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## **Abstract**

I investigated eight preservice teachers' understandings about culturally responsive pedagogy as they participated in a writing methods course in which they tutored children from different ethnic, socioeconomic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds in an afterschool program at a local community center. I also investigated how these preservice teachers demonstrated culturally responsive teaching within the writing curriculum.

I recognized the need for research relevant to my own personal beliefs and how to strive for more equitable schools. I want to contribute further to the understandings and insights related to culturally responsive pedagogy. According to the literature, it appears teachers remain unprepared to teach children from diverse populations many of whom continue to fall behind academically. Insufficient information exists in the literature regarding attitudes and understandings of preservice teachers about culturally responsive pedagogy.

I utilized a qualitative design, in particular an embedded case study to gain an understanding of a smaller part of the larger case. The larger case was the entire community center, preservice teachers, course instructor, and the elementary students. Data included individual and focus group interviews, course documents, reflections, field notes, and a reflexive journal. I chose constant comparison analysis to find themes within all of the data. I then used within-case analysis to more deeply examine the themes found

in the data. In order to gain understanding of these discoveries being relevant to other cases, I employed a cross-case analysis.

After multiple readings of the data, carefully analyzing the data through coding and categorizing themes, the following five themes emerged: 1) cultural awareness and integration, 2) student-teacher interaction, 3) influence of the field experience, 4) questions and conversations, and 5) best practices for teaching writing. I also recommend effective aspects of the field experience, which facilitated preservice teachers' development of deeper understandings about culturally responsive pedagogy as they confronted their conscious and unconscious beliefs. The effective facets in the field experience included one-on-one student teacher interaction, scaffolding critical reflection, and use of best practices in culturally responsive writing instruction.

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

The United States continues to change demographically

culture of teachers also influences teachers' attitudes and beliefs. Teachers' unconscious understandings, for instance biases and prejudices that relate to diverse students' backgrounds impact teachers' beliefs and teaching practices (Berlak, 2008). Howard (2006) and McFalls and Cobb-Roberts (2001) contend teachers must experience cognitive dissonance, a friction between prior and new knowledge, about cultural understandings, and through their reflections and writing come to recognize the self in order to understand and teach others. In this process, teachers may develop self-awareness and then possess the necessary means to connect students' learning with the students' culture. Other researchers suggest teachers with cultural knowledge, information, and awareness lack understanding to transfer it into classroom practice or demonstrate limited use of cultural knowledge to integrate into the curriculum (Morton & Bennett, 2010; Wake & Modla, 2008). Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995, 2001)

elementary students, 35 preservice teachers) and want

songs and sometimes wore Native American clothing, such as a silver concho belt. Other people in this time period also dressed in fringed suede clothing associated with some of the Native American tribes. I became drawn to Native Americans ways. Consequently, Jim's music led me to other music of the 1960s, which led me to the civil rights movement, to a time of change, and a time for voices to be heard about peace, equality, and social justice. I became a hippie in my dress, thoughts, and beliefs.

Individuals construct meaning through experiences, interactions, and the world around them (Bourdieu, 1993; Richards, 2006). In order to be culturally responsive teachers, individuals must first know themselves (Howard, 2006). Other people and experiences shaped my beliefs, values, and attitudes. Therefore, I think it is important to explain how I reached this point as an educator. Through self-awareness, reflection, education, experiences, interactions, and writing, I developed into the person I am now.

### **My early childhood experiences.**





could think of was the slip women wear under a skirt. I could not figure out how to get that across by acting it out, and the teacher had someone slip and fall. Then I remember feeling stupid and frustrated because I knew the word but could not let the students or teacher know I understood. Language barriers often cause miscommunication within the classroom. I wonder how many students feel this way in school.

educator, I consider it my responsibility to prepare preservice teachers to hear their students' distinctive voices as important contributors of the community.

*Empathy in my teaching.* A few additional incidents in my early teaching years deepened my ability to empathize with and hear my students' voices. While teaching in elementary schools, I encountered three students, two in my own class and one in my colleague's class, who I considered select mutes. T



summers from high school through college. I found a job at an animal clinic and worked

teaching, although at the time I had no knowledge of this term for I have no recollection of the term being used in my undergraduate program. During my time on the reservation, I sometimes felt as if I understood what Jim Morrison (1978) meant by the Indians floating into the sky. I never saw Indian “ghosts” that Jim claimed he did, but I often felt the tragedy in the air. I witnessed heartbreaking devastation: unemployment, poor living conditions, alcoholism, prejudice from others, and death of people and culture. Many people still lived in isolated areas on long dirt roads, possibly without running water or electricity. Our school had designated days to provide showers for the students without running water at their home. This new place in which I lived was quite different from my past life experiences, and I was happy because I thought I could make a contribution to the











me as a culturally responsive teacher, and I tried to learn everything I could about the students and their culture.

The culture in the urban schools where I taught was different from my own.

Many racial tensions existed in the Ohio city. During my first year at this school, the city







conversations with them because I was determined to practice culturally responsive pedagogy.

These students dealt with similar problems as the Navajos I had taught: poverty, abuse, neglect, drugs, alcohol, and poor living conditions. Many schools neglect to meet the needs of students from diverse and lower socioeconomic areas (Banks, 2001; Irvine, 2003; Richards, 2006; Sleeter, 2001). In these schools and on the reservation, I saw teachers who I thought lacked understanding and insight about culturally responsive pedagogy. As teachers and educators, we cannot blame parents and students for low academic achievement of minority and low socioeconomic groups (Howard, 2006). Poor preparation and weak qualifications of teachers contribute to the academic achievement gap (Gay, 2000; Howard, 2006; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Richards, 2006).

These less qualified teachers shared concern for the students and an awareness of their students' culture with me. However, good intentions and awareness are not enough because "awareness or appreciation without action will not change the education enterprise," (Gay, 2000, p. 14; Greenman & Jacquelinemel, 1995). Teachers may go out of their way to help students find a meal when students are hungry, but these teachers still express feelings of frustration toward students, which may be on a subconscious level (Anyon, 1995). Teachers may even inflict verbal and emotional abuse. Some teachers I observed implemented the bare minimum to maintain their job, and some showed no sign of change toward culturally responsive teaching. As my cultural awareness grew, I developed a stronger commitment to strive to help end the social inequities within our society and to prepare culturally responsive teachers.

**My Reflection as a doctoral student.** As I became more educated, I developed further awareness of social inequities. I became more aware of how my own biases and my own judgments had slowly transformed and progressed for the better throughout the years. I also had developed an understanding of what it meant to accept differences between others and me











Multiculturalism maintains that gender, ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity should be reflected in all educational institutions across staff, administration, and students (Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997). Grant and Ladson-Billings further stress this point: “Multicultural education is a philosophical concept and an educational process” (p. xxxvi). Multicultural education embraces the notions of equality, social justice, and equity. The purpose of multicultural education is to encourage equality in schools and educational institutions through the elimination of stereotypes and creation of tolerance and unity (Leistyna, 2002).

Banks (2001) identifies and describes five dimensions of multicultural education needed to achieve equity in educational institutions, which interconnects with the tenets of culturally responsive teaching: a) content integration, b) knowledge construction, c) prejudice reduction, d) equity pedagogy, and f) empowering school culture. I provide a brief overview of these concepts in order to explain how teachers can reach and better understand all dimensions of such a complex idea. Content integration is the use of information from diverse cultures integrated into the curriculum and the inclusion of various perspectives. Knowledge construction refers to teachers who help students understand how knowledge is impacted by race, ethnicity, and social class. Prejudice reduction helps students develop positive attitudes toward racial groups different from their own. Equity pedagogy is when teachers help diverse students experience success academically through differentiated instruction if needed. Empowering school culture provides an environment free of inequities and injustices, an environment in which all students feel empowered as agents of their learning, the ultimate goal of multicultural education. I will use these ideas to inform my work with preservice teachers.

Unfortunately, I witnessed many teachers whose incomplete understanding of multicultural education or culturally responsive teaching lead them astray. Tokenism was often their method of incorporation of multicultural education. Tokenism is “the policy or practice of making only a symbolic effort (as to desegregate)” toward the goal of equality (Miriam-Webster Online, n.d.). Teachers revert to celebrating Black History month and believe they are incorporating and integrating multicultural education, yet in reality they discuss civil rights and famous African Americans only during this month instead of throughout the nine month curriculum. I also witnessed teachers utilize multicultural books in the classroom, but they neglected to use the content as a way to integrate the culture. Some teachers filled their classrooms with tokenism when books that contained pictures with people of color were read, but cultural meaning was not taught. I observed teachers celebrate winter holidays around the world because schools no longer encourage Christmas parties, thinking they were teaching about varied cultures. This focus on culture may have occurred once yearly. As earlier stated, good intentions are not always enough. Once again, I witnessed teachers’ misinterpretation of multicultural education or culturally responsive pedagogy.

Research indicates teacher education programs have provided inadequate and ineffective preservice teacher preparation for multicultural issues in the classroom (Barksdale, & et. al., 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Irvine, 2003). Preservice teachers usually have few experiences with students whose backgrounds differ from their own, such as race, culture, socioeconomic status, and linguistics (Lazar, 2007; Mysore, Lincoln, & Wavering, 2006; Ukpokodu, 2003).

teaching diverse student populations. In addition, noted scholars posit society neglects how to better prepare teachers to embrace cultural experiences and be successful teaching in low socioeconomic and high minority schools as students fall behind academically (Delpit 2003; Irvine, 2003).

**Academic achievement gap.** School demographics continue to change as ethnically diverse populations increase in many schools, yet teachers still are predominately white and middle-class (Allen & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2004; Olmedo, 1997; Santamaria, 2009; Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran, 2004). At present, the United States population consists of approximately one-third minorities, and by the year 2042 this minority population will become the majority (U. S. Census, 2008). In 2023, half of the children in the United States will be from minority populations. At this time,

African Americans and Caucasians and Hispanics and Caucasians (NAEP, 2007).

Although the gap lessened between Caucasian and African American students in reading, it is still a disturbing 27 points. Furthermore, students from lower socioeconomic areas, which include students eligible for free and reduced lunch, scored lower on the NAEP Reading and Mathematics tests than those students not eligible.

These problems continue as students of diverse populations enter high school. Students face failure and as a result drop out of high school. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2008) between the years 1972 and 2006, the dropout rate for high school has declined across all racial and ethnic backgrounds, and the gap between White and Black or Hispanic decreased. However in 2006, Blacks' dropout percentage of 10.7 % is almost two times Whites' 5.8%; Hispanics percentage of 22.1% is almost four times their White peers. The dropout rates and academic gaps remain greatest in our society among these students of low socioeconomic and minority groups.

Currently, the United States faces the educational challenge to provide high-quality education to students from diverse ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, and linguistic backgrounds; and teachers need an essential understanding of diverse populations in order to best meet their needs (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Mysore, Lincoln, & Waverin





teachers generally wanted to be prepared to effectively teach students from diverse backgrounds and meet all students' needs (Phuntsog, 2001; Taylor & Sobel, 2001).

Some research about culturally responsive pedagogy includes alternative teaching approaches such as the inclusion of interventions to better prepare preservice teachers for diversity (Athanases & Martin, 2006; Mysore, Lincoln, & Wavering, 2006). These interventions positively affected preservice teachers' attitudes toward multicultural issues, which affected attitudes toward diverse student populations. Wiggins, Follo, and Elberly (2007) documented some preservice teachers who developed positive attitudes and expressed feelings of discomfort about culturally responsive teaching. Additionally, Athanases and Martin (2006) found when experienced teachers modeled instruction and preservice teachers were placed in field experiences in diverse educational settings, it facilitated better preparation to teach diverse populations.

***Field experiences.*** Researchers suggest field experience placement in classrooms with diverse populations facilitates preservice teachers' preparation to teach in these settings (Wiggins, Follo, & Eberly, 2007). Participation and full immersion in field experiences with diverse populations has provided deeper connections between course material regarding culturally responsive pedagogy from the college and practical application in the classroom (Fang & Ashley, 2004; Hedrick, McGee, & Mittag, 2000; Sleeter, 2001). Tang (2003) contends "different student teaching contexts offer varied opportunities of growth for student teachers" (p.495). Preservice teachers claimed field experiences provided challenges to their own beliefs and improved their understandings (Adams, Bondy, & Kuhel, 2005). Preservice teachers who tutor students within students'

cultural contexts developed an increased awareness of cultures different from their own and awareness of their own biases (Barton, 1999; Boyle-Baise, 2005; Sleeter, 2001).

Although quantitative research provides valuable information, their inquiries do not offer insight into how teacher education programs give preservice teachers the best possible experiences to become effective in diverse communities (Au, 2002). Qualitative research reveals that p



practice and writing instruction is important to preservice teachers' development of understanding themselves and the students (Wold, 2002).

Through texts individuals can understand and explore the self, and through preservice teachers' written text, they find their own voice and explore the self (Pattnaik, 2006; Schmidt & Izzo, 2003; Vicars, 2007). Writing allows individuals to think, to gain "new insights and understandings," and to reflect, and writing connects the personal to the professional or academic (Richards & Miller, 2005, p. 197). Leftwich and Madden (2006) conclude that writing reflections provides preservice teachers with a mode to understand the self and their teaching practice. In addition, writing text allows for interpretations and perceptions about the self (Vicars, 2007). In conclusion, writing is a complex process that is constructed through community and individual experiences, and it must start with students' concerns and interests (Bearne & Marsh, 2007).

*Self-reflection and self-awareness.* The college writing class offers a valuable

conduct, I observed preservice teachers in a “survival mode.” Preservice teachers worry about grades and how to complete a course. During one of my research experiences at a summer literacy camp, a disconnect existed between the preservice teachers’ and graduate students’ expectations of their courses. The graduate students wanted to learn and improve their instruction. However, the preservice teachers expressed concerns of, “What do I have to do?” As educators and researchers, we need to find ways to better prepare preservice teachers in a time efficient manner and facilitate deeper reflections (Adams, Bondy, & Kuhel, 2005; Fecho, 2000). Preservice teachers need to understand their own identities before they can understand others. Essential to becoming a culturally responsive teacher is awareness of differentness of self and others and relatedness to other people and cultures (Howard, 2006). Preservice teachers need to know what the differences are and how they connect to others.

In summary, field experiences and integration of multicultural issues within the content of coursework has the potential to result in positive outcomes in culturally responsive teaching. However, investigations are needed to explore preservice teachers’ concepts of culturally responsive pedagogy, student-preservice teacher interactions, and

## **Rationale**

Now I have come to the most challenging event in my life thus far; I am writing my dissertation. I am passionate about social justice and culturally responsive teaching. I think often about how I will create cognitive dissonance that leads to greater understanding or at least spark some change in people and their self-awareness about cultural awareness and understanding. People must understand who they are and how they come to be where they are. Even though I consider myself an enlightened person, I





that I am better preparing my preservice teachers to teach diverse students and develop insight through field experiences and partnerships.

For three summers, I worked in partnership with the community center, where this research took place. I worked with preservice teachers enrolled at the university and with my colleagues. Partnerships between the community and university offer beneficial opportunities and transformative experiences for all stakeholders (Anyon & Fernandez, 2007). In the time I spent at the Community center, elementary students experienced positive, student-centered experiences; preservice teachers and graduate students were able to apply coursework to their instruction; university professors and doctoral students conducted insightful research; and doctoral students developed better understandings of research and building partnerships with the community. Graduate students and preservice teachers shared how valuable and useful their experiences at the community center were. Last summer, one doctoral student conducted research at the community center. I helped her conduct some interviews with graduate students and found unsettling information. She found inservice teachers, already in the classroom, held low expectations of elementary students at the community center prior to the camp because the elementary students came from a lower socioeconomic area and diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds (K. Thomas, personal communication, July 9, 2009). Field experiences alone possibly do not provide sufficient understandings of culturally responsive teaching. Therefore, I wanted to continue my research at the community center to discover how we can better understand preservice teachers learning about teaching writing in culturally responsive way.

Additional research is needed to examine the connection between teachers' verbalized beliefs and actual actions or teaching behavior (Ladson-Billings, 1992; Taylor & Sobel, 2001). More research needs to investigate teachers' beliefs and interactions with students. Researchers need to determine variables and best practices related to culturally relevant pedagogy. Researchers need to look at current teaching methodology to reach culturally relevant teaching (Barksdale, & et al., 2002; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995). This field setting afforded me with the opportunity to investigate these ideas.

## **Situated Learning and Sociocultural Theory**

Situated learning theory and sociocultural theory informed my inquiry. Situated learning and sociocultural theorists contend understanding and knowledge develops through social situa

experience that mirrors future classroom instruction to understand better how to teach students from diverse backgrounds.

Other key characteristics of situated learning theory are reflection and assessment (Herrington & Oliver, 1995). The preservice teachers reflected throughout the semester on their experiences tutoring at the community center. These self-reflections focused on their understandings about instruction with elementary students from diverse backgrounds. Preservice teachers also reflected on assessment of their own learning. Situated learning theory embraces the notion that process and product are both important in acquiring knowledge (Herrington & Oliver, 1995).

transformations occur as participants interact in an activity and different interpretations transpire (Rogoff, 2003). Culture is part of our everyday and past experiences; people develop through culture and cultural processes. Individuals develop and gain knowledge and understanding through shared community activities (Goos & Bennison, 2002; Richards, 2006; Rogoff, 1995).

