering expectations for the student and ostracizing the student.

The participants expounded on the topic of privilege, which included some interesting and unique perspectives on this topic. For example, one of the participants offered a positive perspective of "privilege." During the exit interview, Maria noted she has privilege because she is bilingual in Spanish and English. As a result, this opens job opportunities for her that may not be available to people who are monolingual. I mentioned this idea to another bilingual participant named C.N. Prior to this revelation, C.N. stated she did not have any form of privilege. During the interview, we discussed this concept and I shared with her the example her colleague gave about privilege. C.N. expressed feelings of pride. She stated, "I thought my culture was not a privilege." We then talked about how our bilingual students need to be made aware that being multilingual is an asset they bring to the classroom and their communities.

R.I. offered her version of privilege. She stated that even though her family did not have a lot of money, living in a particular county outside of New York City was a form of privilege. As a result, she was able to attend schools that had more resources than some schools in the inner city. She added that having straight hair was another form of privilege because people with curly hair and dreadlocks are sometimes demonized in the workplace and school environment.

The second biggest impact on attitude involved the application of culturally responsive teaching for Pre-Kindergarten students. There were two early childhood teachers in the group. Grace, who worked with preschoolers, mentioned several times

that culturally relevant practices may be too advanced for the students in her age group. She noted this during the pre questionnaire, the 5-question survey, and discussions. For example, at the beginning of the study during the pre questionnaire, she was asked whether or not she taught her students to advocate for social justice issues that affect them, their families, and communities. This question was posed because it aligns with one of the main tenets of CRP. Grace responded to this question by stating, "I teach PreK, so I encourage the parents or caregivers to advocate for their children." Regarding a similar question, she added, "Our administration advocates for our families and students. The special education teacher advocates for our special education students." In short, Grace said her 4- and 5-year-olds were too young to relate to CRP principles. Gradually, she began to reconsider her position. During a discussion in week two, she noted,

> I did not apply or implement any information from the reading to my teaching practices because I thought they were preschoolers, and I really was just focusing on the book. However, from this evening's meeting, I learned that the issues in the book can indeed be made practical to my preschoolers.

During the group discussion in week four, Grace provided an example of how she plans to incorporate CRP principles with her young learners. One of the activities she proposed is collaborative book making. The authors of the study's text described a book-making activity, which centered on the theme of culture. Grace said she has created books in the past with her class, but she now planned to have the students create books highlighting culture. Afterwards, Grace will do a read-aloud using the students' books and discuss cultural differences found among the students in class. Grace was convinced that with

support and guidance, concepts such as equity, inclusion, and even bias could be modified and delivered in a comprehensible manner to her preschoolers through this activity.

Maria's attitude was also affected as a result of the study. Maria is a high school science teacher. Traditionally, CRP is more readily practiced in the areas of ELA and social studies. One goal in spreading this philosophy is to educate and support teachers in other content areas, especially in math and science (Muhammad et al., 2021). When teachers were asked if they noticed any differences in themselves that could be attributed to the book study, Maria stated that she was more open to practicing CRP in her science classroom. Maria offered an example of how to implement CRP in this content area by helping her students make connections between scientific methods and real-world applications.

A third change in attitude involved a questionnaire item that inquired whether participants examined curriculum items for biases and stereotypes. During the pre questionnaire, C.N. responded no to this item, but during the post questionnaire and interview she stated,

> I really didn't examine the curriculum material for bias and stereotypes all the time . . . After reading the book and having discussions with my peers I found how important it is for me to be more aware of what I am teaching all my students.

Reflection. Similar to attitude changes, there were palpable instances of reflection among the participants. Case in point, during a discussion, C.N. questioned and reflected on her culturally responsive practices. After reading the text, she constantly pondered

92

about how she was teaching her students based on culturally relevant precepts. In addition, C.N. reflected on a section of the text involving challenges regarding materials, which caused her to examine her library. She came to the conclusion that the books in her library were not geared toward her students. C.N. noted the books were old and unrelatable, which leads to a lack of comprehension and boredom. She raised another issue, stating the students in her class are not part of the storyline or pictured in the books. In short, she said the students cannot imagine or see themselves in the texts. This concept is the crux of CRP, which entails utilizing materials that reflect the student population, which in turn helps them to relate to the content (Souto-Manning et al., 2018).

When asked if the participants noticed any differences within themselves that could be attributed to the book study, R.I. astutely stated, "I've become more and more aware that just because I am a minority doesn't mean I automatically know how to implement CRP. It takes a lot of effort and dedication to do it." During a different session, she shared similar sentiments, stating, "Understanding my own culture from page 40 has helped me rethink my role as a teacher. It's the same as me being Latina, doesn't mean I'm progressive." Souto-Manning (2022) discussed the misconception that educators of color are automatically equipped to teach students of color simply because of their race, ethnicity, and/or backgrounds.

Maria's reflection led to a desire to learn more about her own background and culture. In particular, she wanted to have a better understanding of her identity, privileges, and world views, which impact her interactions with her students. In turn, she stated this will help her to support her students conduct work in this area.

R.I. made a profound statement when she said, "I have become much more aware of what I don't know and that may influence how I view my students. . . . I can learn from them just as much as they learn from me."

Impact on Practice. In part, two goals of the study were to examine the impact of the book study on the teachers' practices and to determine whether there was an impact on their students. Each week, the participants were tasked to answer a 5-question survey that related to these objectives. Those questions were framed as follows: Based on the reading and/or discussions, what did you learn last week or what concept was a refresher? How did you apply information from last week's reading and discussions to your teaching practices? If you did not apply anything last week, what obstacle prevented you from implementation? What differences have you noticed in yourself that may be attributed to your participation in this professional book study on CRP? What differences in your students have you noticed that may be attributed to your participation in this professional book study on CRP? What quote or section of the book resonated with you? Why? Please note the page number.

Overall, participants stated they did not have time to implement the practices due to obstacles that were previously mentioned. However, there were some instances of implementation. C.N., the PreK teacher, said as a result of the study, she began to interrogate the books she used with the kids during read-alouds. In particular, she wanted to ensure the children could relate to the stories. Grace stated she became more aware and sensitive to her students' cultures. At the end of the study, she was able to not only see her students but the rich cultures and assets they bring to the classroom. This sentiment extended to the students' parents/guardians as well. For instance, Grace stated she made

an effort to communicate to her students' parents/guardians in their native languages, even if it was only a few words. By speaking their languages, it showed that she honored their cultures, which helped to forge relationships.

During the study, we read about one of the principles of CRP, which entails holding high expectations for students. Prior to the study, R.I. admitted that as a new teacher, she did not have boundaries with her students. For example, she allowed them to turn in work late without any consequences. After reading the text and engaging in discussions, she began holding her students more accountable. This caused a counter reaction in her students. R.I. explained,

> By holding high expectations for my students, I have started to see them be more responsible and honest when they mess up. A lot of them have also started opening up to me once I started being honest about who I am and what I value as a person and teacher.

She added that this authenticity, helped students feel more comfortable revealing their true identities.

The authors of the book club text provided many tools for their readers. In particular, they offered recommendations for a variety of content areas, including math and science. Maria took advantage of this opportunity by perusing the recommended websites and incorporating ideas from these resources into one of her science lessons. Maria stated, "I applied what I learned about critical literacy while preparing for my upcoming lesson. I took into consideration selecting texts that offer multiple points of view and critical perspectives." For example, during a lab titled "Heart Rate and Physical and Physical Activity," Maria facilitated a discussion to help students make cultural

connections with the content. This prompted the students to ask questions, such as, "Does higher heart rates have a connection with living in an urban city like NYC.?" This led to a class discussion about the type of food available to people of color in urban environments, which can lead to unhealthy eating habits for some Black and Brown people, such as consuming meals with a high sodium content. Students were able to make connections to themselves and family members, which increased their engagement during this lesson. As a result, Maria plans to incorporate similar relatable concepts for the upcoming school year, such as lessons on environmental justice in the inner city and food insecurity.