On a personal level, preservice teachers developed writing instruction and teaching abilities as they worked with diverse populations. Additionally, culturally responsive teaching was evidenced as preservice teachers wrote and reflected on their experiences. On an interpersonal level, preservice teachers worked collaboratively to tutor students in shared community activities. Therefore, situated learning theory and sociocultural theory guided my inquiry as I investigated the preservice teachers in a social learning environment.

### **Research Questions**

- 4) In what ways might course content influence eight preservice teachers' understandings about culturally responsive teaching?
- 5) In what ways might the instructor influence eight preservice teachers' understandings about culturally responsive teaching?

### **Overview of Methods**

I explored preservice teachers' understandings of culturally relevant pedagogy. In order to find meaning, I decided to utilize a qualitative design, in particular an embedded case study. I chose an embedded case study because I could not investigate and see all aspects of the case, and thus I gained understanding of a smaller part of the larger case (Stake, 2005). The larger case was the entire class, community center, preservice teachers, course instructor, and the elementary students. I focused my investigation on eight preservice teachers within the whole case. I utilized constant comparison methods, within-case analysis, and cross-









*Embedded Case Study:* An embedded case study is a case study of a smaller part or subsection of the larger case (Yin, 2003).

*Member Checking:* Member checking refers to feedback participants provide to check the data for accuracy (Creswell, 1998).

*6+1 Traits:* The 6+1 traits is a contemporary model used to teach writing which includes ideas, organization, word choice, voice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation (Culhan, 2005, 2003).

*Within-case Analysis:* Within-case analysis is the examination of a single case within a particular context (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

## **Summary**

In America as schools and society become more racially and socio-economically diverse, teachers are predominately Caucasian from middle-class backgrounds and lack sufficient experiences to best meet the needs of students from backgrounds different from their own (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Richards & Bennett, In Progress). The academic achievement gap persists and might continue to expand (Richards, 2006; Sanchez, 2005). In order to narrow the widening gap, teacher educators must continue to research culturally responsive pedagogy as it relates to writing, self-reflection, teachers' understandings, and connections of research to practice (Chambless & Bass, 1995; Howard, 2006; Schmidt, 1999).

## **Organization of Remaining Chapters**

In the subsequent chapters, I convey information that offers additional insight into this study. In Chapter Two, I reviewed current literature on culturally responsive pedagogy, situated learning theory, writing and writing instruction, student-teacher

interactions, development of self-awareness, and field experience. In Chapter Three, I offer a detailed explanation of the methods I chose. In Chapter Four, I present descriptions and interpretations of my discoveries about eight preservice teachers' understandings about culturally responsive teaching, enrolled in a writing methods course. In Chapter Five, I provide a discussion of my discoveries and future implications of my study for teacher education.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

*“Let us not be too urgent; these things take time*

*Let us raise our children to be wonderful*

*and healthy, wise and determined against injustice.*

*O let us not waste the precious moments we have.”*

*(Ortiz, Our Children Will Not Be Afraid, p 68)*

As the nation continues to change demographically and minority populations increase, scholars note teachers lack the preparation required to meet needs of students from socioeconomic, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds different from their own (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Nieto, 2000; Richards & Bennett, In Progress). Preservice teachers lack experiences with diverse student populations (Lazar, 2007; Mysore, Lincoln, & Wavering, 2006). In addition, the No Child Left Behind Act has created an atmosphere of high stakes test preparation and accountability

must first understand themselves (Howard, 2006; Schmidt, 1999). Students and teachers must participate in meaningful interactions. In order to develop these meaningful interactions, teachers must share conversations about diversity in teacher education programs and experience cognitive dissonance, the psychological friction that occurs as prior knowledge does not match new knowledge (McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2001). This dissonance provides an opportunity for teachers to challenge their prior beliefs, such as low expectations of students from culture different than their own, and develop more positive beliefs about their students.

As I conducted the literature review pertinent to my research, I considered the questions that guided my inquiry and enabled me to determine deeper meanings.

- 1) What understandings about culturally responsive teaching do preservice teachers matriculating in a required writing methods course hold prior to the semester field experience teaching diverse populations?
- 2) What understandings about culturally responsive teaching do preservice teachers matriculating in a required writing methods course hold after completion of a semester of teaching diverse populations in the field?
- 3) In what ways do eight preservice teachers demonstrate culturally responsive teaching within the writing curriculum?
- 4) In what ways might course content influence eight preservice teachers' understandings about culturally responsive teaching?
- 5) In what ways might the course instructor influence eight preservice teachers' understandings about culturally responsive teaching?

To increase understanding of topics related to my questions, I provide information about *culturally responsive pedagogy* in the first section. I include a description of student-teacher interactions, interventions, multicultural issues, and concerns of teachers' expectations of students. In the next section, I present information about *self-reflection and self-awareness*. I introduce *writing and writing instruction* in the third section. This area of the review is important because limited research exists that connects writing instruction with culturally responsive teaching. In the fourth section, I offer research and knowledge in reference to *field experiences*. The final section of the literature review consists of *situated learning* and *sociocultural theories*.

### **Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**

Schools contribute to social inequities within our society and further marginalization of minority and lower socioeconomic populations (Kozol, 2005; Orfield, Frankenberg, & Lee 2003; Rosenberg, 2003). Preservice teachers generally possess few encounters with students' from backgrounds unlike their own such as race, culture, socioeconomic status, and linguistics (Lazar, 2007; Mysore, Lincoln, & Wavering, 2006; Ukpokodu, 2003). Researchers suggest teachers are not prepared to support cultural experiences and to teach in lower socioeconomic and high minority areas (Delpit, 2003; Irvine, 2003). Therefore, this lack of teacher preparation might contribute to the academic achievement gap (Gay, 2000; Howard, 2006; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Richards, 2006) and to schools that fail to meet the needs of diverse populations (Banks, 2001; Irvine, 2003; Richards, 2006; Sleeter, 2001). Teachers' good intentions and awareness are not sufficient enough to initiate culturally responsive teaching and to meet the needs of students from diverse populations (Gay, 2000).

Culturally responsive teaching incorporates a more extensive view than good intentions and awareness. Delpit (1995) contends teachers must welcome and appreciate the cultural experiences and backgrounds of ethnically diver





The second tenet proposes teachers recognize the significance of communities within the classroom. Individuals learn from others and through social interaction. Teachers maintain connections and develop meaningful relationships with students in the classroom. Culturally relevant teaching appreciates the need for community and social interactions to ensure success for all students (Ladson-Billings, 1992).

Effective communication is an essential part of teaching, culture, and learning, and in effect necessary for culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2000). Through communication, individuals make sense of their world and each other. Sometimes

choice and responsibility. The relationships lead to emotional and personal connections and to deeper awareness of students' needs. Culturally responsive teachers link students' economic and cultural backgrounds of students to instruction.

Culturally relevant pedagogy creates an environment that intertwines the social-emotional connections, child-centered instruction, and professional growth to meet the needs of individual students for writing instruction (Morton & Bennett, 2010) (See Appendix A). Morton and Bennett (2010) found preservice teachers adapted lessons to

suggests in-service teachers possessed low expectations for diverse urban populations as a result of preconceived notions of stereotypes (Song, 2006). These teachers' instruction resembled a formula or a script instead of individualized instruction as a result of the renewed focus on standards and accountability. In the Song (2006) study, schools focused on low achievement among minority and low income groups who were less likely to live in two parent homes, more likely to have difficulty speaking English, more

Researchers point out that disconnect exists in regard to social inequalities from teacher and students' beliefs, values, experiences, and perspectives (Au & Kawakami,



Lincoln, and Wavering (2006) investigated the attitudes of preservice teachers toward multicultural issues. Forty-eight participants in a Master's Teaching program completed a Multicultural Attitude Survey at the beginning and end of a semester. The researchers utilized interventions throughout the semester; interventions included additional content approaches such as discussions, films, research articles and presentations, case studies, internships in the field, and guest speakers who focused on aspects of culturally responsive teaching. The researchers suggested interventions and field experiences positively affected preservice teachers' attitudes toward multicultural issues, which in turn affects attitudes toward diverse student populations.

Researchers continue to investigate interventions as an approach to best prepare teachers to meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds. Some researchers utilize film such as *The Color of Fear* (Wah, 1994), *Crash* (Hagis, 2004), and *School Colors* (Andrews, 1994) to cause a cognitive dissonance in teacher educators and to raise awareness and challenge preservice teachers' unconscious or conscious beliefs, biases, and stereotypes (Alquist & Milner, 2008; Berlak, 2008; Lea & Sims, 2008; McGarry, 2008). Wake and Modla (2008) reported success when teacher educators and researchers modeled culturally responsive pedagogy with children's multicultural books and asked preservice t

The larger longitudinal investigation included course documents, questionnaires, interviews with faculty members, observations, and surveys of over 300 graduates. In this study, the researchers conducted focus interviews with thirty-eight of the graduates who were teaching. These graduates emphasized that integration of topics addressing culture, language, and equity into the content of courses led them to feel better prepared to teach diverse populations. Many of the participants felt cohort discussions assisted the development of culturally relevant pedagogy as well.

As some research suggests, field experiences connected to the university coursework about culturally responsive teaching provides enhanced preparation for teachers of diverse learners (Sleeter, 2001). Consequently, integration and consistency with field and course work are essential for educational programs, and more longitudinal research is needed to prepare preservice teachers to teach diverse populations (Athanases & Martin, 2006; Taylor & Sobel, 2001).

Researchers must examine how to connect teaching practice with the research, and teacher educators should begin with what teachers already know (Wake & Modla, 2008). Wake and Modla also add that although teachers sometimes have sociocultural awareness, they have insufficient practical knowledge and application with reference to this awareness (Wake & Modla, 2008). More extensive qualitative research is needed to enhance for teacher preparation.

### **Self-Reflection and Self-Awareness**

Critical reflection is an ongoing process in educators' beliefs and practices and includes questioning behaviors, beliefs, and values (Powell, Zehm, and Garcia, 1996). A teacher participates in critical reflection when she/he ponders a specific teaching situation



or incident. Teachers improve instruction and understand their teaching better through reflection in three areas: instructional content, students and their learning, and environment and social context of teaching (Zeichner & Liston, 1996).

Self-reflection facilitates individual development of a broader perspective of multicultural issues, and research indicates it is essential for preservice teachers to critically reflect about experiences with students from diverse ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds (Adams, Bondy, & Kuhel, 2005; Sleeter, 2001). Teachers, students, and administrators bring cultural influences and assumptions to school (Zeichner & Liston 1996). Individuals construct new knowledge through self-discovery and reflections of self-identity supported by reflection (Ukpokodu, 2003). Teachers' experiences shape their beliefs and values, and through knowledge of self, the teacher can identify how their own bias can affect others in the classroom (Hale, Snow-Gerono, & Morales, 2008).

Culturally responsive teachers demonstrate awareness of differentness of self and others and relatedness to other people and cultures (Howard, 2006). Culturally responsive teachers who recognize the differentness of self and others possess self-awareness. Teachers must respect values and beliefs of others. Through words, individuals can know the self and others, and through their own awareness see connections to others. Preservice teachers' reflections illustrate social/emotional connections and personal growth, and reflections can provide further insight into the development of culturally relevant teachers (Morton & Bennett, 2010).

Culturally responsive pedagogy consists of areas hard to measure: self-awareness, attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions (Hedrick, McGee, & Mittag, 2000). In Schmidt's







lessons. First, preservice teachers need to learn how to look at their own “life text” with a critical eye (Leftwich & Madden, 2006). Through autobiographies and asking critical questions, individuals can understand the differences and relatedness of diverse populations (Howard, 2006). However, there are limited inquiries concerning literacy and more specifically writing instruction as it connects to culturally responsive teaching.

Lazar (2007) studied two groups of preservice teachers enrolled in a literacy methods course. One course incorporated diversity and community connections, and the other course focused on literacy methods. The preservice teachers in the diversity and community course demonstrated confidence and developed new understandings. The preservice teachers in the other course showed less confidence and believed they would not teach in an urban school. However, these teachers expressed beliefs in their students but could not apply those expectations to their practice. The less confident teacher

affect education (Hale, Snow-Gerono, & Morales, 2008). Through writing, individuals think and understand the significance of reflection, critical questioning, and seeing the other. For teachers “to become more transformative individuals, they must make a radical shift and reflect on how their values, beliefs, biases, and experiences influence and guide the work they do with students” (Hale, Snow-Gerono, & Morales, 2008, p. 1424). Once this shift occurs, teachers develop an increased self-awareness.

An additional component of writing instruction is motivation and interest. McIntyre and Leroy (2003) suggest teachers motivate reluctant writers if they provide a topic of interest and use good literature about which to write. Writing attitude surveys with students demonstrate younger ones have a more positive attitude, and it decreases as they mature (Kear, Coffman, McKenna, & Ambrosio, 2000). Students experience success if teachers use effective strategies and provide opportunities of choice and give specific feedback (Kear, Coffman, McKenna, & Ambrosio, 2000; Street, 2005). Teachers, who scaffold individual instruction, provide social writing, offer supportive feedback, and supply writing strategies increase student motivation and engagement in writing (McIntyre & Leroy, 2003). Good rapport with students, emotional connections with students, and knowledge of students’ prior writing experiences are essential to building confidence in writing (McIntyre & Leroy, 2003). These teacher practices are also present in beliefs of culturally responsive teaching.

Other writing researchers found that co-authoring and collaborative writing also

process as Kear, Coffman, McKenna, and Ambrosio (2000) and Wynn, Cadet, and Pendleton (2000) found. Through a social process of writing, preservice teachers gained confidence and built identities as writers, which affect





field-based experience as they tutored struggling readers. Through journals, surveys, course documents, and interviews, Fang and Ashley discovered preservice teachers gained confidence in their instruction, developed a better understanding of why their students were struggling, and learned how to individualize instruction to meet their students' needs. Aside from feeling more prepared, preservice teachers also improved in confidence, understood new concepts of teaching and learning, and demonstrated more



& Hand, 2006). As individuals receive increased responsibilities and participation, they increase the complexity of their learning.

Sociocultural theorists allege goal-directed activities, problem solving, social relations, and culture situated in authentic circumstances provide experiences and opportunities for students to learn (Billett, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978). Authentic means real-life situations that afford students application of learned knowledge. In addition, situated learning includes realistic contexts for students to apply what they know (Herrington & Oliver, 1995; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Situated teaching neglects traditional methods, incorporates teacher and students' cultures, and focuses on problem-solving pedagogy. Through this teaching, participants develop critical thinking skills as it empowers them (Shor, 1992). Through shared experience, collaboration, and problem-solving opportunities and experience, teachers gain valuable understanding of effective teaching

which may consist of cooperative learning; and community involves shared histories and languages. Community combines the personal and interpersonal into the whole. Individuals transform from the interpersonal to intrapersonal, which is internalization of learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Sociocultural research examines the way knowledge is co-constructed and how it becomes internalized, appropriated, transmitted, or transformed in learning contexts (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). As participants interact, transformations take place in the community and individual and distinctive interpretations emerge (Rogoff, 2003). The classroom community creates an environment incorporating culture, diversity, difference, and inclusiveness within which individuals construct unique social positions at different times (Brown, 2004). In these settings, individuals develop through culture and cultural processes, and culture is a combination of daily and historical experiences.

Sociocultural theorists concentrate on how individuals participate in a particular context and how individuals use tools and artifacts from their culture (Nasir & Hand, 2006). Predominately, the educational system has separated knowing and doing, but activity and context are integral to learning (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1996). Hands-on experiences within authentic contexts help individuals learn. Therefore, when an individual is active in the doing, then the knowing follows. Research has traditionally concentrated on individuals and environment separately not as interconnected (Rogoff, 1995). Thought and action arbitrated through social processes, and language and social interactions serve as important features in a collective environment (Brown, 2004; Vygotsky, 1978). These aspects are important to consider in a culturally responsive classroom.

## **Summary**

As the United States changes demographically, an academic achievement gap among cultural groups still exists (NAEP, 2007; Richards, 2006; Sanchez, 2005). Teachers lack understandings and remain unprepared to teach students from socioeconomic, racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds different from their own (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2000). Teachers must first develop knowledge and self-awareness through writing or cognitive dissonance about themselves in order to teach and build relationships with their students (Berlak, 2008; Howard, 2006; McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2001; Schmidt, 1999). My study will contribute to the current body of research on culturally responsive pedagogy, in particular as it relates to writing instruction and self-awareness of preservice teachers. This investigation will add to the literature on understandings of preservice teachers in regards to culturally relevant pedagogy as the preservice teachers participate in a field experience in which they tutor low income, minority students in writing. In Chapter Three, I present a thorough description of the methods I chose.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

I conducted my research during the spring semester, 2009, at a community center located near the university where I am enrolled as a doctoral candidate. I chose a qualitative research design because I wanted to understand the perceived experiences of preservice teachers as they tutored school-aged students, approximately five to twelve years old. I chose a case study design because I wanted to better understand the participants, preservice teachers, within a particular setting, the community center (Eisenhardt, 1989; Tellis, 1997; Yin, 2003). Specifically, I used an embedded case design because I could not experience or observe all aspects of the entire case, as the entire case was large and complex, and I wanted to examine the smaller part of the whole case (Patton, 2002). Individual, relationships, culture, and everyday life are intertwined together. For these reasons, I chose a qualitative research design to study the above aspects of preservice teachers' experiences within the course.

During the semester of tutoring at the community center, I investigated the understandings of preservice teachers about culturally responsive pedagogy, who were enrolled in a writing methods course. The following questions guided my inquiry:

- 1) What understandings about culturally responsive teaching do preservice teachers matriculating in a required writing methods course hold prior to the semester field experience teaching diverse populations?