Maria made many plans to incorporate more culturally relevant lessons into her classroom for the next school year. Additionally, the book study appeared to have ignited a desire to learn more about CRP. For instance, Maria mentioned that during the summer, she planned to read other texts in the genre of CRP, specifically *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain* by Zaretta Hammond (2015). Blanton et al. (2020) found similar findings during their book study. At the conclusion of their research, participants continued to seek information on topics covered during the study (Blanton et al., 2020).

Similarly, other participants discussed implementing various practices during the next school year. C.N. reflected a lot on the books used in her classroom. She noticed her students showed greater interest when they were able to relate to the characters and stories that were read to them. As a result, she plans to focus on her classroom library. She plans to make substantial changes by replacing the current book selections with books that have more cultural texture.

There was one recommendation in the book that was of particular interest to the participants. The activity focused on the history of student names and collaborative book making. The concept of honoring names and how this connected to identity and culture resonated with the educators. In the last section of the book, Souto-Manning et al. (2018) began by sternly advising readers about the importance of correctly pronouncing students' names. Specifically, the authors explained that mispronouncing the names of marginalized students could have racial undertones, which could be considered a microaggression. Psychologically, this could lead to feelings of inadequacy, which could negatively affect academic performance and behavior. Furthermore, making the effort to use the correct pronunciation and spelling can forge social emotional well-being for students and bonding between students and teachers. The authors introduced an activity titled the History of Names. In short, each student researched the background of their names by interviewing family members. This activity could be modified for younger students. The culminating activity was the creation of class book with student names and profiles.

This activity resonated with the participants. Grace said she planned to use the history of names activity. She shared her plan to execute this lesson at the beginning of the new school year. Grace said students' families are an asset and source of information. Her activity will begin by sending a letter home to parents/guardians notifying them of the research project in an effort to get the families involved. Families would share on a piece of paper the root of the child's name and any pertinent cultural connections, artifacts, and pictures. The stories would then be bound together into a class book, shared

with the class as a read-aloud, and placed in the classroom library, as a legacy for the students. Grace plans to title the publication, *The History of Our Names*.

Results Segment 4: Impact on Students

As previously mentioned, R.I. began to hold her students more accountable. As a result, she noticed, "My students are becoming a lot more independent in knowing what their needs are and communicating with me about them. I hold them to high expectations because I know that they are more than capable of achieving them."

Prior to the study, Maria stated her students constantly asked her how science related to them and why they should view it as important. Using her experiences from the study helped her to incorporate culture into her science lessons. She stated, "I applied what I learned about using critical literacy, while preparing for my upcoming lesson. I took into consideration selected texts that offered multiple points of view and critical perspectives." For instance, she began asking questions related to social justice and noticed that her students became more engaged. She stated, "My students became more vocal and more willing to answer and participate during class. They also noticed that science is more than just a heavy content course."

Other Noteworthy Sub-Themes

There were concepts that emerged that were not constantly repeated throughout the data, yet contained meaningful sentiments worth mentioning. The first was the importance of names. For example, Grace, which is a pseudonym for her real name, added a personal example. It should be noted that Grace is from a Caribbean background. She relays the story of when a substitute teacher was assigned to work with her. The teacher was in her room when she walked in and introduced herself. The substitute

looked at her with confusion and said, "I thought you would have been a Chinese, Oriental, or Korean person." Grace responded, "Ah, you're judging a book by its cover." Grace then explained the background of her name. Though this is not an example of mispronunciation, the situation does illustrate the racial undertones, microaggressions, and stereotypes attached to a name and a person's identity.

The second issue involved classroom materials. R.I. expressed frustration that many ELA books are Eurocentric. She stated,

> And so for a lot of kids that come from low-income backgrounds, a lot of them are people of color, that don't relate to the books that they read. So, I think a lot has to do with the fact the curriculum that people have built up over time is mostly White student-centered, and I think we're kind of geared towards having it be for everyone.

Conversely, Grace was concerned that the books in her library were too advanced for her students. She stated her classroom library includes bilingual texts. Initially, this appeared to be a benefit for students in her class whose native language is not English. However, if the content of the books is too advanced for her PreK population, this makes the texts unrelatable and incomprehensible, which can have a negative impact on student learning.

Summary

The findings of this qualitative case study were presented in four segments: (a) prevalence of the three tenets of CRP, (b) discovered themes/concepts, (c) impact on teachers' attitudes and practices, and (d) impact on students.

Regarding the three foundational tenets of CRP, educators appeared to have the biggest interest and understanding in the area of student learning and cultural

competence, whereas sociopolitical awareness was the area that was addressed the least. The educators mentioned the principle of cultural competence 95 times, student learning/academic success 70 times, and sociopolitical awareness 26 times.

The process of analysis involved several transcript readings taken from the pre and post questionnaires, 5-question weekly surveys, weekly virtual discussions, and individual exit interviews. I applied Lichtman's (2017) and Saldaña's (2021) analysis methods to unpack the data. This entailed maintaining a research journal throughout the study and using this tool to record initial impressions and general themes. Next, an initial reading of all transcripts transpired. One objective was to find commonly repeated concepts. A second goal was to find data supporting the research question. I used a mixture of preformulated themes as well as themes organically developed based on data analysis. The preformulated concepts included the three tenets of CRP: (a) student learning, (b) cultural competence, and (c) sociopolitical awareness/critical consciousness. Regarding these foundational principles, the participants focused on cultural competence the most and sociopolitical awareness the least.

I read the transcripts several times until a point of saturation was reached. At this point, there were many noted concepts. Themes that were not frequently mentioned were eliminated, and other similar concepts were combined. The final stage resulted in three main themes, which were assigned codes. Most of the codes were simple abbreviations of the chosen concepts. Hence, lack of time was simply abbreviated LOT, theory to practice was coded as TTP, and comradery was coded as COM. All transcripts were printed out and read one final time and the applicable codes were assigned accordingly. I created a

chart (see Appendix E) with the themes/codes and the number of instances where each concept was mentioned throughout the study.

The theme most commonly addressed was lack of time, which was a the major barrier to executing culturally relevant principles in the classroom. Educators lamented that daily teaching duties and obligations, such as lesson planning, proctoring state examinations, meetings, assemblies, and commencement activities, did not leave time for executing culturally relevant practices.

A second topic receiving much attention was the need to translate theory into practice. Participating teachers expressed a need for exemplars in this field of study. In general, this is a common complaint among those the field of education. Teachers learn methods in their preservice programs and via PD workshops, but more support is needed in executing this knowledge live in the classroom.

Comradery/connections between educators was the last poignant theme. Educators were able to make text-to-self connections as well as relate to their peers and authors of the book. This sense of community provided a sense of comfort for the participants who frequently said they did not feel alone.

One goal of the study was to determine whether participation in the book study influenced the educators' attitudes and practices. Additionally, it was proposed that any possible impact would cause a domino effect, thus affecting the educators' students. Overall, there was a more notable impact on attitudes than practices. The participants stated there was not enough time to implement many CRP practices, and therefore there were not many changes in their students.

In the next section, these findings are further analyzed for deeper meaning. In addition, limitations of the study are outlined, as are implications in the field of culturally relevant teaching.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This qualitative case study was designed to determine the possible impact of a 6-week book study on teachers' culturally relevant pedagogy. Participants read the text titled, *No More Culturally Irrelevant Teaching*, by Souto-Manning et al. (2018). Data analysis was conducted to examine the research question: In what ways does engaging in a professional learning book study on culturally relevant pedagogy influence teachers' attitudes and practices in the classroom, and what impact does this have on their students?

I used snowball sampling to recruit subjects and designed a flyer detailing an overview of the study, including the general topic, amount of time required, and meeting particulars. I shared the flyer with teachers and professors working in education programs. The main requirement for participation was that teachers had a high population of students of color. This process led to the participation of five teachers, including four females and one male. Two teachers worked in a high school setting, two in preschool, and one in middle school. The teachers worked in three different schools in the Northeast region of the United States, encompassing public-school systems, charter schools, and community-based organizations.

Teachers met once a week for 6 weeks. In an effort to provide flexibility and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic, participants met synchronously via the Webex virtual meeting platform and asynchronously using Padlet as a means of communication. In addition, participants were tasked to fill out a 35-item pre and post questionnaire (see Appendix A). The inquiries covered general demographic information as well as questions designed to assess teachers' levels of proficiency in the area of culturally

relevant teaching. The questionnaire was adapted from the CRTS-E scale (Cruz et al., 2020). The questions were evaluated by a doctoral candidate in the field of literacy as well as members of the dissertation Institutional Review Board. Accordingly, adjustments were made based on feedback. Participants answered a 5-question survey each week based on a section of the text assigned for that respective week. Educators were tasked to read approximately 16 pages per week and have weekly discussions on the designated pages. The weekly survey was constructed to determine whether educators applied CRP principles to their daily practices, and if there were any obstacles with this application. Last, at the end of the book study, 1-hour interviews were conducted with each individual participant in an effort to make clarifying inquiries and delve deeper into their thought processes.

A case study was the method of choice. Based on the literature review, similar studies fit this criterion. Case study methodology usually entails a contemporary event, within a bound system, which requires multiple forms of data, such as questionnaires, surveys, and interviews. These multiple forms of data lead to triangulation, which strengthens credibility, dependability, and confirmability. In addition, case studies use foundational theoretical principles to help frame the study. In this case, CRP and critical pedagogy were used as the theoretical frameworks for this study.

There were two rationales for conducting research in the area of CRP and critical pedagogy. First, culturally relevant teaching has been a popular topic in the field of education for at least 5 decades, ranging back to the work of Paulo Freire and other pioneers in the field (Foley et al., 2015; Freire, 1984). Previous studies have mainly illustrated the benefits of this ideology, especially for marginalized student populations in

urban school settings (Souto-Manning et al., 2018). Despite these findings, there are misconceptions about culturally relevant teaching and the inconsistent use of this practice in school settings (Muhammad & Mosley, 2021; Souto-Manning et al., 2018).

A second reason for conducting this study was to interrogate the practice of professional learning in the area of culturally relevant teaching. Traditionally, PD has been relegated to the category of one and done. Facilitators and coaches often provide valuable training to staff members; however, said topics are covered sporadically, without providing support or follow up to educators. Research indicates PD has proven to be most effective when it is an ongoing process (Amador et al., 2015; Blanton et al., 2020). CRP requires long-term training and support because it is a mindset involving philosophical principles and reflection. Therefore, one short-term goal of the study was to examine whether extended professional learning in this particular area influenced teachers' attitudes and practices in the classroom. A long-term goal is to use the results of the study to design a professional learning series in the area of CRP, and to follow up with participants in the next school year to assess the application of this ideology into their classroom practices.

Data analysis involved the process of thematic content analysis, specifically Lichtman's (2017) 3Cs approach, which is an iterative six-step process. I analyzed the data for initial codes, which emerged based on repeated patterns. After further scrutiny, these codes developed into categories and subcategories. The categories were eliminated or combined and pared down into three main themes: lack of time, translation of theory to practice, and comradery/connections. A spreadsheet (see Appendix E) was created to illustrate the number of occurrences per theme, which helped narrow down the main

concepts addressed during the study. This was an exhaustive process taking several rounds of sifting through the data, thus continually repeating the process to the point of saturation. Three preformulated concepts were also used to analyze the data. These concepts included the three tenets of CRP: (a) student learning, (b) cultural competence, and (c) sociopolitical consciousness/awareness. These themes, as part of the theoretical framework for the study, helped determine the participants' knowledge, growth, and learning needs in these domains.

Findings and Implications

Lack of Time

The main finding was that educators lacked the time needed to implement culturally relevant practices in their classrooms. This concept is both a valid concern and a fallacy. Teachers have come to rely on scripted curricula; however, CRP is not a step-by-step program. CRP is an ideology that requires reflection and an adopted philosophical stance regarding academic learning, culture, equity, and social justice within school systems and society at large (Giroux, 2010). Essentially, educators need to become knowledgeable about the conceptualization of culturally relevant practices in their totality. This is an intangible concept extending lessons, materials, and resources. There is a valid need to have the time to plan lessons that reflect a given population. However, there are instances that do not require planning per se, such as building strong relationships with students and parents, which is an entry way to discovering their backgrounds and interests. Educators need to be aware of their own worldviews and beliefs that may negatively affect their students, especially if there are cultural differences. Educators also need to champion social justice causes in school and the

community and encourage their students to do the same. Furthermore, teachers need to be aware of historical institutional racism, which affects marginalized scholars. These factors do not require planning but instead deep reflection and existential work.

The practical implications of this finding tie into the purpose of this study. Administrators need to be enlightened in order to properly lead and support their staff. This entails constant reflection, consistent training in this area, and sustainable monitoring (Khalifa et al., 2016).

Translating Theory Into Practice

The challenge of translating theory into practice was the second finding for this study. Educators frequently discussed the need for exemplars. They stated the information in the book study text and previous training made sense, but it would be useful to see culturally relevant practices in action. Though there were some examples in the text, the participants called for more models. The concept of exemplars goes against the philosophical roots of culturally relevant practices and critical pedagogy (Giroux, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2014). As mentioned, CRP is not considered a step-by-step strategy. One pioneer in this field, Gloria Ladson-Billings, has said on multiple occasions that she avoids answering educators when they ask her how to execute culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Reid, 2021). This is not a question that can be answered in practical terms because it is based on a belief system. Reid (2021) echoed this sentiment with a simple statement: "Culturally relevant pedagogy: It's not what you do, it's who you are" (p. 133). In addition, exemplars could be considered a one-size-fits-all approach. The demographic makeup of students changes from one school year to another;

therefore, teaching must be constantly altered to meet the makeup and needs of the current student population.

One implication is perhaps CRP would be used more consistently if educators could reference the best practices of other critical pedagogues. In the field of education, modeling is considered a part of best practices. When introducing a lesson or new concept to students, educators first provide an example before requesting scholars to demonstrate acquisition of knowledge in a particular area. As such, newcomers in the field of CRP have begun to comply with the request for exemplars. Case in point, Dr. Gholnecsar Muhammad has released many articles about culturally relevant teaching. It has become common practice for her to include not only examples but lesson plans as well. The same is true for Muhammad's (2021) book titled *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy*, in which the author provides multiple models for culturally relevant teaching and lesson plans for best practices.

Comradery/Connections

Comradery was the next theme frequently mentioned during the study. Participants made text-to-self and text-to-world connections, as well as connections among themselves. Frequently, the educators commented that they felt the book was written about them or they had written the book themselves. In part, this text was chosen because it was written by an expert researcher in the field of CRP and by teachers, which added authenticity to the text. Who better to write a book about the culturally relevant practices of teachers than individuals with first-hand knowledge and experiences to share?

The implication of this finding is that learning is a communal experience. Researchers (Amador et al., 2015) who have conducted studies on professional learning book studies have noted that the efficacy lies in the sharing of information among participants. Similar to youth, adults feel empowered when they exchange ideas and information with colleagues, as opposed to one-way lectures traditionally provided during PD (Amador et al., 2015).

Not only do individuals learn from one another, but people also take comfort in shared experiences. The participants echoed this thought by stating they felt they were not alone after reading the book and talking with their peers. The struggles they experienced and questions they had about their pedagogy were normalized. In addition, the teachers swapped teaching practices and drew ideas from the text. As a result, many plans were discussed for the next school year.