- 2) What understandings about culturally responsive teaching do preservice teachers matriculating in a required writing methods course hold after completion of a semester of teaching diverse populations in the field?
- 3) In what ways do eight preservice teachers demonstrate culturally responsive teaching within the writing curriculum?
- 4) In what ways might course content influence eight preservice teachers' understandings about culturally responsive teaching?
- 5) In what ways might the course instructor influence eight preservice teachers' understandings about culturally responsive teaching?

I collected data that included audiotapes of interviews, observations of the writing instruction and tutoring settings, and course documents. In addition, I maintained fieldnotes and wrote in my reflexive journal during the semester.

In the subsequent sections of this chapter, I describe the research design and methodology. I present information for all aspects of my study: the research design, research context, population f q 18 4rmp let q 18 4( c) 0.2 dolletion and( q 18 4rna) 0.2 (l) 0.2 (ys) -0.

natural setting, 2) data collection appears as images or words instead of numbers, 3) process is emphasized in addition to product, 4) data analysis occurs inductively, and 5) the research centers on the lives of participants (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). I wanted to examine the perspectives of preservice teachers in a natural teaching setting about culturally responsive teaching. Therefore, qualitative design was an appropriate choice.

The three main processes of qualitative research are data collection, analysis procedures, and interpretation (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Wolcott, 1994). The researcher provides observations and rich details about what occurred during the study (Wolcott, 1994). During analysis, the researcher concentrates on the identification and interconnectedness of themes within the research. The researcher then interprets the meanings of the entirety.

I placed myself in the community, the situation, as an “observer in the world,” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Qualitative research consists of comprehensive exposure and connections to the field in everyday life situations with the purpose to illustrate and illuminate not only the context of the data, but a view from the inside (Miles & Huberman, 1994). My research took place in a social situation, and the inquiry focused on meaning preservice teachers made of their experience, which is consistent with a qualitative approach (Patton, 2002).

Qualitative designs require the researcher to look at experiences and data from different perspectives in order to provide detail and depth in the inquiry (Patton, 2002). In qualitative investigations, the researcher uncovers themes, categories, patterns, and gains understandings and insights. The researcher then interprets and analyzes data in ways that attempt to show meaning (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Qualitative data extend





and analyzes them to determine meaning. The case is the component analyzed (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The analysis could involve individuals, groups, activities, time and or incidents, which creates micro-or mini-case studies. The case could even include experiences of the observer or researcher. The purpose of case studies is to contribute to

***Embedded case study.*** As a researcher, I was not able to see, know, or write about all aspects of a case (Richards, 2010; Stake, 2005). Therefore, I chose an embedded case study because I concentrated on a subsection of the entire case. My interest in a smaller part of the case emanates in my concern for gaining insight in the changes of preservice teachers' understandings about culturally responsive teaching. An embedded case study includes "more than one unit of analysis" (Yin, 2003, p.42) and may utilize both quantitative and qualitative data (Scholz & Tietje, 2002). However, for my particular study, I solely focused on a qualitative design because I wanted to investigate the meanings and relationships as constructed within social contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

The case was defined as the entire context of the community center partnership with the university: the class of preservice teachers, course instructor, elementary students, community center staff, and me (the researcher). Then, I analyzed separate units embedded within the context of the partnership: eight preservice teachers.

**Research context.** My research involved a partnership between a local community center and a large southeastern university. According to the university website, it is one of the top 10 largest in the nation. First, I describe the community center and the partnership, and then I briefly identify aspects of the writing methods course.

***The community center.*** The community center is located in an urban area with a

Ninety percent of the children living in the area receive free and reduced lunch. From this merger, the center complex materialized and is now situated on 50,000 square feet. This center contains offices, art and dance studios, a fitness center, gymnasium, and classrooms with an outside recreation area, which contains basketball courts and a deck courtyard. The community center provides activities, programs, and services free to the area community members, which focus on cultural arts, health, education, and crime prevention. Other valuable aspects of the development are the magnet elementary school and career high-school located near the center. Yet, another positive feature is the private and public partnerships that have developed.

*University and community center partnership.* Partnerships exist with the university I attend and the community center, and I have participated in some of the partnerships. Universities sometimes collaborate with the community to form partnerships in which all stakeholders benefit (Anyon & Fernandez, 2007). For two summers, I served as a research assistant to one of my major professors. This professor brought her graduate literacy education majors to the community center to tutor students in a summer literacy camp. I collected data, assisted the professor, provided mentoring to

*Writing methods course.* A fellow doctoral candidate taught a writing methods course at the Community center during spring semester, 2009, to whom I assigned a pseudonym, Maya. Maya utilized the techniques of Culhan's (2005, 2003) 6 +1 Traits Model to teach the methods writing course. Culhan designed the 6 + 1 Traits Model in attempt to create a shared vocabulary to describe qualities of writing. She believed the model would provide a common language for writing assessment and for feedback to students on their writing performance. The model is meant to provide a framework to make sure students write through various genres and for different purposes and audiences. Culhan also created the model to give students the opportunity to receive individualized instruction, gain confidence in their writing, and become responsible for improving their writing.

The 6 + 1 Traits qualities of writing include ideas, organization, word choice, voice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation. This process is used by teachers in public schools. According to Culhan (2005; 2003), ideas incorporate the meaning and development of message, the content of writing. The ideas component includes how to select the idea, how to narrow and elaborate the idea, and how to convey the message. For this quality, the teacher illustrates how to find ideas in their writing and in other contexts, such as analyzing children's literature and the different authors' ideas. The next element, organization, consists of the internal structure of the message, the framework of the writing. The teacher provides models of how effective organization looks. Organization contains the sequence and framework of ideas and how to tie ideas together so the content makes sense to the reader. The quality word choice consists of specific vocabulary the writer uses. The writer chooses language and "just right" words to

express ideas in order for the reader to vividly see the message. The teacher illustrates how the parts of speech convey meanings, but it is not about grammar. The teacher helps students learn how to select words to create an image in the reader's mind. Voice is the tone of the piece, the personal stamp, and voice in writing expresses how authors see their ideas. Voice in writing conveys the purpose to an audience. The teacher facilitates the students' awareness of voice through high-quality assessment and teaching. Sentence

expository. Maya dedicated an entire class to ESOL strategies. She first showed a video of an Iranian woman as she told the audience to make a nametag in Farsi. Then, after Maya stopped the video, she asked the preservice teachers if they understood what she said. No one comprehended the woman's language, and then Maya played the next section of the video. The Iranian woman spoke again in Farsi, but she demonstrated how to make a nametag. The preservice teachers then understood the woman's directions. Preservice teachers first discussed the experience with each other and then with Maya and then entire class.

the person who creates it, an autobiography. The preservice teachers chose at least four genres to write about themselves for the Me-Zine. They conducted Garfield writing surveys to gain understanding of elementary students' attitudes about writing (Kear, Koffman, McKenna, & Ambrosio, 2000). Kear, Koffman, McKenna, and Ambrosio (2004) created this survey that includes questions about how students feel about writing in different situations and how they feel about writing in different genres. The answers are a four point likert scale that ranges from agree to disagree. They also taught writing lessons provided by Maya to the elementary students. As a group, preservice teachers reflected each week on Blackboard, a web-based course management system, at the university. Maya, the course instructor, and I read course documents that included reflections each week.

**Population and sample.** Most qualitative designs focus on a small sample within a context to achieve deeper insight and provide rich data (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007a). I reached data saturation through the voice of my eight informants. I conducted two focus group and three individual interviews with the eight preservice teachers throughout the semester. I achieved the point of sufficient data, saturation (Miller & Crabtree, 2005), which means the researcher does not see or observe anything new in the data (Charmaz, 2005). The purpose of this study was to gain insight into these individuals and not generalize to entire populations.

Thirty-five preservice teachers were enrolled in a required elementary education methods course, entitled Teaching Writing, taught by Maya. I utilized convenience sampling to choose eight preservice teachers. A sampling scheme consists of ways used to select the people in this case. Convenience sampling means participants who are



accessible and willing to participate in my study (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). I explained the study thoroughly to the preservice teachers. Preservice teachers formed groups of four or five the second week, and these groups tutored four to six elementary students throughout the semester. I gave them a week to think about participation in my study as a group. I then asked the class if any groups of preservice teachers were willing



the writing methods course for four semesters, and I experienced the community center. Therefore, I have familiarity with the setting, context, and the writing course. In addition, I think it is important to identify my training as a qualitative researcher. I am now a doctoral candidate and have been a primary or co-investigator and research assistant in eight qualitative studies and two mixed method studies in which I have taken

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) contend qualitative researchers achieve another's point of view through in-depth interviewing and observation. Fontana and Frey (2005) emphasize that interviews include two or more people who interact in order to reach a shared meaning. Interviews enabled me to become familiar with the preservice teachers' perspectives about culturally responsive teaching.

I conducted three focus group interviews during the 12<sup>th</sup> week of the course and again at the end of the semester. I chose the 12<sup>th</sup> week to conduct the focus interview to give me the opportunity to first individually interview each preservice teacher. I decided to again interview the preservice teachers at the end of the semester to see if any changes occurred in their understandings about culturally responsive teaching.

Focus group conversations have the potential to influence the participants' thoughts and perceptions about culturally relevant pedagogy. The purpose of a focus group is to listen and collect information from a group of people about how they feel and think in regards to an issue, in this case culturally relevant pedagogy (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Groups share common experiences and in this particular study groups learned through social interactions and contexts. Focus groups include open-ended interviews with five to ten participants in a homogeneous group of similar backgrounds, such as preservice teachers but may include as few as four and as many as twelve (Krueger & Casey, 2000; Patton, 2002). I created a guide of questions about culturally responsive teaching in order to keep the interactions of the group centered on culturally relevant teaching while permitting individual perspectives (See Appendix B) (Patton, 2002).

teachers and I decided th

and check for accuracy. I also audio taped and transcribed each focus group interview and then provided the transcriptions to all preservice teachers to check for accuracy. This type of feedback is known as member checking in which the data are checked for accuracy (Creswell, 1998). Member checking allowed for feedback from the participants (Stake, 1995) and provided credibility and descriptive validity (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007b). Therefore, I ensured the data represented the interviewees' perceptions.

*Preservice teachers' reflections.* Reflection is necessary to learning and problem-solving, and preservice teachers' reflections on their own behaviors and performance can lead to success with their students and classroom (Reed & Bergemann, 2005). Sometimes preservice teachers lack depth in their reflection and keep responses on a surface level, which consists of factual recounts of what happened (Reed & Bergemann, 2005). Reed and Bergemann (2005) propose preservice teachers might summarize events, but they may not analyze the situations or interpret with questions about their experiences in order to apply the knowledge to future teaching practice. It was obvious the preservice teachers needed support to understand how to reach beyond the surface level. The instructor, Maya, provided critical task questions throughout the semester to achieve deeper reflections (See Appendix D). The preservice teachers posted their answers to the questions each week on the university's web-based course management system. These specific reflections prompted preservice teachers to analyze (ask why and how), appraise (interpret), and transform (apply) experiences rather than just describe the experiences with the elementary students at the community center (Reed & Bergemann, 2005).



completed the required forms for the Institutional Review Board and collected data only after I received approval.

**Data analysis.** The ultimate goal of analysis is to find meanings in cultures by looking at the relationships of symbols within that culture (Spradley, 1979). At the center, qualitative researchers are “making sense of the world but also in making sense of our relationship of the world and therefore in discovering things about ourselves even as we discover things about some phenomenon of interest” (Patton, 2002, p. 432). Spradley (1979) states, “Analysis of any kind involves a way of thinking. It refers to the systematic examination of something to determine its parts, the relationship among parts, and their relationship to the whole” (p. 92). In qualitative research, themes and patterns sometimes emerge during data collection (Patton, 2002). Therefore, data analysis b2002 ttaking s res



Huberman and Miles (1998) contend data analysis includes three subgroups that transpire before, during and after data collection: data reduction, data display, and conclusion/ verification. Before data collection, I decided on the research design, conceptual framework, and research questions. Through this process, I reduced the data to focus on culturally responsive teaching and continued as I collected data. As I persisted to examine data, I organized and clustered information into data display of brackets and codes to facilitate drawing conclusions. Finally, I interpreted, summarized, and found meaning from data I organized previously, hence the subgroup of conclusion

Onwuegbuzie, 2007). I categorized the data into chunks beginning with interview transcripts and labeled the chunks with codes. I then checked the new chunks emerging

and provided evidence of developments and discoveries to ensure credibility and trustworthiness, which I did for each of the eight cases.

*Cross-case analysis.* As the researcher, I wanted to examine and describe multiple cases of preservice teachers' understandings about culturally responsive teaching. In order to gain deeper understanding and to enhance the possibility of these discoveries being relevant to other cases, I decided to employ a cross-case analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Individuals' experiences vary from case to case; therefore, cross-case analysis was an appropriate choice (Patton, 2002). A cross-case analysis groups together responses to common questions from different participants. As I looked through similarities and differences among cases, the cross-case analysis allowed me to find negative cases that enhanced the discoveries (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I began the analysis with an exploration of all of the cases in within-case analysis. I analyzed my observations, the audiotapes of the interviews, the interview transcriptions, and preservice teachers' course documents. Through the utilization of the cross-case analysis, I examined the data to gain a deeper understanding and find meaning to be generalized to other cases.

#### **Legitimation of methods.**

data speak for the individual and that the researcher is neutral is not practical (Fontana & Frey, 2005). I continually reminded myself to be aware such as during the interview I attempted to be as unobtrusive as possible. I stepped back from the data and returned with a fresh frame of mind.

Legitimation is increased through different methods. As I attended every session, I observed, audiotaped, and took field notes in the class session and in two tutoring groups. In addition, I obtained the reflections of my participants, attended all sessions, and obtained the syllabi and course documents from the instructor of the course. These data sources with the interviews allowed me to triangulate my data, which provided multiple sources and reduced the chance of analytic bias and chance association (Patton, 2002). These sources provided rich and thick description increasing credibility and interpretive validity (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

In addition, I used an audit trail with the data and records from my study  
(O and

a doctoral candidate in my department at the university. Jacqueline observed and listened as I conducted the initial and last focus group interviews with the preservice teachers. Jacqueline and I met to de-brief to promote inter-coder reliability.

Furthermore, I augmented credibility through use of peer debriefing with Maya and Jacqueline, class-long engagement, triangulation and member checks (Anafara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). Triangulation along with an audit trail increases dependability, and triangulation together with my reflexivity facilitated confirmability. I provided thick description to enhance transferability.

### **Summary**

I conducted this research at the community center, as part of a partnership between the university I attend and this center. I investigated the understandings of preservice teachers enrolled in a writing methods course related to culturally responsive teaching using qualitative research methods. In order to gain insight and understandings, I observed, took fieldnotes, and audio taped each week during the writing methods course as the preservice teachers tutored elementary students. I conducted interviews, kept a reflexive journal, conducted focus group discussions with eight preservice teachers, and obtained reflections and course documents.

In order to analyze data on this embedded case study, I utilized a constant comparison method of analysis to develop categories, within-case analysis, and then cross-case analysis. When any necessary adjustments became apparent during data collection, I communicated with my doctoral committee and included evidence of these changes in the final dissertation report.

## **Chapter Four: Discoveries**

I know as a qualitative researcher I cannot tell the whole story of each preservice teacher in my study. For that reason, I chose to conduct an embedded case study. I could not observe or write about the entire case, all of the elementary students and preservice teachers, because its considerable size, and I wanted to expand my understandings of the smaller component of the larger case (Stake, 2005).

preservice teachers' changes in understandings about culturally responsive teaching after a semester teaching diverse populations in a field experience at a community center.

During the semester of tutoring at the community center, I investigated the understandings of preservice teachers about culturally responsive pedagogy who were enrolled in a writing methods course. The following questions guided my inquiry:

- 1) What understandings about culturally responsive teaching do preservice teachers matriculating in a re50 0 0 Tm /T Q q 0.24 0 0 0.24 413.9297 653.r

had just conducted this course the previous semester at the community center. Maya knew the course well and adapted the course to make it better each semester through improved reflection prompts and the incorporation of technology.

In an interview with me, Maya explained why she teaches the course at the community center. One of Maya's goals was directly related to the model of the community center's director, Naomi (pseudonym). Maya said, "All the time I've been there [at the community center]," Naomi "said one of the big goals of the community center is to have preservice teachers exposed to urban kids." Maya thought preservice teachers learn best in an authentic context and "make a connection with kids" at the community center. She thought the preservice teachers "learn to either be able to work with them [urban children]" or the preservice teachers "decide they don't want to work with them." Maya said, "Everyone doesn't have to work with urban kids." She believed she provided an experience that would help preservice teachers choose where they may teach best.

Maya considered the community center an opportunity to "expose new people because we may find really good teachers that can work within this environment." She thought "immersion" in a community of teaching diverse populations is the "best way of learning," and she thought such experiences offer preservice teachers a chance to collaborate and discuss in their collaborative tutoring groups. As a group, preservice teachers have the opportunity to self-reflect and notice changes "along the way."

During the first and second week of the course, Maya provided information to the preservice teachers about the



kids.” She also commented the elementary students might be English Language Learners. Maya described the community center as a great experience that could provide extra field opportunities. Maya talked to the preservice teachers about the reciprocal learning that occurs at the community center, “you teach them; they teach you.” She stated as tutors they help the students and at the same time the students help preservice teachers learn about teaching. Maya believed the experience promotes preservice teachers’ development into becoming more responsive and reflective.