Conversely, it is common to go through a PD workshop excited by the knowledge acquired with good intentions to apply said knowledge to one's classroom practices. This is in line with the "one and done" concept previously mentioned. This study was designed to combat that issue. Accordingly, each week, participants were asked to share examples of application or obstacles that hampered their practice. In this case, the teachers in the study frequently stated they did not have time to apply the principles they learned. Consequently, there will be a follow-up to this study. During the exit interview, the educators were asked if they would participate in follow-up activities. Specifically, they will record instances of practicing the principles they learned during the study. This information will be part of a future research project, memorialized in the form of a journal article or book.

Three Tenets of CRP

Regarding the three foundational principles of CRP, cultural competence was addressed the most frequently. The concept of cultural competence is two-fold. From an educator's purview, it requires reflecting on one's belief system, values, and background, and how these elements affect students in their charge (Souto-Manning et al., 2018). Teachers also need to become knowledgeable about the diverse cultures in their classrooms, including cultural norms and communication patterns (Christ & Sharma, 2018; Souto-Manning et al., 2018). Furthermore, teachers must access and embed students' cultures into the curriculum. For students, being exposed to their lineages helps to forge their identities (Christ & Sharma, 2018; Souto-Manning et al., 2018). The majority of the participants appeared to have a solid grasp of this concept. In particular, they discussed siphoning student knowledge to use in lessons, which often led to enriching dialogue and increased engagement. This took many forms, such as using social media, music, highlighting people of color from various professions, and learning student communication methods, such as the use of slang.

Sociopolitical awareness/critical consciousness was the CRP principle addressed the least during the study, which aligned with findings from other studies (Christ & Sharma, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995). This segment of culturally relevant teaching entails helping students connect lessons with real-world events and promoting activism (Souto-Manning et al., 2018). Educators take a political stance against injustices affecting their students and the students' families. This requires educators to be aware of issues, such as inequity, stereotypes, and institutional racism. Furthermore, teachers assume the role of ally by empowering students to get involved in social causes.

Critical consciousness was not mentioned frequently; however, when discussed, participants provided innovative ways in which they engaged in activism. This included using social media, allowing students to share their feelings about various social issues, and providing information and support to families with special needs students.

The implication of this finding is that teachers are not fully engaged in all facets of CRP. Instead, more attention is given to materials, resources, and lessons. Because the educational system is a microcosm of the larger society, the school years are a pertinent time to prepare students regarding the realities of the world. Marginalized students will face issues of inequity and social injustices as they enter higher education and the workforce. It is an ethical imperative that educators prepare scholars for this reality by giving them the necessary tools to face these issues. Furthermore, we need a new generation of activists to break the cycle of discrimination and racism. The findings of this study are a possible indicator that more education is needed in this domain.

Muhammad (2019) shared her wisdom on how criticality can be embedded into the curriculum, especially through the medium of literacy. Some best practices include (a) using agitation texts, which relay the history of oppression and inequity in society; (b) teaching scholars to disrupt and interrogate classical texts within the Eurocentric canon; (c) viewing common core learning standards through a critical lens; (d) using literacy as a platform for social justice causes and issues; (e) highlighting and dismantling power structures in society; and (f) creating a safe space for students to discuss issues that affect them, their families, and their communities.

Impact on Teachers' Attitudes and Practices/Impact on Students

The overall purpose of the study was to examine the possible impact of extended PD in the area of CRP on teachers' attitudes and practices, as well as the possible impact on students.

During the study, participants illustrated the impact of the readings and discussions on their attitudes and practices. The readings and discussions led to much reflection and plans to make pedagogical changes. Teachers were reminded of the essential role culture plays in the classroom. More specifically, the biggest shift in thinking was around the concept of privilege. In CRP, this is typically viewed through the lens of White privilege. Hall and Jones (2019) defined privilege as ascribed benefits provided to individuals simply due to their affiliation with a particular group. Taking this a step further, in the realm of education, privilege entails elements of race, class, and other factors that can lead to divisions or disparities between teachers and students. For example, a teacher of color who grew up in suburbia and attended private school can be considered to hold privilege over marginalized students in their classroom. This can lead to a lack of empathy, understanding, bias, stereotyping, and even microaggressions. Souto-Manning (2022) cautioned that an educator of color is not automatically the best teacher for students of color simply based on their race or ethnic background. During the exit interview, it was clear that the participants did not have a full understanding of this concept. After sharing examples and having discussions around this topic, participants began to consider their own privileges and how these ascribed benefits affected their students.

An unexpected outcome from these conversations was yet another perspective on the concept of privilege. For example, Maria stated being bilingual was a privilege for her because it opened job opportunities and elevated her status in work environments because employers relied on her translation skills. This was a positive perspective that had not been considered. This became an epiphany when shared with another bilingual participant in the group, who stated she was surprised that an aspect of her culture was beneficial. This led to conversations about the cultural assets held by Black and Brown students, which is one of the foundational principles of CRP (Muhammad, 2021; Souto-Manning et al., 2018). The practical implication is that educators need to assess their students' strengths and make scholars aware of how their assets can be used in school and their communities.

Though participants said there was not enough time during the study to see changes in their students, there were a few notable shifts. The main impact on students was that one teacher began holding her students to high standards. As a result, the students became more independent and accountable for their work. A second impact on students transpired in the area of science. Using recommended resources from the book and engaging in the study allowed one participant to help students make real-world connections in the science classroom.

Strengths of the Study

The study was thoughtfully designed to meet teachers' hectic schedules. Teachers constantly juggle several obligations. As one of the findings indicated, there is not much time for other activities. For these reasons, the text was short, which made it manageable. Flexibility was also built into the design to help alleviate the obligation of participation.

This included an alternate synchronous and asynchronous schedule. The latter allowed teachers to log in at their convenience and also catch up on readings when necessary. Similarly, virtual meetings eliminated travel and venue issues. Educators were able to participate from the comfort of their homes or chosen locations. The virtual format also provided a layer of protection against the transmission of COVID-19. In addition, familiar programs, such as Google Forms and Padlet, were implemented to provide easy access to materials. The book was also a good choice because it was written by teacher-researchers who provided examples of CRP as well as several resources for different content areas, including math and science. Finally, though the research group was small, it covered a wide range of student age bands (e.g., preschool, middle school, and high school) as well as content areas, such as ELA, science, general education, and English as a new language. This allowed for the incorporation of diverse perspectives and views.

Limitations of the Study

One drawback of the study could be the small sample size of five educators. Qualitative studies typically have small sample sets, which allows researchers to dedicate more time to delve into the thought processes of the participants. Though a larger group of educators could have added more perspectives and generalizations, the smaller group size allowed for rich discussions and deeper analysis.

A second limitation was that the study was conducted during the end of the school year. Traditionally, the end of the school year is the period after state examinations, which can yield a lower workload. However, participants in the study frequently commented that they needed more time to practice the information they acquired during the study. In turn, this might have yielded more noticeable changes in their students.

During the exit interview, more than one teacher suggested the study would have been more fruitful if it were administered closer to the beginning of the school year.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings of this study, there are many recommendations for future research. The first recommendation is the revamping of professional learning. One goal of this study was to use the results as a springboard for future work in this field. The ultimate vision is to have a CRP professional development series. This would entail a cycle of training, which could include book clubs, videos, articles, and other learning modes. During these cycles, teachers would be surveyed to determine their personal needs in the area of culturally relevant teaching. Educators would then be assigned to groups depending on their needs. Some teachers would be in cohorts, whereas others may have more independent work. Similar to young students, adults also benefit from differentiation. Leaders have to shift from whole group workshops in which everyone receives the same training without follow-up or support. Instead, during training cycles, leaders would provide non-evaluative observations and feedback, as well as opportunities for intervisitations for educators to observe their colleagues in action.