### **The Community Center**

*From my notes: I observed Maya teaching for one semester prior to this study, and I have been to the community center for the past three years for other research projects as well. I now teach a course at the community center. I also agree with Maya and believe this experience provides preservice teachers with an authentic context to learn about teaching and learning and utilize exemplary strategies and approaches they have learned in class. In particular, the community center offers preservice teachers*

different ways of learning (

is not responsible for being hungry or wearing dirty clothes, the adults are responsible for the child's well-being. For these reasons, Naomi works to provide a welcoming environment.

Naomi also prepared the preservice teachers for behavior management and offered more information about the elementary students they would tutor. The children consider preservice teachers as special, as they often say, "My tutor." Naomi shared with the preservice teachers that the community center does not allow any bad behavior and that they should ask for help from the coaches who are employees responsible for care of the elementary students if problems occur. Naomi discussed the rules: hug the children from the side to avoid inappropriate contact, bathroom trips are unnecessary, and avoid snacks as they will have already received one before class. Naomi then thanked the preservice teachers for their time and contributions to the center and confirmed preservice teachers supplied a wonderful service. Naomi expressed how the preservice teachers would learn about teaching and themselves as they gave back to the community. Naomi thanked the preservice teachers again and told them to enjoy themselves.

*From my notes: I was impressed with Naomi's introduction. Naomi appreciated the preservice teachers and believed the community center, the students, the university, and the preservice teachers benefited from this experience. This is a great opportunity for the university instructors to provide preservice teachers with an authentic learning environment where they gain valuable experiences working with diverse populations.*

*The community center*







child...every child deserves the love, respect, knowledge, and hope that teachers offer on a daily basis.” This philosophy reflects the image of a culturally responsive teacher.

**Rebecca.** Rebecca, another member of group A, was a 24 year old Caucasian woman who grew up in a Northwestern state. As a child, she “moved around many times and learned to make friends quickly.” She thought her “biggest obstacle” in life was to stay in school while overcoming personal issues and experiences.” For at the age of 21, she lost her son and struggled to “deal with the aftermath” as she continued “to pursue her passion of teaching children.” Although school had “taken longer than expected,” Rebecca remained persistent.

Rebecca described herself in an acrostic poem and bio-







having everything organized and teaching them, being able to educate them.” She said, “I will one day teach a classroom of children and become one of the stepping stones to their future.”

Kelly thinks one of her strengths as an educator is organization. She said,

From my notes: *Katherine, Kelly, Lisa, and Rebecca are just a year or two older*



leadership” soon after she finished her bachelor’s degree. Although Julie wanted to become an administrator, she said “I would like to teach, but I want students to get a good education, and I want to help teachers teach better.” She said, “I hope to touch countless children’s hearts by teaching as well as leave an everlasting impression on the people I love.”

*From my notes: How can Julie be an effective teacher? I think she is not passionate about her choice in careers. Is she implying that teaching is not high enough on the status bar; therefore, she wants to be in administration? She could not be a doctor and settled on education. If Julie has to become an educator, then is it better to be in the highest position possible?*

Julie described her strength as an educator as engagement of students because she “want[ed] to do fun activities,” and she “would never be a teacher to like lecture, and like just do worksheets.” She felt “a lot of teachers do that [worksheets],” so she considered it a strength because she wanted her “classroom to always be engaging.” Julie continued to explain how creativity would impact her instruction and make her classroom engaging. She commented:

I am really creative, so I would definitely make the lessons like that. And I would do like lots of arts and crafts, like not have them do it [worksheets, boring



I am from







said when “kids are acting out or something” she does not “want to be the mean one.”

She also believed she sometimes became distracted. She stated:

You know so when it comes to disciplining or making sure everyone’s on task the entire time, I like get side tracked also. You know so if they start talking about a sport, I’ll get side tracked with um...you know I really need to stay focused and have that discipline, which I’m not really good at. (Laughs) I like having fun, yeah.

Sam discussed her lack of focus because she valued the conversations with students, especially if the discussion centers on her interests such as sports.

Sam thought her family and prior school experiences did not influence her understandings about diversity. She went to a private school for most of her life. She believed she learned about diversity at the university when she was “in the classroom [at elementary schools] more than anything.” Sam expressed she had now learned “all the different ways to learn,” such as through the creative arts or individualized instruction.

*From my notes: This group had different dynamics than Group A. In Group B, the preservice teachers have participated in different interpersonal activities such as acting, sports, and sororities that helped them be comfortable in front of people. Therefore, these preservice teachers had strong social or interpersonal skills and confidence.*

*All but one preservice teacher in both groups said they considered teaching a calling, even though some of them had chosen another career. Only Julie in Group B did not convince me she wanted to teach. The other preservice teachers appeared to be transforming themselves into teachers.*



& Onwuegbuzie, 2007). I then compared all the data and conflated the codes into categories to identify themes. I offer direct quotes from the preservice teachers to reveal insight into their understandings.

**Theme one: Cultural awareness and integration.** The theme cultural awareness and integration became apparent in the preservice teachers' responses to

of the various cultures in their students the concepts through experiences and situations that the students can relate to.

*Rebecca.* Culturally responsive teaching takes practice and a variety of literature and tools in the classroom. It is important to include minorities of all kinds in literature being read in the class, as have it available to students in the classroom library.

interested in. Food is a large part of any culture and if included in this activity would bring interest to it. Literature that has a theme about diversity would be good to use.

Katherine, Rebecca, Kelly, and Lisa offered their definitions of culturally responsive pedagogy, which entails the incorporation of their students' cultural background into the academic content areas including holidays, food, and heritage.

**Group B.** Preservice teachers who tutored in Group B also thought culturally responsive pedagogy meant to incorporate the students' cultural background into the academic lessons. The following preservice teachers' answers show their initial understandings about culturally responsive pedagogy.

*Amy:* My understanding of culturally responsive teaching is teaching students about culture, especially about the cultures specific to that classroom. Another aspect includes using different instructional strategies to help them learn, and helping to bridge learning between home and school.

*Christy:* My understanding of culturally responsive teaching is that I take into consideration that not all students come from the same background and standard of living. What happens at home affects how students learn and act within a classroom, and so it is important to keep this in mind when creating lessons. Also being culturally responsive means helping other students in class to learn about different cultures of diverse students in class, so those diverse students can be proud and share their background and not feel excluded or like an outcast because of their culture or background. I think a fun activity for our group would be to read a multi-cultural book to our group and then have them draw pictures or write

down what the book makes them feel, and something that they think represents the culture or ethnicity of the people, places and events in the story.

*Julie:* Culturally responsive teaching to me is teaching that incorporates all cultures and doesn't leave out anyone. I feel culture should not be ignored in the classroom but should be welcomed and embraced. There are tons of great books out there that could be used in the classroom and even students' own resources can be used when teaching a lesson.

*Sam:* I think it is very important to understand that each student comes from a different background and different cultures. It is very important to keep that in mind when dealing with each student[']s situation and how they deal with things. A good suggestion would be to have the students make a collage at the beginning of the year describing themselves. This could help the students to open up and give the teacher an understanding of their backgrounds.

*From my notes:* I noticed every preservice teacher mentioned how a culturally responsive teacher becomes aware of the different cultures in the classroom and then integrates the culture into the lesson plans. I believe they are regurgitating what they have been taught in previous classes and do not think or reflect critically. I used regurgitate because I think it has a negative somewhat disgusting image. However, I need to put my bias in check as I become disgusted sometimes with the limited understandings of people in our society. I enjoy becoming acquainted with these preservice teachers, and I thoroughly appreciate and love to teach preservice teachers. I want to help them become more effective teachers, especially to become more culturally

*responsive. I think, however, their understanding appears to be surface level and lacks depth; culturally responsive pedagogy is a complex, multifaceted theory.*

Amy, Julie, Christy, and Sam, members of Group B, disclosed their definitions of culturally responsive pedagogy as awareness and integration of the students' culture into the curriculum. They shared similar, beginning understandings about culturally responsive pedagogy as Group A. This theme of cultural awareness and integration correlates to one of Gloria Ladson-Billings' tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy, the conception of knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 1992). The conception of knowledge is characterized as teachers link learning to the students' lives, such as their cultural background, and utilize the connection to facilitate and scaffold their learning and knowledge to more difficult and bigger ideas. As a result, culturally relevant teachers employ students' cultures in order to empower the student and provide opportunities for the student to critically analyze their learning and create meaning and understanding of the world.

**Theme two: Student-teacher interaction.** The next theme I identified was student-teacher interaction, and this theme includes two subcategories: 1) misconceptions and assumptions, and 2) personal connections and relationships. Misconceptions and assumptions refer to the preservice teachers' failure to realize how their thoughts or ideas might influence their beliefs and practices. According to the online Merriam-Webster dictionary (n.d.), assume means "to take as granted or true," and misconception means a mistaken thought or understanding. Their comments regarding the elementary students could be construed as biased or prejudiced. Due to the preservice teachers' understandings of the elementary students, they sometimes made assumptions and held



misconceptions. Preservice teachers' understandings of the elementary students also facilitated the depth of personal connections and relationships that developed during the tutoring at the community center. Personal connections and relationships suggest preservice teachers valued the chance to learn more about the elementary students and to get to know the elementary students. In addition, preservice teachers believed personal connections to the elementary students demonstrated an aspect of culturally responsive teaching. Personal connections could include personal interests or relating the elementary students to preservice teachers' lives or cultural influences. As the preservice teachers learned more about the elementary students, they developed relationships ( t ) 0. ( , t ) 0.s(l)0.2 ( c

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considered to be “at-risk,” the teachers and family of the child have an obligation to whatever is necessary to help the child in any way possible.

*Rebecca:* I believe an ‘at-risk’ student can mean many different things. Students can have a low socioeconomic status and be considered at risk, or they can have behavior problems that limit their learning. I also think that at

around you. The choices you make as an educator will be reverberated throughout a life for decades and that's why they need to be inspirational and meaningful.

*From my notes: I have a hard time with Kelly's use of genetic predisposition, especially because I am a sociocultural theorist who believes we learn from social interaction. Kelly leaped to a grand assumption or misconception that students are predisposed to negative influences. What does she mean by that? Does she believe students do not have a chance because they are genetically incapable of success? She contradicts herself because she states teachers should create a positive environment to help these students, which would mean she thinks social interaction and situations impact students. If these preservice teachers are told, "you will be working with students at-risk," then how will this perpetuate negative preconceptions or misconceptions or assumptions? They have preconceptions of what the students might be like but really can not define the term at-risk.*

The preservice teachers in Group A demonstrated a limited understanding of the term at-risk. Lisa appeared to have the best understanding of students at-risk in her group. She knew students at-risk are more likely to fail at school, and she recognized low socioeconomic and unstable homes might contribute to this failure. Rebecca had a limited understanding, but similar to Lisa, she revealed how economic situations influence students' success in school. Then, she connected behavior problems and lack of interest in learning as a substantial hindrance. Katherine and Kelly believed students at-risk need teachers to help them in any way possible. Group B provided a definition closer to the actual meaning of the term at-risk.

*Group B.* Amy, Julie, and Christy in Group B were able to verbally define students at-risk better than Group A. However, the last group member, Sam, provided diminutive amounts of detail for her definition. She stated, her “definition of an ‘at risk’ child is a child who doesn’t understand basic concepts, or [has] possible behavioral problems. This could also relate to a child who may have a disability.” Sam relates the elementary students’ behavior and academic abilities to the label ‘at-risk.’ However, she does not make the connection to failure to complete academic tasks or to drop out of

other kids may have, such as computers, books at home, parents that help with homework, and a number of other things. Not having these resources [a]ffects their continuing education in the home after they leave school, and also [a]ffects them as students in the classroom.

Amy, Julie, and Christy had







types of horrible situations. And we come in and there are these mild mannered children sitting there. And then, it's like now that they're getting used to us. Oh well, I can misbehave a little bit here or I can hit somebody here because they're not going to do anything to me... They might go tell my coach, but... so I am

could be mild mannered and still have difficulties at home, and it seemed that she fulfilled a self-fulfilling prophecy that they were relaxing their behavior.

In Kelly's last interview, she discussed a cultural difference between her and one of the students. Kelly assumed the family dances at home because the boy who was black liked to dance.

The same with Our Space, like certain kids wanted to show off part of their cultural, their upbringing. Like one of the kids that I had, M., he was very much into dancing. And he's a little black child, and I know I can't dance as a white girl.





illustrated her point through a story about a couple who adopted a child from China. She emphasized that physical appearances are not the best way to determine a student's culture. The parents of this Chinese child were American, one of Hawaiian heritage and the other from a Scottish background. She understood not to stereotype according to appearance because she said, "it's so important that just because this little Chinese girl comes into your classroom, don't automatically assume that all the culture what you think being Chinese is going to be shown with this student." According to Katherine, a person or student's physical appearance does not define their culture and the use of physical appearance as cultural categorizations produces misconceptions and assumptions.

Katherine continued to share thoughts of assumptions she made about other preservice teachers in her education courses:

....so you just can't assume that just because the student comes in or that just because it's...just because I'm Caucasian that if I have, you know, fifty percent of my class are Caucasian that they are all going to be just like me; they're all going to come from backgrounds just like me. So...and that's something I think we picked out at the community center this time. Was seeing like kids that you think would be similar to us in their likes and stuff, but their home life is very different from what my home life was or what their home life were.

Katherine's examination of her previous assumptions illustrated that she thought physical appearances do not determine a person's culture.

In Rebecca's final focus group interview, she also noted significant changes in previous assumptions she had made. She said:

But I grew up in a very, like predominantly white, middle class, suburban....there weren't any other ethnicities or any other religions. There wasn't anything different. Like, that you could tell anyway, like what you [Katherine] are saying [not making assumptions about a person by their physical appearance]...I just think that's so true, and I just never really thought about it like that. Is that just judging by how a person looks, or judging by what they say or how they act....like you have no idea what kind of background their home life is. But maybe it was really different, I just never thought of it about like that while I was in those classes. But it just seemed like everyone was kind of the same, like even if you were to go to their homes outside of school or you know if you had friends over....it was still like...you know they had the....well I don't remember what it's called, the type of family...nuclear family. It's like everyon



at...when I see kids within my classmates, and then kids that were at the community center, kids that are at the internship...that you really have to look at...not necessarily...I think...I think that obviously religion, all this stuff, is a huge part of culture. But just as a person's love, and a person's morals, and a person's passions and what their needs and stuff have a huge impact on who they are as a person.

Katherine then discussed more how culture is more than religion or physical appearance:

Like, there are so many other things that you have to look into um with each individual person to see them as person and say just because they're Catholic



knowing each person. So I think that you have to be really cautious about the stereotyping or just making assumptions.

Rebecca continued to discuss how stereotypes and comments could hurt and you never know who might be listening. She commented:

You just have to be really careful about what you say and really careful about what you think.

out there now. But, I think because of that, whenever you go into education and you still have that mindset the way that you were taught, who taught you, and how they did it, and so it's...definitely you can't make those assumptions like that anymore. I cannot expect to see all my colleagues be white women, go to church, and have kids.

our society does, so I mean they should and probably do hold education somewhat as a priority and... I just think it's like helpful to... it's helpful to know where they came from, but at the same time when your teaching to kind of ignore it, not totally ignore it, but just like treat them equally and not like... pass judgment just because of this and that and don't over think about it.

Julie commented that the girl had a nice car and house, but it contradicted her initial understandings when she thought the students would be underprivileged. Julie also stated she had a great family, and it appeared Julie connected the family with a nice car and house as if only great families provide nice things for their children.

In Julie's critical task question, she mentioned how her assumptions changed about the elementary students. She stated:

I also didn't expect the kids to want to continue to do school work after school but they do what they are told and write when asked, so I am very impressed with that. I realized that despite where the child comes from they are still a normal child in the aspect that they like to have fun, they like to be with their friends, and they like games so even if they come from a rough home environment in the classroom you can get past that and I feel all students should be treated equally.

Julie noticed the elementary students enjoyed learning after school and participating in activities students from different cultures enjoyed.

*From my notes: I find it hard to believe Julie will not pass judgment when she makes connections to great families and privilege. She used the word "normal" like Lisa in group A. What do they mean by normal? Well-behaved? Interested in learning? I guess she means an average person.*

Christy also mentioned the family structure in their interviews. The stories this group shared about family structure suggested assumptions about non-traditionally structured families. In the first focus group interview, Christy said:

Our one girl, she's like I'm about to have a baby brother. I'm like Oh is that your first sibling? She's like Oh, no I have like 3 step siblings. I'm like, Oh, okay. So, like you see that's the type, not that there's anything wrong with that. But that automatically, you know like having a step dad or mom, you know it is a different type of family to grow up in so I think even that like...

*From my notes:*



*Christy:* But, I think it does say something about...yeah...where she personally comes from. Like at home. Like I definitely think it said something, whether or not it was you know negative or positive. Like it just, right away, we heard that and we were like, oh...like it made us think about so that's what's going on at your house.

*Amy:* And I think it was the first time anyone of us had to deal with the, do we tell someone about this? Which...

*Christy:* Yeah. And also what do you say to her? And be like you know it's probably not appropriate to be sharing with your friends.

*Amy:* Yeah and it's one thing to be like my parents had a party, but even on her illustrations she drew rum. Like that was when I was oh...and just, I think for me, it was the first time I ever had to say to someone, do we need to tell someone about this? And it's not because like she's being abused, or anything like that, but it's just something to think about with other things. Like that's going to happen in all our teaching careers, something's going to happen at some point where we're going to have to do the, do we tell someone about this or is it not necessary. I

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*Christy:* That was...That was the one, and then, that was the one girl, and not only that but wait maybe it is the same, but then the rum girl didn't she, she was saying she spent half of i75 ( [ (w) -02 (yi) 0.2 (75 (7 ( of) -0.5676 681.30 0 50 0 0 Tm /F4.0 1 Tf (2.

never went to the parents. I just went to the director and I was like sketch,  
something's going on at home. You know I'm glad she's involved in volleyball  
'cause she will not see any of us do that. But, it's just the fact that, what do you



because then they'll

communication. She said, “The best way I can be a culturally responsive teacher is to be a good listener of the student and the student’s family members.” Katherine suggested students want to share their stories, and “Most students want to talk about themselves and their experiences.” Katherine not only thought students liked to talk about themselves, but she revealed the elementary students needed to feel comfortable with her. She said, “I hope they will feel comfortable in explaining to me where they are struggling, so I will be able to assist them in learning the material.”

Due to Katherine’s cultural awareness and orientation toward personal connections, she noticed the elementary students at the community center were “so unique. Um, I think it’s really important to see the uniqueness of each student and their talents and their strengths.” She also thought, “You can’t show favoritism” because “they all have different strengths, and it’s trying to find how to work with those strengths.”

Katherine continued to discuss how the tutoring experience at the community center influenced her expanded understandings to incorporate building relationships with the students. She stated:

...this whole experience has made me think of there are so many different parts of culture that it’s not....you can’t even count them because every person almost has their own culture. Cause just because you grew up in the same household doesn’t mean you and your siblings are going to have the same beliefs. You know so just because you have two kids in your class that are twins or two kids that you already had one of their older siblings doesn’t mean this kid is going to be anything like the older one. So you really have to work hard in getting to know

the kid as a person and who they are and who they are and try to get them to come out of their shell and express that.

Katherine continued as she discussed how she learned from the elementary students at the community center because she had never worked with such diverse populations.

Katherine learned the elementary students were different than her cultural background.

She uttered:

And um especially kids that are very different from me, different home lives that uh... Like, I was raised both my parents together and a lot of siblings and a lot of love. Some of them [students at the community center] haven't had the best experiences at home, and some of them have had wonderful experiences as well, but still different from my own. So, I've learned um...t.t...to understand and to acknowledge their differences and understand they're not always going to have to understand my perspective, and I'm not always going to understand theirs. But I need to work hard on trying to understand their perspective.

Katherine suggested she should attempt to understand the perspective of her students even when it is different than hers.

Katherine also realized teachers should express curiosity for students and develop a safe environment. She stated:

One positive aspect I have learned about teaching is that by becoming excited and showing interest in the students as individuals they are much more comfortable in expressing themselves to me. They also get excited when I relate to them.

Katherine thought teachers should relate lessons to the students. She said, "...when we showed interest in something that they liked, then they became excited about the activity

and we could not get them to stop thinking about ideas.” According to Katherine, the elementary students demonstrated greater engagement when they could relate to the ideas.

Rebecca alleged she developed a relationship as time progressed throughout the semester. She commented:

I really had no understanding of them at first because it was just kind of like a, you know, like a thrown together, like this is who you’re going to be with, and I didn’t really have any background







*Susan:* So basically you have to build relationships?

*Rebecca:* Right.

*Katherine:* And with their parents as well, I think. With the students, but if you can...I mean not all parents want to be involved, but you really have to try because you can learn a lot from the parents too. And you can see how...um...like some kids that don't pay attention, and they get very distracted in the class. And they're doing all this different stuff. And I've met one of the parents once at my internship, and the mom, cell phone, you know....palm pilot... all this different stuff constantly going on at the same time. And you say no wonder why the kid has to have all this stimulus going all at the same time because that's how he sees his mom live her life. So you really have to...you'll learn a lot through the parents as well and what the kids home life is like. [Someone says, "That's true."] Because some kids don't want to talk about what's going on at home because they're embarrassed by it or they don't like it. But, you can talk to a parent and learn a lot too, and you know how significant that's going to affect the kids.

Preservice teachers in Group A offered how important it is for teachers to connect to the students' interests, build relationships with them, understand their students' situation, and relate to the students.

*Group B.* Three of the four preservice teachers in Group B discussed the significance of getting to know the elementary students at the community center. Julie was the preservice teacher in Group B who never mentioned getting to know the students.



However, the other three preservice teachers connected with the elementary students, listened to their stories, and related to their interests.

Amy enjoyed engaging in humor with the elementary students at the community center and relating to her past as a fifth grade girl. She said, "It's just so funny because they are older, and you can joke with them. And I like that because I don't know...because they are just funny. They like to have fun."

Amy also shared a story about a girl in their group who was shy and hardly ever spoke. She discussed how the girl did not want to have her picture taken alone, but when the girl was in front of the video camera, she became more confident. Amy believed the girl developed a relationship with them and felt more at ease.

*Amy:* And the funny thing is, at the beginning of the semester, and we took their like single shot for their My Face pages, she wanted to have someone stand with her in her personal shot. We cropped the other person out; she didn't know that, but we were like yeah, it's fine. And now video camera, like so she was actually speaking and moving and all that. She got out there by herself and was talking and talking and talking. And it was just very surprising, but good for her.

*Susan:* Yeah. So, you don't have any thoughts on why that changed?

*Amy:* I don't know. I mean... I'm hoping it's 'cause she finally feels comfortable with all of us.

From these experiences at the community center, Amy realized support, communication, and friendliness were significant aspects for culturally responsive teaching. She commented:

At this point, I think that the most important aspect of teaching that will help meet

Christy shared her astonishment for the interest the elementary students took in them. She uttered, “I was surprised at how open the kids were right off the bat, they seemed really excited to meet us.”

Christy concurred with Amy about the MyFace page, and she considered the page to be an avenue to get to know the elementary students at the community center in order to connect to the students’ interests and build relationships with them. Christy revealed:

The MyFace page was not only a great way to get these kids to express themselves but it was also a great way to get to know them and see where they come from. It was interesting to see what they wanted to mention about themselves when it came to the “About Me” section. One girl made it an important note to mention that she was Puerto Rican, and she also mentioned having step siblings and a new sibling coming soon. Just hearing about her ethnicity and the type of household she lives in, having a step parent and step siblings, shows what a diverse type of life she has at home. It important to realize that their experiences at home affect who they are when they come to school each day, and that [a]ffects their learning in the classroom.

Christy continued to say:

And like that day just, I think all of them shared something about like their house, their home life, and they didn’t have to. That wasn’t something we told them to write about; Like that was all just something they chose to write about and like wanted to share.

Christy expressed how the elementary students displayed an eagerness to impart personal stories of their lives with the preservice teachers.



focused on learning more about them, and I think that reflected how we taught them.” Therefore, through the development of the relationships, knowledge of students’ interests, and connecting to the students, the preservice teachers were capable of being more culturally responsive.

*From my notes: I noticed Group B would sit or stand on one side of the table during the first sessions of the tutoring at the community center. This group had all fifth grade girls who talked often of hippies, peace signs, and the Jonas Brothers (a popular boy band). The fifth grade girls giggled and laughed every session. It almost appeared as if they were in control of the group not the preservice teachers, like they were just hanging out with their older buddies. The preservice teachers also would huddle together while one teacher worked with the fifth graders. The preservice teachers laughed with the girls and talked with them. Amy even commented that the fifth grade girls were into similar things as she was when she was in fifth grade. However, the preservice teachers seemed hesitant and dubious.*

*The preservice teachers in Group A interspersed among the third grade students, made eye contact, and talked with them, but they still would leave one teacher alone with the students while the others planned and discussed the next step in their lesson. The preservice teachers also appeared nervous and unsure of what to do next.*

*Preservice teachers in both groups mentioned how the elementary students began to feel more comfortable. I observed how the preservice teachers appeared to be more at ease. As the semester progressed, all the preservice teachers began to become part of the community of learners as they built relationships with the elementary students.*



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<i>Group B</i>	Amy	Yes	Field Experience	Best Practices	
	Christy	No	Field Experience	Best Practices	
	Julie	No	Field Experience		Critical Task Questions
	Sam	Yes	Field Experience	Best Practices	

**Group A.** Katherine, Rebecca, and Kelly mentioned how the experience of tutoring, or field experience, influenced their understandings about culturally responsive teaching. The preservice teachers believed the tutoring of the elementary students impacted their understandings because they gained valuable information on how to approach and teach different students. Katherine said:

I guess just working with a very diverse group of kids and their personalities, and their cultural background and their home life. Um... I've learned... I don't know. I guess I've learned a lot about how to approach kids in a way that's respectful towards their cultural background, um which is sometimes hard to determine.

Kelly recognized the need for different approaches for how students learn. She stated:

Well, just with working with the kids there, I've noticed that each...you know even though they tell you so many of the different modalities to work with kids. It's practicing it and actually experiencing it. You know, knowing well I can get away with this with this child, not get away, but be able to work with this child in this manner, verses you know this one needs a different approach to ...um... you know teaching them that. And I've learned that each kid has a different way of

doing it.



I mean having us come here. She didn't have to do that. I mean I have a couple of other friends who took writing, and they didn't have any experience with kids at all. So I mean that's...that's a huge different...[experience].

Rebecca continued to express the vast knowledge she gained as she encountered interactions with populations with whom she had never become acquainted:

Well, I think that's [being at the Community center] helped a lot because before this I really didn't have any consistency with culturally different students or different um... I really didn't have anything good to compare it to. So I mean I had...I had worked in a school before, but really there wasn't very many cultural differences at all. So I guess this has been my first real consistent experience with the same students in the cultural diverse atmosphere.

Rebecca acknowledged she had limited experiences with people from different cultures than her own, and she recognized how this field experience offered an opportunity to work with students from different cultures.

Rebecca, Katherine, and Kelly identified the field experience, tutoring elementary students at the community center, as an important influence on their understandings about culturally responsive pedagogy and how to approach and utilize different techniques to meet the needs of diverse populations.

through shared experiences as they gain understandings about diversity (Fang & Ashley, 2004; Hedrick, McGee, & Mittag, 2000; Morton & Bennett, 2010; Richards, 2006; Richards & Bennett, In Progress; Sleeter, 2001). All members of the group proposed the field experience made them see how the elementary students came from many different backgrounds.

Amy discussed how the instructor prepared preservice teachers for field experience tutoring at-risk elementary students. Amy commented:

But, outside of preparing us for like what kind of kids they could be, because obviously ahead of time she didn't know what kids I was going to have, what kids you know what I mean, like she had to prepare all of us for the same like in case everyone got them.

Amy believed the instructor provided information to prepare her for diverse populations of students at-risk. Amy commented again about field experience during the focus group, "Like we didn't learn directly about culture, but working with the kids is how I learned more about it..." Amy thought the instructor provided a valuable learning opportunity to work with students in this field experience from different backgrounds (Fang & Ashley, 2004; Hedrick, McGee, & Mittag, 2000; Morton & Bennett, 2010; Richards, 2006; Sleeter, 2001). She gave an example of a girl who did not talk very much, but Amy thought the girl opened up toward the end of the semester. She reflected, "And I mean that could definitely be cultural related, how she is at home, everything like that." Amy recognized Maya brought the class to the community center to gain experience with diverse populations.

Sam also recognized this experience as beneficial. As Sam's group discussed the instructor in a focus group interview, she mentioned field experience as an essential part of learning to teach. She thinks, "...it's like really going to help to be hands-on, so it's good that we have internships." According to Sam and Amy, Maya furnished them with knowledge and experience to tutor at-risk students from diverse backgrounds.

In Sam's last interview, she described how the experience provided an opportunity to observe how the elementary students all had distinctive personalities and came from various backgrounds:

I think that tutoring here are...we had five girls. They were all completely different.

instructor influenced her understandings, “I don’t think so. Like I mean I think working with the kids was like a good experience...” Although Maya chose to incorporate field experience into the course, Christy did not make the connection that the instructor e...

culturally responsive teaching, preservice teachers' conversations indicated that they were influenced by Maya's instruction as they acknowledged distinctive aspects of her instruction they thought was culturally responsive. Preservice teachers suggested instructional strategies or best practices such as *MyFace* or *Our Space* integrated students' background and culture into the writing content. Best practices for writing include 1) positive environments, 2) organization of writing, 3) meaningful writing to students, 4) writing for a variety of purposes, 5) collaborative writing, and 6) critical reflection (Whitaker, 2007; Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1998). Preservice teachers in their words stated "activities and ideas." After analysis, I determined preservice teachers discussed best practices for writing.

These best practices incorporated different purposes (genres) for writing and writing experiences that were meaningful to the elementary students. In addition, the best practices provided opportunities for students to share and express information about themselves, which gave preservice teachers a chance to get to know them. Preservice teachers offered understandings about scaffolding from students' prior knowledge.

***Culturally responsive teaching.*** Six of the eight preservice teachers recognized Maya's instructional activities and ideas as another influence on their understandings about culturally responsive teaching. Instructional "activities and ideas" is how the preservice teachers referred to writing instruction, or as in terms of best practices: writing as meaningful to students or writing for a variety of purposes. Maya expected preservice teachers to use these best practices while tutoring and in their future classrooms. Some activities were *MyFace*, *Our Space*, write a story about an object, "Garfield Writing Survey" (Kear, Coffman, McKenna, & Ambrosio, 2000), and a spelling inventory from the text *Words Their Way* (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2008). Maya then instructed th

Maya introduced the last technological strategy to the preservice teachers. The teachers helped the elementary students create a movie utilizing the program *QuickTime* (2009) as a public service announcement for the community center. They collaborated to create story boards and scripts and to take video shots around the community center. As a culminating activity, each group presented the movies to the entire class.

The other activities Maya demonstrated did not require technology. During the first and last tutoring session at the community center, the preservice teachers conducted a “Garfield Writing Survey” (Kear, Coffman, McKenna, & Ambrosio, 2000). The survey asked questions about the elementary students’ attitudes toward writing. The survey consists of 28 items that asked “how do you feel...” about different aspects of writing. The students answered the questions based on a four point Likert Scale represented by Garfield pictures of very happy to very upset. The survey did not provide information about why students like or dislike writing; however, the instrument served as a preliminary guide to the students’ writing attitudes, a pre/post measurement, and a way to examine the impact of the instructional techniques in the course.

Toward the end of the semester, the preservice teachers utilized an additional activity, a Spelling Inventory from *Words Their Way* (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2008). This inventory consisted of lists of words structured to indicate grade level of the speller. The preservice teachers read the words and then read the words in the sentence provided. As preservice teachers administered and scored the Spelling Inventory, they gained authentic experience with an assessment that helped them learn more about the elementary students.

Preservice teachers thought the last activity engaged the elementary students. In this activity, the elementary students wrote a story about an object they pulled out of a container. The objects included different things such as a button, bracelet, toy shoe, or story characters. These objects engaged the students because the objects provided a focus for the students' writing but also allowed for creative expression. The preservice teachers believed the instructor influenced their understandings about culturally responsive teaching through these activities and ideas.

Two preservice teachers suggested the final influence the instructor had on their understandings about culturally responsive teaching was with critical task questions. The instructor posted critical task questions online weekly for preservice teachers to teach reflective practice (See Appendix D). The questions included topics such as definitions of culturally responsive teaching and at-risk students, the writing course content, own writing experiences, students' needs, class activities, and strengths and weaknesses as a teacher. The preservice teachers recognized critical task questions, as well as field experience and activities and ideas, as instructor influences on their understandings about culturally responsive teaching.

*Group A.* Katherine, Rebecca, Lisa, and Kelly noted best practices were aspects of the instructor's influences toward culturally responsive teaching (See Table 2). Lisa and Kelly identified the "activities and ideas" or best practices that Maya provided influenced their understandings about culturally responsive teaching. Katherine stated the instructor did not directly influence her understandings, but the activities Maya provided offered insights into her understandings. Rebecca was the only preservice teacher in this group who mentioned field experience and critical task questions as influences.





*Lisa:* Definitely.

Lisa also recognized culturally responsive teaching incorporates the individual student's needs, and culture represents more than ethnicity. She said the instructor was "teaching us how to be culturally responsive because it's looking toward different ways to motivate students to learn." Lisa identified how heritage and ethnicity is not the only identifying aspect of culture:

I think a lot of times we always think of culture....we think of heritage type things. I think culture also has to do with like pop culture and how technology has really been a big part of children's lives. So bringing that sort of aspect to it will maybe inspire them to write more, and she showed us that. That there is other ways to have them write rather than pen and pencil.

Lisa associated Maya's best practices as influential to her understandings about culturally responsive teaching because she noticed writing includes more than "pen and pencil" as way to meet student's individual culture needs.

Katherine also noticed other aspects of culture such as technology and pop culture. She remarked:

I definitely agree with that, ...that's stuff that we have to remember to think about when we are educating our kids. So they do need to be exposed to a lot of technology, and they do need to be exposed to a lot of things that have to do with pop culture because the culture is constantly changing. So that's just something I thought of when she was mentioning that because it is really important that they are exposed to those things. And basically, the culture because it is changing its going to be a new culture for them, if that make sense? So...I just think that the





are ways that you can bring different kids or have kids explore their own cultural backgrounds or talk about their cultural background by using...doing different activities and having kids talk to each other and learn about each others' backgrounds and stuff, but not like direct teaching about being culturally responsive.