An extension of this plan would be the creation of a professional learning community (PLC). This entails a group tasked to fill the role of teacher-researchers (Brown et al., 2018). This group would work in cycles to determine the needs of teachers and students, create mini-research projects to assess and monitor these needs, and then make changes based on the findings. Brown et al. (2018) found schools with effectively designed PLCs yielded the most significant improvements in their school communities. Binder (2012) shared the reasons she continued teaching in the classroom after receiving

her doctorate in education, rather than seeking a position in higher education or on the district level. Binder explained that research naturally takes place in the classroom. Through action research, teachers can make valuable contributions in education because they are engrossed in everyday experiences (Binder, 2012). Both the cohort model of PD and PLCs create a supportive network of educators who are given agency and empowerment over their professional growth. This aligns with one of the findings of the study that comradery and connections with other professionals enhances teachers' pedagogical practices (Amador et al., 2015).

A second recommendation for future research is to embed reflection into the process of CRP. Christ and Sharma (2018) proposed that reflection can have a positive impact on teachers' pedagogy. Christ and Sharma mentored preservice teachers in an effort to develop their ability to select and use culturally relevant texts for their students. Part of the methodology involved the participants viewing videos of their teaching, while using culturally relevant texts, and reflecting on their practices at the conclusion of the lessons. Accordingly, throughout this process, some educators adopted a more positive position regarding the use of culturally relevant texts. There are many reflection tools and checklists educators can access to ensure they are growing in the area of CRP. Reflection should be ongoing throughout their teaching career.

A third recommendation for future research is to include the voices of the students. One of the foundational principles of CRP involves promoting student voice and empowering students to take part in their own education (Souto-Manning et al., 2018). This requires reciprocity, which can entail students acting as co-planners and cocreators of the curriculum. Specifically, students can be surveyed to assess their

perception of culturally relevant teaching practices in their classrooms. Students are capable of making astute observations and contributions, which in turn can help educators reevaluate their own practices.

One instrument that could be used is the Student Measures of Culturally Responsive Teaching (SMCRT) Self-Efficacy assessment. The SMCRT is an adaptation of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy assessment, which is used to determine teachers' attitudes about CRT. However, the SMCRT was developed to measure whether students determined their lessons and teaching environment to be culturally relevant. Dickson et al. (2016) conducted a study to determine the efficacy of the assessment. The instrument has three main components: diverse teaching practice, cultural engagement, and diverse language affirmation. The instrument has 28 items and a Likert scale ranging from *never* to *always*. A sample question is: My teachers use examples from my culture when teaching. Twenty-eight items on the scale were piloted on five middle school students to ensure comprehension. After piloting the instrument and making adjustments, the assessment was administered to 748 seventh graders. The findings revealed high reliability (.90) for the three main components. Validity was moderate and included two additional components: school belongingness (.42) and teacher support (.62).

Recommendations for Future Practice

The findings of this study illustrate work is needed on various levels. In addition to reimagining PD, there is an onus on the part of leaders of teacher education programs. Preservice educators need to be better prepared to enter the field of teaching. The change

needed in teacher educator programs is an urgent matter for those entering schools with underserved populations.

Teacher education programs are still using traditional methods for mainstream populations. For instance, the syllabi for these programs list classic White male theorists, such as Vygotsky, Piaget, Dewey, and Maslow (Muhammad et al., 2020). The list is not necessarily problematic in and of itself but needs to be balanced with scholars and activists of color, such as Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Dubois, and Mary McCloud Bethune, to name a few (Muhammad et al., 2020). Furthermore, developers of teacher preparation programs need to broaden their curricula to include more courses and topics in the field of culturally responsive teaching (Muhammad et al., 2020).

Souto-Manning and her colleagues have been conducting extensive research in this area. Souto-Manning (2022) conducted a qualitative study framed through the lens of critical race theory. The participants included eight educators of color, which included a participant of Asian American ancestry. Using the method of storytelling, respondents shared their experiences in their teacher education programs. Through this medium, it was determined that teacher education programs perpetuate the cycle of institutional racism. Teachers of color felt compelled to denounce their roots and comply with using curriculum and assessments that were inappropriate for their marginalized populations. Similar results were found during a sequential mixed-methods study with 83 teachers (Souto-Manning, 2019). In short, facilitators of teacher educator programs continue to perpetuate the cycle of institutional racism and inequity within school systems (Souto-Manning, 2019; Souto-Manning & Stillman, 2022). This includes training teachers to

view students of color through a deficit lens as opposed to using a strengths-based approach.

Souto-Manning (2022) explained that teachers of color have been used as political pawns under the pretense that educators of color are qualified to teach students of color. Yet, the reality was that these educators were trained to use Eurocentric materials, curricula, and assessments that did not reflect their marginalized populations. Souto-Manning captured this concept eloquently by stating, "The solution is not as simple as providing same-race teachers for students of color. Regardless of background, teachers struggle to comprehend and employ culturally responsive practice" (Teacher of Color Collective & Souto-Manning, 2022, p. 67). Gist (2017) added that during educator preparation training, preservice teachers of color benefit from the experiences and modeling provided by teacher-educators of color.

Souto Manning and Winn (2019) provided a provocative analogy comparing the field of teaching to that of law and medicine. The researchers stated lawyers and doctors take an oath to do no harm to clients and patients, and the same should be applied to professionals entering the field of teaching. Harm in the field of education is detrimental to the well-being of our children and the future of our society. Accordingly, Souto-Manning and Winn created a transformative justice framework to support the work of preparing educators of color for the field of teaching.

Professionals in the field of education have been discussing the issues of equity, institutional racism, bias, stereotyping, and social injustices for at least 50 years (Foley et al., 2015). During the past few years, the topic of CRP has grown to include conversations about equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in higher education (Clarke,

2022). Many institutions of higher learning require EDI statements and positions for faculty members (Clarke, 2022). Clearly, CRP can propagate this conversation and encourage action.

Discussion/Conclusion

Currently, civil rights advocates are using the buzz phrase, "the two pandemics." One pandemic being the coronavirus and the other being racism and inequality in the United States. The topic of CRP is more relevant than ever during this unprecedented time in history. In urban environments, inequality has been exposed within the school system and society at large. Many students of color suffered during the pandemic and remote learning due to issues such as the digital divide (Jones et al., 2021). In the wider community, a lack of equality has been witnessed via acts of police brutality against people of color and the disproportionate occurrence of the coronavirus and deaths in communities of color (Jones et al., 2021). In addition, the political climate has illustrated a divided nation over issues, such as the entry and care of refugees from Afghanistan, Ukraine, and other foreign lands, and how to effectively teach students from these backgrounds (Fredricks, 2012). Recently, there has also been much debate regarding teaching critical race theory in schools (Ladson-Billings, 2021). These examples are indicators that we need a call to action regarding education, social justice, and equity.

The foundational principles of CRP are designed to address these imbalances in academia and society as a whole. Marginalized populations, such as students of color, females, English language learners, and students with special needs, are taught that they are valued through a curriculum that reflects their culture. Furthermore, students are empowered to recognize and disrupt societal injustices. This case study was designed to

explore whether PD and reflection can increase educators' critical practices. The findings

can lead to future research focused on strengthening this pedagogical practice and

increasing educators' awareness in order to make CRP more commonplace. Ultimately,

the goal is to procure a more equitable and just society. We cannot wait another 50 years.

The time is now. Everyone has a role and responsibility in this area. How can you use

culturally relevant principles to enact change in academia and society?

APPENDIX A WEEKLY SURVEY, PRE AND POST QUESTIONNAIRE,

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

CRP Short Weekly Questionnaire
(The questions will remain the same each week)

Week 1
Book Pages Introduction-9:
Stories/examples of culturally irrelevant teaching

1) Based on the reading and discussions, what did you learn last week or what concept was a refresher?