Katherine believed Maya focused more on writing content than culturally responsive teaching she learned about in an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) or diverse populations' course. Although Maya focused more on writing, Katherine noted her ideas could be adjusted to fit the needs of diverse students:

I mean a lot of us have taken ESOL or taken classes that already talk a lot about cultural responsive teaching and about the different diverse groups, where this is focused on teaching writing so she just correlated [Maya connected writing to different cultures]. Um, I don't think she really talked about how to specifically work with diverse groups, but how you can do writing activities and that can be used to working with diverse groups.

After discussion with her group members in the interview, Katherine stated:

So just all different types of methods that she...she did activities in the classroom.

We talked about that.

The preservice teachers believed the instructor influenced their understandings about culturally responsive teaching. Preservice teachers mentioned Maya chose to conduct the course at the community center. Here, the preservice teachers gained hands-on experience tutoring the elementary students from diverse backgrounds. In addition, preservice teachers noted Maya asked reflective questions throughout the semester to connect the course content and culturally responsive teaching. Lastly, preservice teachers suggested Maya demonstrated activities and ideas that engaged students and focused on meeting the needs of the diverse student populations. Therefore, all preservice teachers recognized different aspects of Maya's instruction that influenced their understandings about culturally responsive teaching.

*Group B.* Group B included the preservice teachers Amy, Christy, Sam, and Julie. Amy and Sam believed the course instructor influenced their understandings of culturally responsive teaching through the provision of "activities and ideas" or best practices (See Table 2). Although Christy and Julie stated the instructor did not influence their understandings, they shared the best practices facilitated insight into culturally responsive teaching.

In addition to preparation of at-risk students, Maya offered meaningful writing experience for the elementary students and writing for a variety of purposes (best practices) to practice culturally responsive teaching. Sam mentioned in the focus group







themselves which allowed them to like under...we learned more about them and like their family, and everyone in the group learned about that too.

*Susan:* So maybe her ideas and activities?

*Julie:* Yeah.

Julie suggested the activities that Maya demonstrated helped her form a relationship with

way “to get these kids to express themselves, but it was also a great way to get to know them and see where they come from.” Although Christy stated the instructor did not facilitate her understandings about culturally responsive teaching, she recognized the field experience and best practices that Maya utilized as influences.

Amy recognized writing as the focus of the instructor and course, not culturally responsive teaching. Amy commented, “It was mainly about writing, not necessarily writing culturally.” However, in her last individual interview, she claimed Maya, the instructor, supported alternative techniques such as drawing to meet the needs of diverse populations.

Julie also realized how practice writing lesson plans facilitated her understandings about culturally responsive teaching. She stated, “

significant role motivation and interest plays on students' learning, and they proposed their writing instruction must connect to the students' interests in order to learn.

At the end of the semester, Maya interviewed and recorded the elementary students at the community center. She asked questions about writing such as what students like or dislike about writing, what was their favorite thing about writing, and what are differences between writing at school and tutoring. Preservice teachers listened to the podcasts, which reinforced how importance of motivation and interest on writing instruction. Therefore, the theme motivation and interest transpired.

*Group A.* Katherine suggested how to motivate some of the elementary students: "...the ones that loved drawing and painting...have them first draw and paint stuff, and then have them write." In Katherine's final interview, she noted how to motivate and interest the elementary students. Katherine stated:

...having those types of activities where it's more fun; it's not so much structured.

This is the correct way of writing; you need to do this. Kinda letting their true colors show and then helping them out along the way, but not judging every second of the way, not analyzing everything.

Katherine believed the best practices were enjoyable and more meaningful to the students than structured writing.

Lisa thought writing might be more interesting for the students if they worked in groups sometimes.

should,

hard to like ok, what should I write about. Even now, so don't like write a sentence on the board, and (groans) uhhh, ok. So, think of more creative ways to present it, other than just writing.

Lisa provided examples of creative writing projects such as ones they did at the community center; she said, "Like skits, the commercials, and stuff like that." Lisa suggested motivation and interest as significant features of writing instruction.

During Rebecca's last interview

Rebecca reflected during the last interview about the podcast of elementary students from the community center. She thought it provided an understanding about what motivates and interests the elementary students. Rebecca stated:

...the podcast that she did was very helpful, I thought...in determining like what kids like about writing, what they really just can't stand I think what you were saying about first having them type it all out, and then go back and re- ...hand write. That's a really good idea because those kids don't want to focus on handwriting. They don't want to focus on sentence length.

Rebecca emphasized again students in schools are often told to focus on quantity versus quality. In addition, she noted how one student shared how his teacher scrutinized about his handwriting. She said, "... it [podcast] showed a lot of the different students, not just the students from our group, but... 'my teacher says I don't write an A right or my A's sloppy.'" Rebecca shared how the community center and the writing methods course facilitated better understandings about culturally responsive pedagogy in addition to writing instruction. She said, "I think we have to take a look at that...the community center and the class both helped me." She considered the Maya's provision of best practices as a significant aspect of culturally responsive teaching.

In Kelly's critical task question, she realized the elementary students' writing ideas were important to motivate and interest them. She wrote, "I am now more open to the children's suggestions on what they want to write about so that it's more fun for

*From my notes: Kelly realized how students gain interest in writing if it is something they want to write about. However, she still has the need to control. If she controls, then how does that stifle the creativity and how does that impact their motivation and interest?*

Preservice teachers were asked how a podcast of the elementary students' voices from the community center influenced their writing philosophy in the last critical question. In the podcast, elementary students discussed their attitudes toward writing experiences at school and the community center. In Kelly's last critical question, she documented her thoughts about motivation and interest. Kelly wrote:

After listening to the students' voices and their overall opinions about working with the tutors I have found that I need to make the writing process as enjoyable as possible. From what the student's talked about, we, the tutors, had many interactive activities that they thoroughly appreciated because they weren't the same boring tasks as school. I want my student's to want to write and remember that it can be fun... The overall impression is that the more one-on-one and creative the activity, the more the students will be engaged in the writing and learning process altogether.

Kelly believed writing must be fun and enjoyable, not boring. She also emphasized the importance of interactive and creative activities to develop engaging writing (m) 0.2 50.2 (i) 0son ant

video] gets student's more engaged in their writing because based off of what they decided open they can act it out for the camera." She continued to say, "Many times I've noticed, students get extremely bored performing the same boring tasks if they have the opportunity to change it up it makes the learning process more enjoyable." She related the experience to her teaching in the future and suggested, "I don't want my students to find all writing to be a boring monotonous tasks that they believe won't get them anywhere in life." She also said, "I believe that the writing experience for the students should be interactive and exciting. They need to be creative and explore their ideas and thoughts." Kelly believed, "There are so many fun activities that can help with the writing process and develop an awareness of the rules without boring the students out of their minds." Kelly advocated for motivation and interest, meaningful experiences, or best practices as an essential element of writing instruction.



I think the biggest thing about writing for the kids is knowing the right buttons to push. Like I know a couple of the boys that I've been working with a lot, they love playing Halo games. Like any game that you can talk about, they will sit there and ramble on. And I can use that you know as a tool, ok, why don't you write it down rather than just tell me about it. You know just like, when you talk to the kids, find out what their hot button is, what they like to do in their free time. And you can get them to write forever about that. That's just one thing I've noticed.

Preservice teachers in Group A suggested the best practices Maya recommended were an imperative component of writing instruction. They also considered motivation and interest important for culturally responsive pedagogy.

*Group B.* Preservice teachers, not just individually but in their groups, believed writing instruction must include creative techniques and catch the attention of students to enhance attitudes toward writing and their willingness to write. Group B commented on their wiki the 13-th week of class and after six weeks tutoring the elementary students:

One thing that we have learned is to give writing assignments that

Amy described her enjoyment of writing as a way to help her students in their writing. She said:

I think it will help me in the fact that I do enjoy writing, so I can think I can hopefully help my students with that and be like...you know present it to them as not a scary thing. Like, I think little kids think of writing as, ooh writing, I have to write an essay, like you know and it's... I think if since I enjoy it, I can hopefully portray that to the students. Like this is a fun thing; it's a creative thing, like just write what you feel. And maybe, hopefully that will make them feel more comfortable.

Amy stated she learned what to do when the elementary students were stuck on writing one thing. She would help motivate the elementary students, and she would "ask questions and motivate them to branch out and think of new things to write 'cause you

Julie proposed the elementary students should have fun when they write as compared to how she felt about writing when she was younger. She stated:

I'm a math and science person, and I dislike writing. And it made me like...I know when I grew up, I hated writing, and if I can make it fun for the kids, then that would be amazing, and I think she [Maya] gave me a lot of great ideas on

I know the one girl we had them... she wrote about like a shoe. So, she wrote like a poem, and then she really liked it and was like really proud of her poem. So like if you like... if teachers, do the fun stuff that like we would do and do it like often, I feel they would like writing a lot more. Because the only thing they thought of writing, was like it was so boring, academic, and like they all hated it. But what we did with them, they didn't like hate. So like if the teachers just like did fun stuff, like they would enjoy it a lot more, and they'd probably learn a lot more since they would actually participate and try harder.

Julie considered the fun assignments as motivators to help students learn more and work harder because they would be interested in the assignment or writing project.

Christy stated in her interview, "I got to see what things they do like to write because even the ones who said they didn't really like writing at least liked one of the writing things." Christy in the last focus group interview commented on the Garfield Writing Attitude Survey. She thought it provided knowledge and awareness of the elementary students' interests, which facilitated ideas to motivate them. She said:

Well, I think that Garfield survey definitely gave a lot of insight to that age group and the writing that they prefer. 'Cause like there's no person that said... had the mad Garfield for every single thing. Like there was at least one type of writing that they had the happy face for. Like, I think two of them said they'd rather write in a diary or something than an essay in class or whatever. And I think they all said they'd rather write about personal experiences than some history topic or science topic whatever the thing said. And I just think that gave us really good insight.

Christy also concluded elementary students do not always have to write about academic content. She thought elementary students should write about personal experiences

In Sam's last interview, she discussed different types of best practices to engage the students. First, Sam thought activities with drawing pictures and physical items to write about would help motivate students because these writing experiences were more meaningful to the students. She also believed personal connections to the students facilitate more engagement and interest. Sam said:

...with writing I learned that doing pictures and having like physical objects will help them to like...you know motiv...like get thinking and like want to write more about it 'cause when... we did one activity where we put like objects in front of them and write about this and that. And they were able to develop and come up with these off the wall stories, but they enjoyed them. Because they had more of a task instead of being like write about this specific subject, and I think that for me what I'm going to do with writing is have them do more personal talk about, not personal, but like things that they like. Let them focus on just getting something on paper as opposed to giving them subjects they're not really interested in.

Sam in the last focus group indicated drawing is another technique to motivate and interest elementary students in writing. She commented:

I think drawing with writing is good too. They like that. (all agree) And then even if you have to incorporate it with a subject that's not about them personally, you can explain whatever you want them to write about. And be like, now what I just talked about, can you produce a drawing on it, and then from your drawing and what I said, write about it. I think it would be a good step by step to keep the



what they are writing about the better they will write and the more the



with the participants in the context of the study and during this time noticed the preservice teachers in my groups seemed inexperienced.

*From my notes. I wonder if the preservice teachers feel inhibited, anxious, self-conscious, or nervous because I observe them every week. They do not seem confident in their teaching and only demonstrate novice understandings in their instruction. Therefore, I think their experience as a teacher or tutor has been limited. I remember during the participants' first interview they shared experiences they had with children,*



Katherine claimed the interview questions heightened her awareness of culturally responsive teaching because otherwise she thought she and her group members would just complete the necessary steps to fulfill the class requirements. In addition, the questions facilitated a more in-depth connection to the elementary students' instruction and increased Katherine's self-awareness as she learned about others and herself from the community center.

Kelly also believed the interaction with me and the questions I asked during the interviews influenced her understandings about culturally responsive teaching.

*Kelly:* Oh definitely, just by sitting down um and asking questions. Like I know, Ms. [Maya] probably wouldn't have done that, sit down and talk about being culturally...like she mentioned cultural responsive teaching, but she didn't go into a lot of depth about it. It was kind of like, this is what it is. But sitting down with learne (a) C

And as far as multicultural literature last week, we went over it for fifteen minutes and then said we don't have time for this.

*responsive pedagogy. Therefore, the courses in the College of Education fail to afford preservice teachers with sufficient understandings about culturally responsive teaching. If I reflect on my instruction of preservice*

*presence. She also identified a bigger picture than the other preservice teachers because Lisa talked about “being part of something” and noted the students should be treated equally...I think she demonstrated insightful meaning as she connected the research to an expansive view of what it means for education and cultural responsiveness.*

When Group A discussed the interviews during the focus group, they again revealed how I contributed to their understandings about culturally responsive pedagogy.

*Kelly:* Definitely it was you.

*Rebecca:* No I think that... Yeah, cause that would have been a different class.

Because I really don't think that we would have focused at all on cultural responsive teaching.

*Kelly:* Like she talked about it, but sh

group discussion to reflect. I think it would have been much more vague. If you were just answering those questions...

yo











Lisa Kelly	No Broadly	Field Experience Best Practices Accommodate
Katherine	Somewhat	Vocabulary, Adjust to connect to 6+1 traits

Best practices and field experiences overlapped with the preservice teachers' understandings about culturally responsive teaching that they thought Maya influenced. However, one influence of course content significantly illustrated preservice teachers' changes in their understandings, which was vocabulary. Vocabulary is an important aspect of writing content, and Julie and Amy realized a student's vocabulary is influenced by culture and geographical location. The example Julie and Amy utilized in their interviews was the word 'cellar.' 'Cellar' was one of the words in the *Spelling Inventory* from *Words Their Way* (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2008). Amy and Julie grew up in a southern state where houses do not have basements or cellars. Julie said:

And me and Amy were talking about how we always lived in[this state], so really when we were in 5th grade, we probably never would have know[n] how to spell that word. So, it made me like think about like the words that they were using and how that might be more relative to their culture, and in this case it was more relative to where they live.

Julie and Amy both commented on this vocabulary word and demonstrated how course content influenced their understandings about culturally responsive teaching.

In Julie's final interview, she identified the practice of ESOL modifications and vocabulary as the aspect of writing content that influenced her understandings about

culturally responsive teaching. She continued to say, “but other than that,” she did not think the course content influenced her understandings.

Preservice teachers in both groups stated the writing methods course content did not identify course content as an influence in their understandings about culturally responsive teaching. The most noteworthy influence for two of the preservice teachers was vocabulary. However, preservice teachers commented on best practices and field experiences, which were themes from the study.

**Changes in understandings about culturally responsive teaching.** In the final interviews, preservice teachers provided their definition of culturally responsive pedagogy. Their initial understandings of culturally responsive teaching included an awareness of their students’ cultures and integrating their culture into the curriculum. Some of the preservice teachers suggested their definitions did not change.

**Group A.** Katherine’s definition of culturally responsive teaching no longer just included cultural awareness and integration. She said:

I think culturally responsive teaching is about a teacher’s ability to connect on a deeper level with each student and to have a better understanding of the student is as a person, um...not strictly based on personality, and whether they’re good at one subject or another subject. But, what makes them who they are based on their home life, Ahhh, based on their home life and the experiences they face.

Katherine increased her understanding and thought culturally responsive teaching incorporated the development of relationships, such as making personal connections with the students.



cultures that are in your classroom and accommodate those the way you see fit.”



Christy supposed her definition of culturally responsive teaching had not altered.

She stated:

I don't really think my definition has changed, but let's even see if I can remember what I said before. I think its just like...going like as a teacher, like being in the classroom, and being like u

Sam demonstrated a slight change in her understandings about culturally responsive teaching. She exemplified the importance of knowing her students in order to be culturally responsive.

*From my notes: At different times, I had mixed reactions to the preservice teachers' comments. I have to admit I felt some anger when I thought they were being insensitive or offensive. I also felt excitement when I noticed the preservice teachers becoming more culturally responsive. I also just thought they were sharing surface level answers or what they thought they were supposed to say. After analyzing, I saw a deeper level of what they were really learning, even though they were small changes.*

From the within-case analysis and after multiple readings of the data and conflating codes, five themes emerged from the data: cultural awareness and integration, student-teacher interaction, field experience, best practices, and questions I asked in the interviews. Preservice teachers claimed course content did not prove to provide influences on the preservice teachers' understandings about culturally responsive teaching. Preservice teachers illustrated some change in their understandings about culturally responsive teaching.

### **Cross-Case Analysis**

After I analyzed the preservice teachers as individual cases, I wanted to

integration, questions I asked as a major influence, final understandings of student-teacher interaction, and final understandings of best practices for writing instruction.

Preservice teachers in both groups considered cultural awareness and integration of the students' culture as the main definition of culturally responsive pedagogy.

Culturally responsive pedagogy is "an approach to teaching and learning that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 17). Although culturally responsive teaching includes integration of the students' culture into the curriculum, it also incorporates concepts such as high expectations of students, communities of learners, and scaffolding learning.

This initial understanding of the preservice teachers suggested teachers should know the elementary students' culture and integrate it into the academic content areas. For example, Kelly said, "Culturally responsive teaching uses the experiences and knowledge of diverse students in the classroom by integrating it into learning exercises, and Julie said, "Culturally responsive teaching to me is teaching that incorporates all cultures and doesn't leave out anyone." Every preservice teacher demonstrated similar understandings of cultural awareness and integration at the beginning of the semester.!