2) How did you apply information from last week's reading and discussions to your teaching practices? If you did not apply anything last week, what obstacle prevented you from implementation?

3) What differences have you noticed in yourself that may be attributed to your participation in this professional book study on CRP?

4) What differences in your students have you noticed that may be attributed to your participation in this professional book study on CRP?

5) What quote or section of the book resonated with you? Why? Please note the page number. Please note the page number.

Feel free to ask questions or make comments.

Week 2
Book Pages 9-30:
Why Does Culturally Irrelevant Teaching Persist?
Mismatch between curriculum and culture
Funds of knowledge

1) Based on the reading and discussions, what did you learn last week or what concept was a refresher?

2) How did you apply information from last week's reading and discussions to your teaching practices? If you did not apply anything last week, what obstacle prevented you from implementation?

3) What differences have you noticed in yourself that may be attributed to your participation in this professional book study on CRP?

4) What differences in your students have you noticed that may be attributed to your participation in this professional book study on CRP?

5) What quote or section of the book resonated with you? Why? Please note the page number. Please note the page number.

Feel free to ask questions or make comments.

Week 3
Book Pages 31-51:
*Deep Dive into the 3 Main Elements of CRP
(Student Learning, Cultural Competence, & Critical Consciousness)
*Cross Curricular Implementation and Resources

1) Based on the reading and discussions, what did you learn last week or what concept was a refresher?

2) How did you apply information from last week's reading and discussions to your teaching practices? If you did not apply anything last week, what obstacle prevented you from implementation?

3) What differences have you noticed in yourself that may be attributed to your participation in this professional book study on CRP?

4) What differences in your students have you noticed that may be attributed to your participation in this professional book study on CRP?

5) What quote or section of the book resonated with you? Why? Please note the page number. Please note the page number.

Feel free to ask questions or make comments.

Week 4
Book Pages 52-66:
*CRP Mindset: Strategies, Practices, and Tools
*Strategies: What's in a Name? & Bookmaking
*Tapping into Students' Funds of Knowledge

1) Based on the reading and discussions, what did you learn last week or what concept was a refresher?

2) How did you apply information from last week's reading and discussions to your teaching practices? If you did not apply anything last week, what obstacle prevented you from implementation?

3) What differences have you noticed in yourself that may be attributed to your participation in this professional book study on CRP?

4) What differences in your students have you noticed that may be attributed to your participation in this professional book study on CRP?

5) What quote or section of the book resonated with you? Why? Please note the page number. Please note the page number.

Feel free to ask questions or make comments.

Week 5
Book Pages 67-79
*Strategy: Interviewing and Story Acting
*Critiquing how history is depicted in texts
*Promoting multiple perspectives
*Resources for culturally relevant texts

1) Based on the reading and discussions, what did you learn last week or what concept was a refresher?

2) How did you apply information from last week's reading and discussions to your teaching practices? If you did not apply anything last week, what obstacle prevented you from implementation?

3) What differences have you noticed in yourself that may be attributed to your participation in this professional book study on CRP?

4) What differences in your students have you noticed that may be attributed to your participation in this professional book study on CRP?

5) What quote or section of the book resonated with you? Why? Please note the page number. Please note the page number.

Feel free to ask questions or make comments.

CRP Final Interview

First Component (pre/post measures based on initial questionnaire)

Pre	Post
15) How would you describe your level of knowledge regarding CRP?* I have limited knowledge in this area.	15) How would you describe your level of knowledge regarding CRP?* I have limited knowledge in this area.

I have basic knowledge in this area. I have average knowledge in this area. I am advanced in this area. Other:	I have basic knowledge in this area. I have average knowledge in this area. I am advanced in this area. Other:
17) Without using any outside resources, in your own words, what is your definition of CRP (Other similar terms are Culturally Responsive Teaching, Culturally Relevant Teaching, Culturally Sustaining Teaching, etc.)? If you chose N/A to the previous question, you may leave this blank.	17) Without using any outside resources, in your own words, what is your definition of CRP (Other similar terms are Culturally Responsive Teaching, Culturally Relevant Teaching, Culturally Sustaining Teaching, etc.)? If you chose N/A to the previous question, you may leave this blank.
18) How do you implement culturally relevant teaching into your classroom practices? If you do not incorporate this into your classroom practices, what obstacles, challenges, or concerns prevent you from implementation?	18) How do you implement culturally relevant teaching into your classroom practices? If you do not incorporate this into your classroom practices, what obstacles, challenges, or concerns prevent you from implementation?
23) I recognize the privilege afforded me due to my race/ethnicity, cultural background, socio-economic status, and/or belief system. Yes No I prefer not to answer. Other:	23) I recognize the privilege afforded me due to my race/ethnicity, cultural background, socio-economic status, and/or belief system. Yes No I prefer not to answer. Other:
24) I reflect on how my cultural norms (For example, upbringing, worldview, belief systems, communication style, etc.) may impact the students in my class who have different cultural norms. Yes No	24) I reflect on how my cultural norms (For example, upbringing, worldview, belief systems, communication style, etc.) may impact the students in my class who have different cultural norms. Yes No

I prefer not to answer. Other:	I prefer not to answer. Other:
25) I critically analyze assessment results to determine my students' weaknesses AND strengths. Yes No I prefer not to answer. Other:	25) I critically analyze assessment results to determine my students' weaknesses AND strengths.* Yes No I prefer not to answer. Other:
26) I believe in a student-centered classroom, in which teaching and learning is a reciprocal process. Yes No I prefer not to answer. Other:	26) I believe in a student-centered classroom, in which teaching and learning is a reciprocal process. Yes No I prefer not to answer. Other:
27) I use various means to assess my students' learning (For example, role-playing, skits, poetry, rap, self-evaluations, Socratic seminars, journaling, student-led conferences, or cooperative group projects, etc.). Yes No I prefer not to answer. Other	27) I use various means to assess my students' learning (For example, role-playing, skits, poetry, rap, self-evaluations, Socratic seminars, journaling, student-led conferences, or cooperative group projects, etc.). Yes No I prefer not to answer. Other
28) I use the interests of my students to make learning more meaningful.	28) I use the interests of my students to make learning more meaningful.

Yes No I prefer not to answer. Other:	Yes No I prefer not to answer. Other:
29) I educate myself regarding the diverse cultural norms that impact how my students communicate and interact (For example, discourse patterns, sense of personal space, etc.). Yes No I prefer not to answer. Other:	29) I educate myself regarding the diverse cultural norms that impact how my students communicate and interact (For example, discourse patterns, sense of personal space, etc.). Yes No I prefer not to answer. Other:
30) I make an effort to develop personal relationships and trust with my students. Yes No I prefer not to answer. Other:	30) I make an effort to develop personal relationships and trust with my students. Yes No I prefer not to answer. Other:
31) I adjust curriculum materials by implementing students' cultural backgrounds into lessons. Yes No I prefer not to answer. Other:	31) I adjust curriculum materials by implementing students' cultural backgrounds into lessons. Yes No I prefer not to answer. Other:

32) I teach students about how figures from diverse cultures have made contributions in different content areas, such as science, math, history, etc.… Yes No I prefer not to answer. Other:	32) I teach students about how figures from diverse cultures have made contributions in different content areas, such as science, math, history, etc.… Yes No I prefer not to answer. Other:
33) I examine curriculum materials for biases and stereotypes. Yes No I prefer not to answer. Other:	33) I examine curriculum materials for biases and stereotypes. Yes No I prefer not to answer. Other:
34) I advocate for social justice issues that impact my students, their families, and communities. Yes No I prefer not to answer. Other:	34) I advocate for social justice issues that impact my students, their families, and communities. Yes No I prefer not to answer. Other:
35) I teach my students to advocate for social justice issues that impact them, their families, and communities. Yes No I prefer not to answer.	35) I teach my students to advocate for social justice issues that impact them, their families, and communities. Yes No I prefer not to answer.