Preservice teachers in both groups also recognized the questions I asked during the interviews as a major influence in their understandings about culturally responsive teaching because of the questions I posed that lead to further self-reflection. They suggested I asked questions to facilitate self-reflection on their instruction and conversations they initiated with each other. For instance, Rebecca noted, "I don't think that we would have talked about cultural diversity at all." Lisa thought the questions

facilitated her reflection; she commented, “So it kind of puts it in your head, so that way you have more time to think about it.” Amy also stated self-reflection evolved from the interviews; “Since I knew you like...you were asking about it in the interviews over and over, it made me think more about it when working with the kids than anything um writing did.” Preservice teachers believed the questions I asked offered an opportunity for them to reflect on their instruction and how to better meet the needs of their students.

Preservice teachers in each group discussed the importance of getting to know students and building relationships, a subcategory of the theme student-teacher interaction. Morton and Bennett (2010) found preservice teachers in field experience discovered social and emotional connections played a significant role in culturally responsive teaching (See Appendix A). In this study, preservice teachers also experienced this finding. For example, Christy said, “I just think that like getting to know them, more about them,” and as Rebecca shared, “The teacher just has to make a connection to each one of those students.” Additionally, Amy thought, “A teacher needs to be understanding and friendly.” Sam believed, “the kids got really excited because you wanted to learn about them.” All preservice teachers revealed how relationships are an important aspect of culturally responsive teaching.

The preservice teachers in Group A experienced greater understandings than Group B about culturally responsive teaching through the one-on-one student-teacher interaction. Group A interspersed among the elementary students whereas Group B huddled together, sometimes physically over the students. Group A engaged in more dialogue with the students as they sat next to them on their level. Even though all

preservice teachers valued the importance of student-teacher interaction in culturally responsive pedagogy, Group A made an effort to build relationships with the students.

Each preservice teacher developed an understanding about best practices for

This interaction facilitated Group A developing greater understandings than Group B about culturally responsive teaching.

### **Summary**

All eight preservice teachers expanded their understandings of culturally responsive teaching. From the within-case analysis, five themes became apparent: cultural awareness and integration; student-teacher interaction; field experience; best practices; and questions and conversations. The preservice teachers claimed course content did not influence their understandings, yet they cited specific activities as extending culturally responsive pedagogy. After cross-case analysis, three interconnections materialized in the preservice teachers' understandings about culturally responsive teaching: cultural awareness and integration of students' culture; questions asked by the researcher; best practices for writing instruction; and student-teacher interaction.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

*“...I think the real life experience is what really teaches you more about [being] culturally responsive.” Rebecca, Preservice Teacher*

*“I think culturally responsive teaching is about a teacher’s ability to connect on a deeper level with each student and to have a better understanding of the student as a person...”*

*Katherine, Preservice Teacher*

In the previous chapter, I presented significant discoveries from my study. I introduced and provided detailed examples of the following themes: 1) cultural awareness and integration, 2) student-teacher interaction, 3) influences of field experience, 4) questions and conversations, and 5) best practices for teaching writing. In this chapter, I explain the purpose of my research, review my methodology, and

my reflections as a teacher educator, and offer recommendations and suggestions for teacher education and future research initiatives.

While the minority population increases in schools in the United States, without culturally responsive instruction, schools will continue to contribute to the marginalization of minority and lower socioeconomic populations (Kozol, 2005; Orfield, Frankenberg, & Lee 2003; Rosenberg, 2003). The teaching population is still predominately middle-class, English-speaking, and Caucasian and remains ill-equipped to meet the needs of their students (Castro, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, 2001; Richards & Bennett, *In Progress*; Sleeter, 2008; Zumwalt & Craig, 2005). Many teachers lack experiences with students from ethnic, linguistic, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds different than their own, yet they will instruct these students (Lazar, 2007; Mysore, Lincoln, & Wavering, 2006; Ukpokodu, 2003). Therefore, teachers often fail to meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds, are not prepared to teach in lower socioeconomic areas, and fail to sustain their students' cultural heritage (Banks, 2001; Delpit, 2003; Irvine, 2003; Richards, 2006; Sleeter, 2001). These teachers often have low expectations for academic abilities, hold misconceptions, and have unconscious preconceptions about their students (Castro, 2010; Lazar, 2007; Song, 2006). As a teacher educator and researcher, I wanted to explore how to best prepare preservice teachers to meet the needs of diverse students. Therefore, I examined preservice teachers' understandings about culturally responsive teaching as they tutored elementary students in writing at a local community center.

The following questions guided my inquiry:



- 1) What understandings about culturally responsive teaching do preservice teachers matriculating in a required writing methods course hold prior to the semester field experience teaching diverse populations?
- 2) What understandings about culturally responsive teaching do preservice teachers matriculating in a required writing methods course hold after completion of a semester of teaching diverse populations in the field?
- 3) In what ways do eight preservice teachers demonstrate culturally responsive teaching within the writing curriculum?
- 4) In what ways might course content influence eight preservice teachers' understandings about culturally responsive teaching?
- 5) In what ways might the instructor influence eight preservice teachers' understandings about culturally responsive teaching?

### **Summary of My Methodology**

I examined preservice teachers' understandings about culturally responsive teaching as they tutored elementary students in writing at a local community center during the spring semester, 2009. In order to answer my research questions and gain insight into the preservice teachers' understandings, I utilized a qualitative design. I could not observe all aspects of the entire case and could not achieve in-depth insight into the whole case because of its vastness. I wanted to investigate the smaller part of the entire case, thus I chose an embedded case study (Stake, 2005). For this reason, I focused on two groups of four preservice teachers. I conducted three individual and two focus group interviews. Additional data included various course documents such as autobiographies, preservice teachers' reflections, written field notes, and my reflexive



definitions of culturally responsive teaching simplistic and wondered if they were repetitions of information learned in a class.

The preservice teachers said the elementary students had different cultures, which meant the preservice teachers had a cultural awareness of differences among the students. They shared how their students each had diverse background experiences. However, many times the preservice teachers failed to recognize differences among themselves and the students. They often omitted their “Whiteness” or otherness (Lea & Sims, 2008) from their discussion of culturally responsive teaching. The preservice teachers initially supplied incomplete definitions and understandings of the complex theory of culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2000; Ladson-



influenced their understandings about culturally responsive teaching. They also mentioned how the elementary students' interest in the writing experiences changed their writing philosophy. They did not directly state that the field experience provided opportunities for them to learn to teach writing. Consequently, the preservice teachers neglected the interrelated concepts and experiences of writing instruction and culturally responsive teaching within this course.

### **Discussion and Implications**

In this section, I begin with the preservice teachers' novice understandings and how these understandings produce a deficient model of culturally responsive teaching. I then proceed to discuss the effective and ineffective facets that contributed to the increased understandings about culturally responsive pedagogy of the preservice teachers. I inform my inquiry with previous literature and guide my query with the theoretical frameworks of culturally responsive teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002) and sociocultural and situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1995).

**Novice understandings about culturally responsive teaching.** Ladson-Billings' (1994; 1995) contends one principle to become a culturally responsive teacher is conception of self and others in which she suggests culturally responsive teachers believe all students are capable of academic success. In addition, Ladson-Billings asserts culturally responsive teachers identify the role they play as a member of the community and facilitate connections to students' cultural identities whether they are local community, global, or national. To align with this principle, a teacher must recognize how culture impacts students' learning.

The preservice teachers displayed novice understandings about culturally responsive pedagogy prior to a semester of tutoring diverse populations of elementary students at the community center, yet they demonstrated some aspects of this tenet, conceptions of self and others (Ladson-Billings, 1994; 1995). In the beginning of the semester, preservice teachers replied to critical task questions posed by the instructor, Maya, that asked about their definition of culturally responsive teaching (See Appendix D). I then followed with interviews of these preservice teachers and queried about their understandings of culturally responsive pedagogy (See Appendix B). Based on these questions, I attempted to answer my research question that addressed the preservice teachers' understandings prior to tutoring diverse populations at the community center.

The preservice teachers initially described culturally responsive teaching in a superficial way and stated teachers should be aware of their students' culture and integrate it into the academic curriculum. For example, Kelly said, "Culturally responsive teaching uses the experiences and knowledge of diverse students in the classroom by integrating it into learning exercises."

Gay (2000), Ladson-Billings (1994), Villegas and Lucas (2002), and Banks (2001) contend this awareness and integration of the students' cultures are significant aspects of culturally responsive teaching, yet they also incorporate other important features of this complex theory such as building a community of learners and maintaining high expectations of students. Additionally, the preservice teachers also presented the notion that all students should be treated equally. Although they asserted these values, preservice teachers' good intentions and cultural awareness are not sufficient to demonstrate cultural responsiveness (Gay, 2000). The preservice teachers did not exhibit



The preservice teachers must have concluded such information from statements made by the students as they never met the family or saw the house or car, but they still assumed the girl was not at-risk.

Through intercultural connections, preservice teachers developed and learned about their students (Dewey, 1963; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978). The preservice teachers noticed



way. Like you know, we're all female. We're all white. We're all Caucasian." Kelly also said, "And just because they look the same as me, they could be Jewish, and I would never know it." These preservice teachers developed some sociocultural consciousness through the shared social interactions with their peers (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1995).

Sociocultural consciousness increased in the preservice teachers to some degree because they recognized how they made assumptions about students at-risk and people who looked like them (Lucas & Villegas, 2001). They admitted to their incorrect assumptions, but the preservice teachers still maintained some misconceptions and assumptions about students from diverse populations. They refused to leave original notions that at-risk meant bad behavior and lack of interest in learning. Preservice teachers only made gradual, plausible changes in their understandings about culturally responsive pedagogy.

**Effective facets of the field experience.** According to Villegas and Lucas (2002) sociocultural consciousness contributes to becoming culturally responsive. It is not only necessary to raise awareness in the preservice teachers but to challenge their unconscious and conscious beliefs and biases (Alquist & Milner, 2008; Berlak, 2008; McGarry, 2008). In this section, I recommend effective aspects of the field experience, which facilitated preservice teachers' development of deeper understandings about culturally responsive pedagogy as they confronted their conscious and unconscious beliefs. The effective facets in the field experience include one-on-one student teacher interaction, scaffolding critical reflection, and best practices. Through the discussion of these facets I



2007). Previous research suggests preservice teachers become more aware of their biases and prejudices as they tutor students who differ culturally from them (Barton, 1999; Boyle-Baise, 2005; Sleeter, 2001). Additional studies revealed the field experience of one-on-one tutoring benefited preservice teachers as they adapted their instruction to meet the needs of students cognitively, physically, and affectively (Hedrick, McGee, & Mittag, 2000; Morton & Bennett, 2010). As I observed the preservice teachers, I noticed Group A enacted more one-on-one tutoring experiences than Group B. Group A interspersed among the elementary students and always physically positioned themselves at the same level as the elementary students. Whereas, Group B stood and huddled with each other rather than placing themselves near the students.

Group A demonstrated greater understandings about culturally responsive teaching than Group B in the answers to the questions I asked and in field observations I made. As I discussed in their novice understandings, Group A reflected more about their cultural identities (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). For example, the preservice teachers in Group A noticed their Caucasian peers did not necessarily experience the same culture as they did, even though they were also Caucasian. Kelly discussed an experience she had in one her classes with a peer who was also Caucasian: "I knew her the like the entire semester, and at the end she told us she was Wicca[n]. I had no clue about any of that." Katherine applied her realization about physical appearances to the classroom and declared she cannot assume "just because I'm Caucasian that if I have, you know, fifty percent of my class are Caucasian that they are all going to be just like me."



fifth grade girls. I wrote in my reflexive journal, “*The teachers in Group A interspersed among the third grade students, made eye contact, and talked with them.*” I wrote the following about Group B:

*I noticed Group B would sit or stand on one side of the table during the first sessions of the tutoring at the community center. It almost appeared as if they [fifth grade girls] were in control of the group not the preservice teachers [in Group B], like they were just hanging out with their older buddies. The preservice teachers also would huddle together while one teacher worked with the fifth graders.*

Group B observed and hovered over the elementary students more than Group A, who interacted, sat with the students, asked questions about the students’ writing, and became part of the community. Group A emphasized the importance of conversations such as when Katherine in an interview said, “Most students want to talk about themselves and their experiences.” Through these conversations with the elementary students, the preservice teachers developed relationships and learned more about them. O’Connor and McCartney (2007) report when teachers build relationships with their students, students display greater engagement. In an interview with Kelly (Group A), she stated, “So you really have to work hard in getting to know the kid as a person and who they are,” and “when you sit down and you work with them a little bit, you ask them questions and find out about them.” Kelly also shared the significance of the one-on-one interactions:

I think it would better help facilitate with the kids here because each child comes in with a different perspective than what I normally see...so just interacting with



conversations to find out more about the elementary students. Group B disclosed information such as “the one girl was shy,” but they never shared anything detailed about her. One particular instance illustrates their judgment of an elementary student. Group B made assumptions based on family structures and socioeconomic status. Julie commented, “At first, she [Maya] made it sound like they were all like underprivileged children, but then one of the girls like... isn’t at all.” Christy commented about divorced families, “So, like you see that’s the type, not that there’s anything wrong with that.” In my reflexive journal notes, I wrote:

*Christy emphasized certain words when she answered this question [about her understandings of the students]. Examples in this answer were ‘type,’ ‘different,’ and ‘oh, okay.’ I thought her words were derogatory because of the emphasis on these words. It was as if she demonstrated prejudice toward people from non-traditional families.*

Even though preservice teachers in Group B detached themselves from the community of learners, they discussed how teachers need practice and have to consider the situations of the students. Sam stated, “I think you really just have to, as far as cultural responsive teaching goes, I think you just really have to consider what you are doing for the students.”

These preservice teachers in Group B suggest culturally responsive teaching requires as if it were a practical skill, not a complex, multifaceted theory with deeper meanings. In addition, preservice teachers view the students as coming from situations and not as individuals with agency.

Preservice teachers in Group A, through more one-on-one interaction, formed deeper relationships with the elementary students and began to recognize how getting to know the elementary students helped form a community of learners (Ladson-Billings, 1994; 1995). Preservice teachers in both groups revealed that the elementary students became more comfortable and shared further information about themselves. However, preservice teachers in Group A discovered more specific individual information about the elementary students. Preservice teachers in Group B still did not totally grasp the theoretical framework for culturally responsive pedagogy because they still made assumptions about students and lacked in-depth understanding in their responses during interviews and illustrated limited connections with the elementary students. Group A demonstrated an enhanced understanding because they experienced cognitive dissonance and expressed deeper understandings.

*Scaffolding critical reflection.* Since Dewey (1933), it has been implied that critical reflection should be applied to teaching practices. Adams, Bondy, and Kuhel (2005) and Sleeter (2001) assert preservice teachers must reflect critically about experiences with students from diverse ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. Scaffolding critical reflection seemed to be another effective facet of the field experience in the development of culturally responsive teachers. During the final interviews, the preservice teachers in both groups claimed the questions I posed during the interviews



significantly impacted their understandings about culturally responsive pedagogy. For example, Katherine (Group A) shared:

Wow! The questions you asked...the...cause generally I would think of it more after, obviously, after the interview. And I remember just working with kids, and like wow, I didn't realize I was doing that [culturally responsive teaching]. Or I should do that more.

Christy also stated, "And just all the questions really like made me think." My questions facilitated the preservice teachers to contemplate more deeply about culturally responsive pedagogy.

The preservice teachers also considered my discussion questions helped to improve their self-reflection and self-awareness. For example, Kelly remarked:

But sitting down with you, like I really enjoyed the experience because I can sit down, I can analyze what I do and reflect back upon it. And you know I feel like

explain to us. What students can do with others, they can eventually do on their own. This appears to be what was happening with my questioning.

The preservice teachers reported the questions promoted an extension of the conversation with their group members. For instance, Sam (Group B) said, “from you asking these questions that really did [influence the group] because after we would, like in our group, we’d talk about what we said in the interview, and then we’re like yeah that was a good point.” Additionally, Rebecca (Group A) noted other preservice teachers in the course might not have developed culturally responsive pedagogy because they did not participate in the interviews, and “they [other preservice teachers] hadn’t had the time to reflect...or group discussion to reflect.” The preservice teachers appeared to need explicit scaffolding to facilitate critical reflection about field experience and the cognitive dissonance the preservice teachers’ experienced and to apply it to their understandings about culturally responsive teaching.

The preservice teachers deemed the questions were valuable because the questions created opportunities for them to deliberate implementation of culturally

questions I asked during the interviews presented opportunities and time for the preservice teachers to critically reflect about the elementary students, themselves, and implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy.

The preservice teachers learned through collaborative discussions that originated from the interview questions I raised throughout the semester. Ladson-Billings' (1994; 1995) tenet, conception of knowledge, involves knowledge as shared and constructed and teachers scaffold to facilitate students' learning (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). This principle also mirrors sociocultural and situated learning theories as knowledge is socially constructed, shared, and recreated within a community of learners (Dewey, 1963; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Nasir & Hand, 2006; Rogoff, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978).

Reflective practice plays a significant role in teaching and learning processes as Dewey (1933) emphasized the importance of integration of experiences with problem-solving, reflection, and theory connected with practice (Harford & MacRuairc, 2008). Pithers and Soden (2000) found preservice teachers demonstrated limited initiatives to critically think or reflect because they had not been taught how to think critically. However, critical thinking and reflection are necessary for teaching, in particular for culturally responsive teaching because one must possess an awareness of oneself and move beyond one's own subjectivity to enhance students' learning (Harford & MacRuairic, 2008; Howard, 2003). The development of culturally responsiveness stems from various experiences as it is multi-dimensional and complex. Some scholars encourage critical self-reflection and analysis to further generate sociocultural consciousness (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002),

and additional researchers emphasize cognitive dissonance (Lea & Sims, 2008; McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2001) as a way to promote increased understandings.