Other:	Other:

Second Component (Follow up questions based on meetings, short questionnaire, and Padlet)

What has been the most beneficial part of this PD?

What was your biggest take-away?

What was the least beneficial?

What should be changed/adjusted?

Based on one of the strategies you learned during this study, what will be the main item you implement next year?

Are you interested in participating in future studies/work?

APPENDIX B PEER INSTRUMENT EVALUATION FORM

Name of Reviewer:

Thank you for previewing the questions for my study. The following is information and guidelines to guide your critique:

1) The study entails a book study on culturally relevant pedagogy. The aim is to determine the impact of extended professional development, in the form of a book study, on teachers' pedagogy.
2) The population are teachers who work with a high population of Black and Brown students in urban environments.
3) The research question is: In what ways does engaging in extended professional learning via a book study on culturally relevant pedagogy impact teachers' attitudes and their practices in the classroom, and what impact does this have on their students?
4) Please make comments or suggestions in the column to the right of the question. If the question is deemed acceptable, no action is required.
5) Here are some questions to keep in mind as you preview and critique the instrument:
    a) Are there any items that would make this questionnaire difficult to comprehend (i.e., Jargon, Phrasing, etc.)?
    b) Are there any issues regarding the respondents' instructions?
    c) Are there issues with clarity (i.e., Two questions in one, Double negatives, etc.)?
    d) Are there items that are too sensitive or biased?
    e) Other concerns (i.e., Length, Repetition, Sequence, Pertinent to research question/topic, etc.)

Source: 2017-EUROPEAN COMMISSION EUROSTAT Directorate F: Social Statistics Unit F-4: Income and living conditions; Quality of life QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGIES FOR QUESTIONNAIRE ASSESSMENT: Questionnaire Appraisal System

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Pre-Study Questionnaire
Part 1: Demographics
Part 2: Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Professional Development

Directions:

*The following questions have been developed to gather basic demographic data and information related to the study. Please respond to the best of your ability and comfort level.
*Some questions will be repeated at the end of the study as a means to determine

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possible mind shifts.	
Questions	**Peer Feedback/Critique**
1) Pseudonym	
2) Pseudonym	
3) What pseudonym would you like to use in the final report and presentations? Some possible ideas include using your initials, middle name, nickname, or a random name.	
4) What is the gender in which you identify? a. Male b. Female c. Other (Please note) _____ d. I prefer not to answer. *Feel free to note preferred pronouns, though this is not required._____ .	
5) What is your age? a. 20-30 b. 31-40 c. 41-50 d. Over 50 e. I prefer not to answer.	
6) What is your ethnic background? a. White / Caucasian b. Asian - Eastern c. Asian - Indian d. Hispanic e. African American f. Native-American g. Mixed race/Other (Please note) _____ h. I prefer not to answer.	
7) What is your primary language? a. French b. Italian	

c. English d. Spanish e. Other (Please note) _____ f. I prefer not to answer.	
8) What is the demographic makeup of the students at your school? Approximations are fine. (For example, 25% African American, 25% Hispanic, 25% African, 20% White, 5% Other (Asian, etc.).	
9) I work in a a. Charter School b. Public School c. Faith Based School (For example, Catholic, etc.) d. Private School e. Other (Please Note) _____	
10) In what state do you work? (Add a drop down in Google Forms) _____	
11) What is the age group of your students? a. 3K/Pre-K b. Kindergarten c. Lower Elementary d. Upper Elementary e. Middle School f. High School g. Other _____	

12) What is the highest level of education you have achieved? a. High School Diploma/GED b. Associate Degree c. Bachelor's Degree c. Master's Degree d. Doctoral/Post-Doctoral Degree E. I prefer not to answer.	
13) How many years have you been teaching? a. Less than 2 years b. 2-3 Years c. 4-5 Years d. 6-10 Years e. More than 10 years	
14) We will utilize many digital tools and platforms during this study (i.e., Google Suite, Padlet, Zoom, etc.). What is your comfort level in this area? a. Not at all comfortable b. Somewhat comfortable c. Comfortable	
15) How would you rate your level of knowledge regarding culturally relevant pedagogy/teaching? a. I have limited knowledge in this area b. I have basic knowledge in this area c. I have average knowledge in this area d. I am advanced in this area	
Extended CRP and PD Questions **(Researcher Created Questions)**	
16) Where did you acquire knowledge regarding CRP (For example, college preparation program, professional development, self-development, etc.)?	
17) Without using any outside resources, in your own words, what is your definition of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Other	

similar terms are Culturally Responsive Teaching, Culturally Relevant Teaching, Culturally Sustaining Teaching, etc.)?	
18) How do you implement Culturally Relevant Pedagogy into your classroom practices? If you do not, what obstacles, challenges, or concerns prevent you from implementation?	
19) In general, what have been the most beneficial and least beneficial aspects of PD during your career as an educator?	
20) How often does your school provide professional development in the area of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy? a. Weekly b. Monthly c. Quarterly d. Occasionally e. Never	
21) Does your school provide ongoing support in the area of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy throughout the school year (For example, coaching, non-evaluative observations, etc…)? a. Yes b. No	
22) If you could anonymously make suggestions to your administration/leadership team, what actions could be taken to improve professional development at your school site.	
Participant Directions: **(Adapted from preexisting instrument)**	

*Please respond yes or no to the following questions. ***Feel free to add an explanation or example but this is not required.**	
Domain: Teacher Self-Reflection	
23) I recognize the privilege afforded to me due my race/ethnicity, cultural background, socio-economic status, and/or belief system. a) Yes b) No	
24) I reflect on how my cultural norms (For example, upbringing, worldview, belief systems, communication style, etc.) may differ from students in my class, and how this may impact them.	
Domain: Student's Strengths/Funds of Knowledge	
25) I critically analyze assessment results to determine my students' weaknesses AND strengths. a) Yes b) No	
26) I believe in a student-centered classroom, in which teaching and learning is a reciprocal process. a) Yes b) No	
Domain: Differentiation/Scaffolding	
27) I use various means to assess my students' learning (For example, role-playing, skits, poetry, rap, self-evaluations, Socratic seminars, journaling,	

student-led conferences, or cooperative group projects, etc.). a) Yes b) No	
Domain: Knowledge of Students' Interests and Cultures/Rapport	
28) I use the interests of my students to make learning more meaningful. a) Yes b) No	
29) I educate myself regarding the diverse cultural norms that impact how my students communicate and interact (For example, discourse patterns, personal space, individualism versus collectivism, eye contact, etc.). a) Yes b) No	
30) I make an effort to develop personal relationships and trust with my students. a) Yes b) No	
Domain: Culturally Relevant Materials/Teaching	
31) I adjust curriculum materials by implementing students' cultural backgrounds into lessons. a) Yes b) No	
32) I teach students about how figures from diverse cultures have made	

contributions in different content areas, such as science, math, history, etc.… a) Yes b) No	
33) I examine curriculum materials for biases and stereotypes. a) Yes b) No	
Domain: Sociopolitical Awareness/Consciousness	
34) I advocate for social justice issues that impact my students, their families, and communities. a) Yes b) No	
35) I teach my students to advocate for social justice issues that impact them, their families, and communities. a) Yes b) No	

Weekly Short Questionnaire

Note to previewer: These questions will be posed at the beginning of each session to assess acquired knowledge and whether the participant applied any CRP principles to his/her classroom.

Short Weekly Questionnaire **(Researcher Created Questions)** *The following five questions will remain the same each week. You may indicate not applicable (N/A). If you answer the question, please explain and/or give an example.

1) Based on the reading and discussions, what did you learn last week or what concept was reinforced?	
2) How did you apply information from last week's reading and discussions to your teaching practices?	
3) If you did not apply anything from last week's readings and/or discussion, what obstacles or challenges prevented you from implementation?	
4) What differences have you noticed in yourself that may be attributed to your participation in this professional learning book study on CRP?	
5) What differences in your students have you noticed that may be attributed to your participation in this professional book study on CRP? Explain and/or give an example.	
Please feel free to use this space to ask questions or make comments.	