As I analyzed the preservice teachers' developing understandings, I believe this lack of cognitive dissonance and superficial self-reflection early in the semester contributed to their nominal growth. The preservice teachers in Group A slowly progressed because they began to notice some assumptions they made about people who had similar appearances as them. The preservice teachers then experienced cognitive dissonance (Berlak, 2008; Lea & Sims, 2008; McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2001) but still failed to recognize other assumptions they possessed about the elementary students. The preservice teachers in Group B continued to make assumptions with minimal change. These assumptions could cause the preservice teachers to focus on students' weaknesses

be challenged. This group continued to keep themselves removed from the students and viewed them as different, which leads me to conclude preservice teachers need valuable experiences with one-on-one student-teacher interactions to produce this dissonance while receiving explicit scaffolding for critical self-reflection.

**Best Practices.** In addition to scaffolding critical reflection, an effective facet of the field experience that appeared to further influence the development of culturally responsive teaching was best practices. Best practices for writing might consist of 1) positive environments, 2) organization of writing, 3) meaningful writing experiences to students, 4) writing for a variety of purposes, 5) collaborative writing, and 6) critical reflection (Graham, MacArthur & Fitzgerald, 2007; Whitaker, 2007; Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1998). The preservice teachers described the meaningful writing and writing for a variety of purposes that Maya provided as “activities and ideas.” They considered these best practices as aspects of Maya’s instruction that resonated with the implementation of culturally responsive teaching. I, therefore, address my research question about how the preservice teachers demonstrate culturally responsive teaching within the writing curriculum.

Six of the eight preservice teachers acknowledged Maya influenced their understandings about culturally responsive teaching through the implementation of best practices. In Kelly’s (Group A) interview, she discussed how best practices related to culture. She commented, “I think there’s [are] a lot of activities that she’s given us that are very representational for different cultures.” Katherine (Group A) also in an interview commented on the connection to culture:

She's [Maya] taught me a lot about different activities that you can do that can be correlated to different cultural backgrounds, and there are ways that you can bring different kids or have kids explore their own cultural backgrounds or talk about their cultural background.

Sam (Group B) mentioned best practices as a way to learn more about the students. She said:

I think using the activities that our teacher did give us to do. I thought they were good activities. Like two or three of them. Like the My Face was a really good one. That's when I found out her parents were divorced, and then the dad had a girlfriend and stuff like that.

Julie (Group B) also in her interview thought the best practices provided opportunities to gain information about the elementary students, and she commented, "We learned more about them and like their family, and everyone in the group learned about that too." A crucial aspect of Ladson-Billings's culturally responsive teaching (1994; 1995).

As part of best practices, teachers provide a meaningful approach to writing when he/she utilizes various writing experiences such as genres or multimedia, which are chosen with an understanding of the students in mind (Graham, MacArthur & Fitzgerald, 2007; Whitaker, 2007). Preservice teachers developed a greater understanding of how important motivation and interest are to writing instruction. In addition, they began to recognize writing transcends beyond traditional ways of writing: five paragraph essays, only writing with pencils on paper, lack of creative techniques, and writing prompts. For example, in an interview Amy (Group B) said:

She [Maya] encouraged us to let them draw and then write about what they draw or drew. Or like if they draw it, then they can tell us what it's supposed to be and we can write it for them, which I think will work really well culturally if we have an ESOL student, or anything like that because maybe they aren't able to write, but she [Maya] opened us up to things to do if this student can't write or something like that...

On their wiki, Group B expressed how motivation influences how well students write.

They wrote:

One thing that we [Group B] have learned is to give writing assignments that appeal to the students. Writing doesn't always have to be expository; it can be fun and interesting to the child. We have discovered that the more the students enjoy what they are writing about the better they will write and the more they will want to write.

Lisa (Group A) shared that best practices interests the students. She noted, "I think that would be more fun for students you know than just sitting at the desk by themselves writing."

The preservice teachers began to recognize how meaningful writing experiences, writing for different purposes, and positive environments contribute to more effective writing instruction (Graham, MacArthur & Fitzgerald, 2007; Whitaker, 2007; Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1998). It is important to note writing instruction must allow for student choice, which creates authentic and meaningful experiences to the student (Graham, MacArthur & Fitzgerald, 2007; Tatum, 2008). Preservice teacher paid attention to the elementary students as they wrote, talked with them, and heard how the elementary

students enjoyed writing with the preservice teachers at the community center. The preservice teachers also listened to the podcast of these elementary students, in which Maya interviewed the elementary students about what they liked and disliked about writing. Most of the elementary students shared how they preferred writing with their



*Lack of explicit instruction.* Five out of the eight preservice teachers thought the

curriculum. However, four of the preservice teachers commented she did not “directly” or explicitly discuss culturally responsive teaching. For example, Amy said, “I think because like I said our writing teacher she didn’t really focus too much on culture.” Kelly thought Maya “probably wouldn’t have done that [asked questions], sit down and talk about being culturally...like she mentioned cultural responsive teaching, but she didn’t go into a lot of depth about it.” The preservice teachers valued the questions I asked during interviews because it provided opportunities for them to reflect. Although preservice teachers noticed culturally responsive pedagogy within the curriculum, they did not identify how the course instructor facilitated their increased understandings. For this reason, I think some of the preservice teachers might have developed even deeper understandings about culturally responsive teaching if there had been more explicit instruction and connections to the writing methods course content.

Scholars have previously noted the significant impact of field experience on preservice teachers’ understandings about diversity but omitted specific aspects of field experience that produce more affirmative beliefs (Castro, 2010). Sleeter (2001) contends field experience needs to be connected to university coursework, and additional scholars suggested university course content does not always become implemented into the field experience (Adams, Bondy, & Kuhel, 2005; Fang & Ashley, 2004; Grant & Koskela, 1986). Other researchers stress that preservice teachers, who engage in field experience in diverse settings, participate in conversations and work one-on-one with students, experience cognitive dissonance, and benef24 404.918 184.56cm BT 50 0 0 50 0 0 Tm 50 0 0 50 0 0



continued to think the girl was not “at-risk.” Sam (Group B) shared, “they got very comfortable with us and kind of weren’t staying focused on the work that we were trying to accomplish.” She thought the fifth grade girls were not listening to the preservice teachers. Amy stated, “It’s just so funny because they are older, and you can joke with them.”

In my estimation, the preservice teachers in my study remained unprepared to teach the diverse populations in the schools (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2000). Yet, I observed these preservice teachers gradually advance in their understandings about culturally responsive teaching as they tutored in an authentic context. I attribute their increased understandings to the effective facets of the field experience during this course and research that included one-on-one student-teacher interaction, scaffolding critical reflection, and use of best practices. These effective facets provided opportunities for these preservice teachers to develop relationships and understandings about students from different ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds from themselves. Through dialogue and collaboration, these preservice teachers cultivated new understandings about culturally responsive teaching and writing instruction, which is supported by sociocultural and situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1995). Ineffective facets of the field experience include lack of explicit instruction and limited student-teacher interactions.

**My reflection as a teacher educator.** As a teacher educator, I think it is important that I remember to practice critical reflection and the significant role it plays in teaching and learning processes (Dewey, 1933) and connect theory and research with my teaching practice (Harford & MacRuairc, 2008). As I reflected on my teaching of preservice teachers prior to this research, I recognized I was not doing enough to prepare preservice teachers to meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds. Although I knew I incorporated culture, discussed English language learners, and conducted lessons about stereotypes in my teaching, I was not explicitly or sufficiently teaching culturally

responsive pedagogy. If I am passionate about culturally responsive pedagogy, then what are the other teacher educators who are not passionate about it doing in their courses?

My reflection initiated my speculation about higher education, and I became concerned about those who are culturally insensitive in higher education and teacher educators. Professors and teacher educators in higher education are also predominately White, similar to the teaching profession overall, and are considered to have expertise in the area they teach (Haviland & Rodriguez-Kiino, 2009; Melnick & Zeichner, 1998; Vescio,

include the journal as an important piece of the triangulation of my data, which improves rigor and trustworthiness of my study (Janesick, 1999).

In my reflexive journal, I captured moments and images of my experiences and the preservice teachers' experiences. At times during my research, I questioned my biases. For example, I wrote, "*However, I need to put my bias in check as I become disgusted sometimes with the limited understandings of people in our society.*" At another instant, I reflected:

*I had to check my bias here.*





Preservice teachers progressively transform from experiences, and their understandings do not occur in one instance or during one semester long course but gradually over time, as ascertained in my research. One course does not provide an adequate amount of time for a person to cultivate an in-depth understanding of culturally responsive teaching.

Field experience needs to be connected to coursework along with explicit modeling of instruction about culturally responsive teaching (Sleeter, 2001). In my study, the interview questions and field experiences contributed to growth in the preservice teachers' understandings. Even though the preservice teachers recognized the questions I provided in the interviews facilitated self-reflection, the preservice teachers needed more in-depth conversations and discussion to increase their understandings; they needed scaffolding to assist in their critical reflection. Howard (2006) noted that teachers must first know the self before they can teach. Teachers must first develop self-awareness because this awareness affects the interactions and interpretations of the students (Trumbull & Fluet, 2008). In order to recognize unconscious and conscious biases and prejudices toward their students, preservice teachers need to become self-aware (Hale, Snow-Gerono, & Morales, 2008). Discussions, collaboration, and social interactions are instructional practices to achieve the self-reflection necessary to become culturally responsive.

I think college of education courses should include various strategies and interventions, such as film, to assist the preservice teachers' developing underst -0.2 (;p) 0.FnTJ ET 4

teaching cases, film, and collaboration. In previous studies, some teacher educators utilized different films such as *Crash* (Hagis, 2004), *The Couple in the Cage* (Heredia, 1997), or *The Color of Fear* (Wah, 1994) (Ahlquist & Milner, 2008; Aminy & Neophytos-Richardson, 2002; McGarry, 2008; Villaba & Redmond, 2008); these films facilitate in some people a sociocultural and cognitive dissonance in which the viewer experiences friction with previous understandings about culture.

Additional researchers utilized preservice teachers writing autobiographies and biographies about their students or community members in attempt to recognize similarities and differences and to develop better understandings about people from backgrounds different from their own (Schmidt & Finkbeiner, 2006; Wake & Modla, 2008). Athanases and Martin (2006) and Richards and Bennett (In Progress) suggested modeled instruction helped in-service and preservice teachers develop an advanced understanding of culturally responsive teaching. Teacher educators must connect the o;

about culturally responsive teaching, but the writing methods course did not include many interventions or discussions. As a result, education programs should integrate culturally responsive pedagogy throughout the coursework. The education program should be infused with discussions and interventions about social justice and cultural issues.

The preservice teachers did not make connections between the text (*6+1 Traits: The Complete Guide for the Primary Grades* and *6+1 Traits: The Complete Guide for Grades 3 and Up*, Culhan, 2005, 2003), course lectures and discussions, and tutoring of the elementary students. Teacher educators must explicitly inform preservice teachers and ask reflective questions that promote them making these connections. These preservice teachers consistently connected writing instruction to how they were taught and suggested writing could be more motivational through best practices. Preservice teachers' prior writing experiences influence their instruction and attitudes toward writing

As a final recommendation for writing methods courses and the connection to culturally responsive teaching, I suggest writing courses include a self-reflective piece in addition to the field experience, discussion, and interventions. Writing promotes critical self-reflection and facilitates preservice teachers' development of understandings about themselves and their students (Wold, 2002). Writing provides preservice teachers opportunities to discover identities and to explore and find their voice (Kear, Coffman, McKenna, & Ambrosio, 2000; Pattnaik, 2006; Schmidt & Izzo, 2003; Vicars, 2007). Through writing, preservice teachers connect the professional with personal (Richards & Miller, 2005). Therefore, writing courses should integrate field experience, course content, and self-reflection through preservice teachers' writing in order to gain deeper understandings about writing instruction and culturally responsive pedagogy (Colby & Stapleton, 2006; Putman & Borko, 2000; Wold, 2002).

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

#### **Culturally responsive teaching.**

Billings, 1994; 2001) and then follow them as they begin their first years of teaching. I believe research should investigate in-depth the relationships of teachers and students in the classroom and the instruction of those students (Castro, 2010). I think it is important to investigate preservice teachers' prior experiences with people from different linguistic, racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Castro, 2010; Richards & Bennett, In Progress).

I recommend research that focuses on the teacher educators and their understandings, beliefs, and attitudes about multicultural education and culturally responsive pedagogy. In addition, researchers should not only examine how teacher educators promote and facilitate positive views towards diversity, but how teacher educators use preservice teachers' prior experiences with diversity to create not only awareness but critical reflection and discussion (Castro, 2010; Howard & Aleman, 2008).

**Writing methods courses.** Writing has not been in the forefront to school reform and continued research is needed on how to better prepare preservice teachers to teach writing (Cutler & Graham, 2008). I propose researchers focus on how preservice teachers demonstrate culturally responsive teaching in the writing curriculum because limited research exists on this connection (Schmidt & Izzo, 2003). Additionally, more research is needed to examine motivation and interest of not only the elementary students but with preservice and in-service teachers and how motivation and interest interrelates to culturally responsive pedagogy (Cutler & Graham, 2008; Schmidt & Izzo, 2003). The current literature does not address adequately the relationship between motivation and students from diverse backgrounds or between motivation and writing (Guthrie, Coddington, & Wigfield, 2009). I suggest researchers examine motivation and writing,



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## Appendices





## Appendix B.



Appendix D  
Critical Task Questions

**February 3, 2009 -- *Critical Task Questions #1***

How do you feel about going to the community center to work with children?  
What is your definition (now) of an "at risk" child?

**February 09, 2009 -- *Critical Task Questions #2***

What were your impressions now that you have been here and met the children?  
Describe your strengths and weaknesses as an educator.  
Explain your understanding of culturally responsive teaching. Discuss some activities or literature you could use in your group here.  
Discuss your expectations of the students, including academic, social, and behavioral.

**February 16, 2009 -- *Cr***

3. Define the writing trait organization. How did you help your students organize the script today?
4. Explain how individualized instruction is different from culturally responsive teaching.

**March 30, 2009 -- *Critical Task questions #8***

1. Describe how you helped the children develop voice and word choice while writing and filming.
2. Describe how scriptwriting and digital video could be beneficial in a writing class.
3. How might digital video, voice, or word choice play a part in being a culturally responsive teacher?

**April 05, 2009 -- *Critical Task Questions #9***

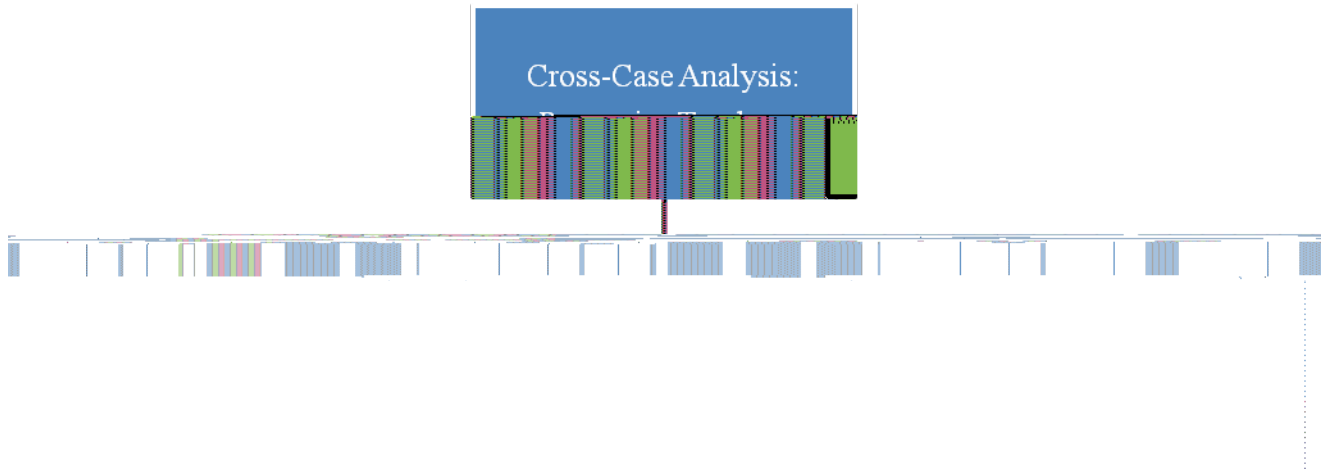
This week, we listened to the podcast and answered this question - How do the student voices (in the podcast) influence your teaching writing philosophy?!

Appendix E  
My Face



## Appendix F

### Cross-Case Analysis



## **Author**

Susan V. Bennett graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Women's Studies from the Ohio State University in 1992 and in Elementary Education from Northern Kentucky University in 1998. She completed her Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Cincinnati in 2003.

Susan taught elementary school for a little over six years on the Navajo Reservation in New Mexico and at urban schools in Ohio and Florida. While she completed her Ph.D. at the University of South Florida, Susan taught undergraduate courses in literacy and creative arts and also supervised Level I and Level III interns in elementary education. During her doctoral program, Susan participated in several literacy research projects and presented at state, national, and international levels and has published four articles in refereed journals and two book chapters. She is now an assistant professor in literacy education at the University of Mississippi.