Post Study Semi-Structured Interview

 *The semi-structured interview questions will be constructed based on data analysis, coding, and themes extracted from the above extended pre-questionnaire, the short weekly questionnaires, and book study discussions and observations. In addition, the following questions may be posed:

Post Study Interview Questions	
(Researcher Created Questions)	
1) How has your knowledge about CRP changed from the beginning of the study to the present?	

2) How has your attitude/perception about CRP changed from the beginning of the study to the present?	
3) How have your classroom practices changed from the beginning of the study to the present?	
4) What impact has your involvement in this professional learning book study had on your students?	
5) After this professional learning experience, in your own words, how would you define Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Other similar terms are Culturally Responsive Teaching, Culturally Sustaining Teaching, etc.)?	

6) Over the course of this study, which area of CRP has been your greatest area of growth?
 	
    a) Student Learning/Academic Success
    b) Cultural Competence
    c) Sociopolitical Awareness
Follow up probes:
    1) Please provide an example.
    2) What plans do you have, if any, to strengthen the other areas?	

7) How would you assess the delivery of professional development during the last 6 weeks (For example, readings, discussions, digital resources/tools, time allotted, etc.)? What went well? What could have been better?	
8) What additional comments, insights, or questions do you have?	
Any additional possible clarifying questions based on data analysis and group discussions.	

Reviewer: Feel free to make any additional observations here. Thank you for your time!

APPENDIX D INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

ST. JOHN'S
UNIVERSITY
8000 Utopia Parkway
Queens, NY 11439
718-990-2000

March 2022

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

You have been invited to take part in a research study. The topic of the study is professional development in the area of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP). The goal is to determine challenges faced by educators in this area. Another aim is to determine the possible impact of extended professional development in this area on educators' attitudes, and practices in the classroom. Professional development will be delivered virtually in the form of a book study, followed by discussions. This study will be conducted by Emilia Lier, herein referred to as the Principal Investigator, from St. John's University, School of Education, Department of Literacy, as part of her doctoral dissertation. Her faculty sponsor/mentor is Shirley Steinberg, an adjunct professor at St. John's University, School of Education, Department of Literacy.

If you agree to be in this study, participation will involve:

- A book study involving group discussions, once a week (for a total of six weeks), for 1 hour and 30 minutes per session. This is the maximum amount of time. Depending on the depth of the discussions, the allotted time may be shorter. At least 3 of these sessions and discussions will be synchronous via Zoom, while the other 3 will be asynchronous via a digital platform, such as Padlet or Jamboard.
- You will be asked to fill out a questionnaire at the beginning and at the end of the study, which will include a request for demographic information.
- At the end of each discussion, you will be asked to fill out a short Google form with approximately 5 questions. This will be within the 1 hour and 30 minutes timeframe.
- At the end of the study, a one-hour interview will be conducted. Brief follow-ups to the interview may be required in order to ask clarifying questions.
- Periodic check-ins may occur to ensure the Principal Investigator is accurately capturing the experiences of the participants.
- All group discussions, interviews, and follow-up discussions will be recorded, and transcribed for the purpose of analysis for the final report. You may review all

audio and video recordings, and request that all or any portion of the recordings with your information be destroyed or eliminated from the final report.

There are no known risks associated with your participation in this research study. The discussions will require transparency, and self-reflection centered on topics, such as race, discrimination, privilege, and equity, which may cause emotional discomfort. However, the level of disclosure is at your discretion.

Although you will receive no direct benefits, this research may provide the Principal Investigator with a better understanding of culturally relevant teaching, including the delivery of professional development, and obstacles/barriers faced by educators in this area. This could provide a benefit for teachers in the field of education, as well as the students in their charge. In addition, this study may enhance your understanding of CRP and its associated practices. At the conclusion of the study, you will receive a small token of appreciation for your participation in the form of a $25.00 Amazon gift card.

Confidentiality of your research records will be strictly maintained by:

- Ensuring your consent form is kept separate from data retrieved during the study.
- Use of a pseudonym when writing and reporting the findings.
- Maintaining a digital database of the data retrieved from the study on a password protected computer, which is only accessed by the Principal Investigator.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at
anytime without penalty. This includes discussions, interviews, questionnaires, and surveys. You have the right to decline participation and/or to skip or not answer any questions you prefer not to answer.

If there is anything about this study or your participation that is unclear and that you do
not understand, or if you have any questions or wish to report a research related problem, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Emilia Lier, at emilialier@gmail.com, or at 718-866-7778. You may also contact the faculty mentor, Shirley Steinberg, at steinbergs@stjohns.edu or at 917-724-1022.

For questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact St. John's University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) chairperson, Dr. Raymond DiGiuseppe, at digiuser@stjohns.edu or at 718-990-1955. You may also contact the IRB coordinator,
Dr. Marie Nitopi at nitopim@stjohns.edu, or at 718-990-1440.

Please place an **X** next to the following statements, indicating that you agree or disagree with the following statements. Since this consent form is being transmitted

digitally, this will serve as your signature. Check the statements that apply. You may agree with some statements and disagree with others.	
I agree with the statement(s) below:	**I disagree with the statement(s) below:**
_____ Yes, I agree to all of the terms stated in this 3-page consent form.	_____ No, I disagree with the terms stated in this 3-page consent form.
_____ Yes, I give the Principal Investigator permission to use my name when quoting material from our interview in her dissertation, publications, and presentations.	_____ No, I do not give the Principal Investigator permission to use my name when quoting material from our interview in her dissertation, publications and presentations.
_____ Yes, I have received a copy of this consent form.	_____ No, I have not received a copy of this consent form.

Agreement to Participate:
Please type your name and date in the blank spaces below. You will then save this document and email it as an attachment to the Principal Investigator at
emilialier@gmail.com

Participant's First and Last Name: Date:

SJU CRP Study Coding Chart

Participants by pseudoymn	CRP Tenets			Obstacles to Implementation		5Rs	Other: Comradery/Connection to other educators	
	Student Learning	Cultural Competence	Sociopolitical/ Critical Consciousness	Lack of Time	Lack of Models/ Exemplars	Refresher, Reminder, Rethinking, Reflection, Releaming		
B.S.								
C.N.								
Grace								
Maria								
RI								

APPENDIX F IRB APPROVAL LETTER

ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY

Federal Wide Assurance: FWA00009066

Jun 14, 2022 12:34:38 PM EDT

PI: Emilia Lier
CO-PI: Shirley Steinberg
The School of Education, Education Specialties

Re: Expedited Review - Initial - **IRB-FY2022-306** *No More One and Done: The Impact of a six week book study on Culturally Relevant Pedagogy on Educators' Beliefs, Perceptions, and Practices.*

Dear Emilia Lier:

The St John's University Institutional Review Board has rendered the decision below for *No More One and Done: The Impact of a six week book study on Culturally Relevant Pedagogy on Educators' Beliefs, Perceptions, and Practices.* The approval is effective from June 14, 2022 through June 13, 2023.

Decision: Approved

PLEASE NOTE: If you have collected any data prior to this approval date, the data must be discarded.

Selected Category: 7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Sincerely,

Raymond DiGiuseppe, PhD, ABPP
Chair, Institutional Review Board
Professor of Psychology

Marie Nitopi, Ed.D.
IRB Coordinator

APPENDIX G FINDINGS: THEMES

Theme 1-Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Academic Learning

Theme 2-Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Cultural Competence

Theme 3-Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Sociopolitical/Critical Consciousness

Theme 4-Lack of time for educators

Theme 5-The need to translate theory into practice

Theme 6-Comradery and sense of connectedness among educators

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Vita

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